

Sustainability and the Authentic Experience. Harnessing brand heritage – a study from Japan

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Sustainability and the Authentic Experience. Harnessing brand heritage – a study from Japan.

This paper explores the influence of the formative brand heritage construct on perceived authenticity at repaired /reconstructed heritage sites, understood in relation to the Japanese practice of kintsugi (金継ぎ), thereby extending Kolar and Zabkar's consumer-based model of authenticity. It notes that variations of kintsugi occur in architectural heritage conservation worldwide. We establish relationships between brand heritage, cultural motivations, perceptions of authenticity, relational value, and consumer commitment, based on questioning 768 visitors to repaired and reconstructed Japanese heritage sites. Analysis using PLS found consumer preconceptions of brand heritage stimulating increased perceptions of authenticity at sites of limited historical provenance, thereby increasing visitor commitment to visiting. Heritage managers should use marketing strategies that effectively communicate a site's brand heritage prior to, during, and after the tourist experience. Even where the material components of the site are entirely reconstructed, this can lead to relational value, and improved consumer commitment. In sustainability terms, holistic brand marketing can increase site revenue, help conservation maintenance and, by increasing repeat visits, reduce footfall damage at other 'unreconstructed' sites. Practical implications include better artefact and information presentation, ensuring synergy between site experiences and its purported values, especially through tour guide narratives and interpretation.

Keywords: authenticity, brand heritage, motivation, relational value, Japan, kintsugi

Introduction

Authenticity continues to ignite interest amongst tourism and marketing scholars, keen

to capitalise on consumer appetite for authentic offerings (Eagles, 2002; Liu et al., 2015; Wong, 2013; Xie, 2003), which enhance consumer commitment (repeat site visitation, lasting positive feeling, and a willingness to support a site at personal expense) and produce the much-desired holistic consumer experience (Rageh Ismail, Melewar, Lim, & Woodside, 2011; Richard & Zhang, 2012; Wang, Huang, & Kim 2015). Yet delivering authentic experiences to consumers is challenging (Liu, Yannopoulou, Bian & Elliott, 2015), especially at sites of limited physical historical provenance (Black, 2005; Bryce, Curran, Taheri & O’Gorman, 2015; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Naoi, 2004). While the potentially negative ecological impacts of “authenticity-seeking” visitors upon relatively undeveloped sites has been discussed by tourism scholars (Aronsson, 1994; Cohen, 1988, 1995, 2002, p.269; 2007; MacCannell, 1973; Ryan, 2002; Sharpley, 2000), there is little empirical research into one potentially powerful sustainable alternative: enhancing tourist perceptions of authenticity at existing and / or less fragile, sites.

This study asserts the influence of brand heritage in stimulating authentic experiences, a formative construct that has not yet been linked to perceived authenticity at tourist sites. The impact of brand heritage, defined as: “a dimension of a brand’s identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols and particularly the organizational belief that its history is important,” (Urde, Greyser & Balmer 2007, p. 4), is explored in relation to the consumer-based model of authenticity (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010) utilising data collected at well-known Japanese tourist sites that have been extensively repaired or reconstructed. The theoretical contribution of this paper is to suggest that even when the physical material of the tourist site has been entirely reconstructed, the felt authenticity of the site may be enhanced through the careful communication of brand heritage. Thus, attending to visitor preconceptions can

facilitate the consumption of authentic tourism experiences, resulting in commitment, irrespective of a heritage site's "objective" historical value. This relationship represents a sustainable touristic choice (visiting an already-developed site) motivated through sustainable business practices (the communication of brand heritage). Japan is a novel context in which to explore these theories, as there is a paucity of authenticity research in non-Western contexts (Bryce et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2015), and our study is culturally informed by the Japanese artisanal practice of kintsugi (金継ぎ), which offers a uniquely apt philosophical perspective on repair.

We first review the literature to establish theoretical, contextual, and methodological gaps and generate hypotheses. Second, we explain our data collection and analysis methods, before presenting our results, thereby addressing the aforementioned gaps, and extending the theory of sustainable authenticity. Finally, we offer practical implications for business professionals, which focus on the way in which a site is packaged, and include the need to effectively communicate brand heritage prior to visits.

Literature review

Authenticity and sustainability

Stemming from seminal investigations positioning the concept predominantly within museum contexts (MacCannell, 1973, 1992; Wang et al. 2015), the concept of authenticity and its influence on the tourism industry has been broadened, developed, and advanced towards a more holistic interpretation (Cohen, 1995, 2002; Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Robinson & Clifford, 2011; Wang, 1999; Wang et al., 2015; Xie & Lane, 2006). Derived from this, scholarship tends to focus on five conceptualisations of authenticity: indexical (or essentialist/objective), iconic (or contrived/constructivist),

existential, negotiated, or theoplacity (Chhabra, 2010; Chhabra, Lee, Zhao & Scott, 2013). The first three may be defined respectively as: the historically verifiable object; the perceived resemblance of an object to the verifiable object; the resemblance of an object to the consumer's conceptions of the object in the moment of perception (Cohen, 2002; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Wang, 1999). The negotiated and theoplacity perspectives may be understood as operating in the space between these essentialist and existentialist poles, with negotiation characterising authenticity as stimulated at the meeting point of consumer and supplier, and theoplacity asserting the significance of place and belief in supporting the authentic experience (Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008).

As Cohen (2002) notes, Wang's (1999) indexical and existential (personally meaningful) authenticity echo Selwyn's (1996) 'cool' and 'hot' authenticity, being respectively authenticity that is known, and that which is felt. Finding these various conceptions of authenticity "numerous, contradictory, and irreconcilable," Reisinger and Steiner (2006, p. 66) abandon the concept of object (or cool) authenticity altogether. However, Belhassen and Caton (2006), and later Chhabra (2010, 2012) argue that object authenticity remains relevant in practice, as the value of purported indexical reference has not been abandoned by tourists, tourism managers, and host communities, but has multiple values attributed to it by diverse tourist segments.

In discussing the effects of state-sanctioned tour guide interpretations of sites of contested heritage (e.g. slavery plantations and colonial fortresses), Wong (2013) finds that promoting a progressive, culturally diverse destination image over provocative and potentially discomfiting colonial histories poses a considerable risk to the sustainability of a country's cultural heritage. Following Du Cros (2009), Wong (2013) finds that even when the physical materials of a site are protected, their cultural significance may

be engulfed by the revisionist historiography embodied in local tour guide interpretations.

Advancing the discourse further, Wang et al. (2015) suggest a wedded, dialectic relationship between authenticity and integrity, whereby integrity is held to be similarly influenced by the subjective, as well as object-based influences. Discussions of existential authenticity are implicitly linked to phenomenology (Grayson & Martinec, 2004), in focussing upon the lived experience of the consumer, both in terms of the consumer's subjectivity (e.g. senses, emotions) and in relation to their experience of inter-subjectivity (i.e., relation to others). Ultimately, object authenticity retains practical relevance as a dimension of what tourists and those involved in the tourism industry understand as authentic.

Our efforts to conceptualise and operationalise authenticity follow those of Kolar and Zabkar (2010), whose research empirically shows both object-based and existential authenticity influencing tourist loyalty, with subsequent expansions demonstrating similar outcomes in relation to visitor engagement in alternative settings (Bryce et al., 2015; Yi, Lin, Jin & Luo, 2016). Object-based authenticity here is not necessarily objective authenticity, relating rather to the capacity of objects to inspire feelings of authenticity within the site visitor. Although Kolar and Zabkar (2010) do not explicitly state this, we find this combination of existential and object-based authenticity to represent a negotiated form of authenticity, which implicates the personal feelings of the site visitor alongside their proximity to the physical site in that visitor's experience of authenticity.

Cohen's (1995, 2002) work explores the relationship between sustainability and these various types of authenticity in tourism. Following Dearden and Harron (1994), Cohen (1995, p. 14) writes of sustainability as "a dynamic concept: it comes to refer to

the existence of some degree of congruence between two sets of changes, in the destination as well as in the motivations of tourists.” Later, Cohen (2002, p. 274) finds that the “postmodern tourist attitudes” reflected in the subjective iconic and existential conceptualisation of authenticity might both “facilitate sustainability in tourism” by substituting the contrived for the genuine, and at the same time inspire a potentially deleterious appetite for follow-up visits to the real thing: objectively authentic sites untouched by repair or rejuvenation. Feelings of authenticity at a tourist site are thus implicitly linked to sustainable tourism; as we find, the maximisation of existential ‘felt’ authenticity at sites of limited historical provenance increases the likelihood of return visits.

Elsewhere, various reviews of the tourism literature find sustainability an increasingly difficult concept to pin down, due to its use (and misuse) in contributing to discussions of truly global issues, such as economics, politics, equity and, of course, the environment (Hardy, Beeton & Pearson, 2002; Liu, 2003; Lu & Nepal, 2009, Sharpley; 2000). Indeed, Butler (1999) notes the futility and undesirability of providing a general definition for a concept that is so often deployed in relation to very specific objectives within very specific geopolitical contexts. As our specific objectives are to better understand authenticity, and our specific geopolitical context is Japan, in order to define what we understand as sustainable we now turn to a Japanese artisanal practice that we feel epitomises a sustainable ideology: kintsugi.

Kintsugi

Kintsugi (金継ぎ), or Kintsukuroi (金繕い), can be translated to English as golden joinery or repair, and is the Japanese art of mending broken pottery with a lacquer mixed with gold dust, or other pottery fragments (Ikeyima & Rosner, 2014). Rather than

attempting to hide the cracks, the instance of the object's destruction is highlighted and becomes a feature of the piece. The act of repair, and the attention drawn to it, thus produce and support the meaning of the object, adding a value that could only derive from historical damage. Kintsugi thus infers meaning and value through a form of recycling, and can here be understood as the practical embodiment of a philosophy of non-attachment and the acceptance of transience as a permanent (and potentially liberating) feature of life (Durston, 2006). These concepts are amongst the defining characteristics of the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi (侘寂), of which kintsugi is sometimes understood as a practical expression (Koren, 1994).

Kintsugi allows us to appreciate the meaning held in and enhanced by the afterlife of the object. Although the use of gold dust may not in itself be sustainable, otherwise this practice represents a particularly useful ideology of sustainability, where waste is reduced and value increased by prioritising the restoration of existing artefacts over their disposal and replacement. Of course, this conceptualisation of sustainability is somewhat contextually bound, being especially apt in our discussions of restored and repaired Japanese tourist sites. But it is not, as a working concept, confined to Japan. In the UK, William Morris (1834-1896) a designer, poet, novelist, political activist and major cultural figure, founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877 (see www.spab.org.uk). It remains a powerful advocate of the skills required to repair historic buildings with the minimum loss of original fabric and so of romance and authenticity. It is perhaps the single most important concept worldwide in the subject and activity of architectural conservation: it encompasses the widely held, but contested belief that repairs to old buildings must not make them look new (Donovan, 2007). The links to heritage tourism to historic buildings, towns and cities are very clear.

Those links can also be made to marketing: we find brand heritage fulfilling an analogous function to the concept of Kintsugi, and the proponents of SPABs philosophies of building conservation at heritage sites, in communicating their continued cultural significance, thereby enhancing associated perceptions of authenticity, beyond the material state of repair or restoration in which that site may be found. Thus consumers who acquire prior knowledge of the site, and find this knowledge confirmed by its presentation (and here reconstruction), can establish relational value, resulting in increased commitment. This study suggests that influence of brand heritage may thus be harnessed by tourism professionals in restoring perceptions of authenticity otherwise diminished by a site's limited physical historical provenance (Naoi, 2004).

Brand heritage

Delineating primary offerings, brands offer multiple benefits to organisations at various market levels, reflecting the entire experiential process afforded to consumers (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Described by Urde et al. (2007, p. 4) as: “a dimension of a brand's identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols and particularly the organizational belief that its history is important,” brand heritage can evoke images of continuity, safety and familiarity amongst consumers, offering reassurance and stability. (Hakala, Lätti, & Sandberg, 2011). Thus, brand heritage, consisting of related, accumulated brand narratives (Ardelet, Slavich, & de Kerviler, 2015), is distinct from other marketing concepts (Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wuestefeld, 2011).

Where absent, brand heritage can be constructed, or augmented (Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008; Holak, Matveev, & Havlena, 2007; Merchant & Rose, 2013),

allowing for reinterpretations of heritage for contemporary audiences (Aaker, 2004). Consumers perceive brands with heritage as more reliable, credible, and authentic (Wuestefeld, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wiedmann, 2012). Although possession of heritage does not constitute automatic success (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007), organisations imbued with heritage possess significant advantage (Balmer, 2013). Consumer perceptions of brand heritage and authenticity are crucial indicators of brand loyalty, identity, and equity in marketing (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Urde, Greyser, & Balmer 2007; Wuestefeld et al., 2012) and tourism domains (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zerva 2015). As noted above, Ardelet et al. (2015, p. 2) describe brand heritage as “the linking glue” allowing consumers to better formulate, process, and evaluate positive experiences of consumption. Wuestefeld et al. (2012) note that brands enhance consumer perceptions of value throughout the consumer experience, aligning with phenomenological assertions of the significance of human subjectivity. Establishing relational value can increase perceived consumer value, and is now discussed.

Relational value

Several studies suggest that value is not simply created by an organisation and accepted by the consumer; but rather co-created within an active relationship between organisation and consumer (Rageh Ismail et al., 2011; Siu et al., 2013; Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010). Chan, Yim, and Lam (2010, p. 49) test customer participation through economic and relational value, defining relational value as “the value derived from emotional or relational bonds between customers and service employees”. Research finds consumers acting as ‘part-time employees’ of companies (Mills & Morris, 1986; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), enhancing long-term service company success (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003), and augmenting their brand image and

value propositions (Taheri & Jafari, 2012). Here, relational value is seen as created during the consumer experience of authenticity that aligns (or is actively aligned by management to meet) with the consumer's preconceptions of brand heritage.

Contextual gap: Japan and authenticity

The historic use of primarily organic construction materials, coupled with damage inflicted by WWII and natural disasters, leave Japanese site managers navigating a complex, arguably unique heritage context (Bryce et al., 2015). The domestic popularity of Japanese heritage sites attests to Japanese consumers' enduring attraction to reconstructed historical (arguably ahistorical) sites (Ehrentraut, 1993). Woodside, Hsu, and Marshall (2011) note national cultural influence over the process of consumption, supported by Liu et al. (2015), whose research in China finds a distinct Chinese culture affecting authenticity consumption. Japanese culture shares some underpinnings with its Chinese, and Korean neighbours (Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, & Kai-Cheng, 1997), namely, Confucian influences facilitate an emphasis upon the group, and validation for individual sacrifice (Bryce et al., 2015; Yan & Pan, 2010). Yet Confucianism in Japan is distinct and compliments other variously indigenous and imported values and beliefs (Bryce et al., 2015; Yan & Pan, 2010). Japanese society boasts a large middle class, governed by a robust democratic system (Bryce et al., 2015). Coupled with low crime rates and a capitalist economy, this further distinguishes Japan from many of its regional neighbours, leading to parallels being drawn with the 'West' (Horne 1998).

Indeed, particularly strong demographic parallels are evident in Japan's ageing population which, as one of the oldest in the world, poses a substantial economic challenge for the future (Coulmas 2007). Such demographic challenges may constitute opportunities for Japan's domestic tourism industry, as growing numbers of retirees

traditionally reticent about overseas vacation travel (Mak, Carlile & Dai, 2005) may seek to visit sites of cultural and historical interest, mandating consideration of how authenticity is perceived and affects such experiences. Japan can thus be considered culturally distinct from both Western and neighbouring Asian countries (Bryce et al., 2015; Woodside et al., 2011), and a particularly relevant context for this study.

Research hypotheses and conceptual model

The discussion above allows us to formulate the following hypotheses and model, which suggest relationships between brand heritage, cultural motivation, authenticity, relational value, and commitment. We also further develop Kolar and Zabkar's (2010) and Bryce et al.'s (2015) models of consumer-based authenticity, adding brand heritage and relational value.

[Insert Fig 1 here]

The direct relationship between brand heritage and object-based authenticity is empirically untested. However, Kolar and Zabkar's (2010) emphasis on a strong existential influence over perceived authenticity suggests this relationship is likely. Furthermore, brand heritage supplements and communicates, emphasising rather than reducing the heritage element of perceptions regarding brands (Balmer, 2013; Wiedmann et al., 2011). Thus, we expect brand heritage to enhance perceptions of object-based authenticity.

Existential authenticity is largely dependent on personal interpretation, and this is variously influenced (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou, Zhang, & Edelheim 2013). Consumer perceptions of continuity, safety and familiarity can be influenced by the communication of a brand's heritage (Balmer, 2013; Urde, Greyser, & Balmer 2007). Balmer (2013) notes brand heritage can be cultivated when absent, thus brand heritage likely holds influence over both setting expectancy levels and resultant perceptions of existential authenticity, operating similarly to the brand conveyance process, whereby meanings of products influence consumer expectations (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Thus:

H1. There is a positive relationship between brand heritage and object-based authenticity.

H2. There is a positive relationship between brand heritage and existential, personally meaningful, authenticity.

Object-based and existential authenticity relationships have been supported (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). Bryce et al. (2015) showed the applicability of the concepts in Japan, consequently, a strong relationship is likely. Thus:

H3. There is a positive relationship between object-based and existential authenticity.

Cultural motivations stem from cultural tourists and cultural tourism (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Poria, Butler, & Airey 2003). Cultural motivations are inherent in someone likely to attend local festivals, performances, historical sites, museums and art galleries (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). These consumers are influenced by history, culture, and heritage (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; McKercher 2002), conducive to brand heritage, rendering a relationship with cultural motivations likely. Thus:

H4. There is a positive relationship between brand heritage and cultural motivation.

Cultural motivations hold influence over perceptions of authenticity (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). Furthermore, a yearning for nostalgic experiences, (conceptually similar to brand heritage) (Wiedmann et al 2011), influences cultural consumption (Leong, Yeh, Hsiao, & Huan 2015). Consequently, we expect to see a relationship here. Thus:

H5. There is a positive relationship between cultural motivation and object-based authenticity.

H6. There is a positive relationship between cultural motivation and existential authenticity

Relational value, an arm of consumer relationship management, is linked to commitment levels amongst consumers (Chan et al., 2010; Siu et al., 2013). Research focuses on traditional relationship tactics constructing bonds between consumers and service providers. Siu et al. (2013, p. 294) describe bonds as “psychological, emotional, economic, and physical attachments fostered by the interaction between exchange parties”, manifest through four levels; social, reward-based, structural and customisation (Wirtz, Lovelock, & Wirtz, 2007). Following Siu et al. (2013), we exclude consideration of less relevant social and reward-based bonds. Brand heritage’s propagation of trust, positive brand image perceptions and satisfaction (Wiedmann et al., 2011) render a relationship between brand heritage and relational value likely. Thus:

H7. There is a positive relationship between brand heritage and relational value.

Explicit investigations of cultural motivations’ relationship to relational value are absent. However, the cultural setting in which Siu et al. (2013) find strong relational value amongst museum visitors suggests they fit the profile of the cultural tourist, likely holding some typical cultural motivations (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Poria et al., 2003). Cultural motivations will likely have a relationship to relational value. Thus:

H8. There is a positive relationship between cultural motivations and relational value.

Relational value is attained through both physical as well as emotional bonds; we expect a relationship between both object-based and existential authenticity (Siu et al., 2013). Relational value pertaining to object-based authenticity likely increases in tandem with historical provenance or associated object-based value (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar 2010; Siu et al., 2013). Similarly, relational value’s psychological and emotional properties suggest it stimulates existential authenticity (Bryce et al., 2015;

Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Siu et al., 2013; Zhou, et al., 2013). Thus, a positive relationship between both authenticities and perceived value is expected. Thus:

H9. There is a positive relationship between object-based authenticity and relational value.

H10. There is a positive relationship between existential authenticity and relational value.

Commitment can be viewed through multi-dimensional (Kim & Frazier 1997; Gruen, Summers, & Acito 2000; Gundlach, Achrol, & Mentzer, 1995), and uni-dimensional lenses (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Ahearne, 1998; Morgan & Hunt 1994; Gruen et al., 2000). Occurring between two or more actors, commitment is stimulated through reciprocal understanding that relationship continuance, even at short-term cost, delivers long-term benefits to all (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Richard & Zhang, 2012), often enhancing consumer trust. Commitment manifests as repeat visitors, promoting sites unofficially, or supporting them through donations, or volunteer service (Richard & Zhang, 2012). Brand heritage possesses a relationship to loyalty, and is conceptually similar to commitment (Evanschitzky, Iyer, Plassmann, Niessing, & Meffert, 2006; Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard 1999; Wiedmann et al., 2011), hence we hypothesise:

H11. There is a positive relationship between brand heritage and commitment.

The literature supports the relationship of cultural motivations to loyalty (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar 2010), which shares characteristics with commitment (Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999). Furthermore, cultural motivations incorporate high levels of visitor investment, manifesting through site knowledge and prolonged personal investment in culture (Bryce et al., 2015, Kolar & Zabkar, 2010).

Consequently, cultural motivations are likely related to commitment. Thus:

H12. There is a positive relationship between cultural motivations and commitment.

Visitors encountering high levels of object-based and existential authenticity have been shown to exhibit higher levels of loyalty (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). As loyalty is similar to commitment (Pritchard et al., 1999), we suggest a relationship between both authenticities, towards commitment, justified through consideration that trust can be propagated by reflecting on alignment of consumer's expectations with actual experiences. Thus:

H13. There is a positive relationship between object-based authenticity and commitment.

H14. There is a positive relationship between existential authenticity and commitment.

Predicated on required investment from both parties in fostering relational value, literature supports the relationship of relational value to heightened levels of commitment (Siu et al., 2013). Furthermore, the process of creating relational value enhances opportunities for commitment to develop (Siu et al., 2013; Snehota & Hakansson, 1995). Consequently, we expect a relationship between relational value and commitment. Thus:

H15. There is a positive relationship between relational value and commitment.

The relationships between the variables and hypotheses are shown in Fig1.

Methodology

Data Collection and measures

Data was collected through judgement sampling at Miyajima's Itsukushima shrine (repeatedly destroyed and repaired), Hiroshima Castle, (destroyed by atomic bombing in 1945, rebuilt in 1958), and Kyoto's Golden Pavilion (reconstructed in 1958 following arson) over a period of five months. 805 heritage site visitors were approached, upon exclusion of incomplete responses; a sample of 768 remained; a response rate of 95%. Judgement sampling is argued to be a good practical way of collecting data where the research aim is theoretical advancement and not only generalisation, and is used regularly in tourism and hospitality studies (Wells, Taheri, Gregory-Smith, & Manika, 2016; Gautam, 2012). Upon completion of a pilot test involving 40 respondents over 14 days, the language of some items was modified and restructured for clarity. Questionnaires were administered in Japanese and English, with back-translation methods employed to verify language.

Table 1 shows respondents' demographic characteristics.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Multi-item measures allowed for the collection of information and application practices following previous research including brand heritage (Wiedmann et al., 2011), cultural motivation (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), object-based and existential authenticity (Bryce et al. 2015; Kolar & Zabkar 2010), relational value (Siu et al., 2013) and commitment (Siu et al., 2013) (Table 2). Respondents rated each statement for the above on a Likert-scale ranging from 1 to 7, with 1 indicating *completely disagree* and 7 *completely agree*.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Data analysis

We used Partial Least Squares (PLS) as the method of analysis for the research model, which suits predictive application research for three reasons: (1) PLS is desirable for both the early stages of theory building and adding new construct(s) that have not received enough empirical attention (Hair et al., 2014; Klärner, Sarstedt, Hoeck & Ringle, 2013; Leal-Rodrigues, Eldridge, Roldan, Leal-Millan & Ortega-Gutierrez, 2015). Limited theory has emerged regarding brand heritage's interaction with experiential constructs such as authenticity. (2) PLS can be presented in both reflective (i.e., causality is from the construct to its indicators) and formative (i.e., the indicators cause the construct) modes (Hair et al. 2014, Ringle, Sarstedt, Schlittgen & Taylor, 2013; Taheri, Jafari, & O'Gorman 2014). (3) PLS is appropriate when the structural model has large numbers of indicators (Hair et al., 2014). According to Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder, & van Oppen (2009, p. 190), "model complexity does not pose as severe a restriction to PLS path modelling as to covariance-based SEM, since PLS path modelling at any moment only estimates a subset of parameters...Consequently, PLS path modelling would be more suitable to more complex models". Our model includes 38 indicators, thus it is sensible to use PLS. Both the measurement and structural model were analysed within SmartPLS 3.0 software (Ringle, Wende, & Becker 2014). The non-parametric bootstrapping technique was tested with 768 cases, 5000 subsamples (Hair et al., 2014).

Common method variance (CMV)

Data from single questionnaires raises the danger of CMV, which may cause systematic measurement error and bias in relationship estimation among theoretical constructs (Liang et al., 2007; Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). A number of

procedural remedies were adapted (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Participants were assured responses were anonymous, minimising social desirability bias and allowing access to participants' 'true feelings'. Participants were not informed about the research purpose, which should have contributed to decreased response bias. Independent and dependent constructs were separated in the questionnaire. Previously validated constructs and the expert view of local and non-local academics on questionnaire design helped reduce item ambiguity and biased responses.

In addition, two statistical tests investigated CMV: (1) Harman's single-factor test. Results indicated multiple factors accounted for variance in the variables since one factor explained at most 29.7% of the variance, CMV was not biasing findings (i.e., less than 50% which did not explain most of the variance). (2) Following Liang et al.'s (2007) procedure, a common method factor was introduced to the structural model in PLS step by step. Loadings of all indicators to the common method factor were non-significant. Average variance of indicators and method factor were calculated. The average variance of enlightened indicators was 63.6% while the average method-based variance was 1.1% yielding a ratio of 58:1. Hence, CMV was not a concern for this study.

Results

Measurement validation

We assessed the validity and reliability of the reflective measures in multiple ways (Table 2). Cronbach's α , average variance extracted (AVE), factor loadings and composite reliability were evaluated. For all constructs, Cronbach's α and factor loadings reached values above the required thresholds of .7 and .5. Composite reliability was above the required threshold of .7. AVE exceeded the threshold of .5 for all constructs (Hair et al. 2010). We used two approaches to test construct differentiation (i.e., discriminate validity). (1) Fornell and Larcker (1981)'s criterion, which requires a construct's AVE to be larger than the square of its largest correlation with any construct (Table 3). Our constructs met this requirement. (2) Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt's (2015) heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) approach was employed. Henseler et al. (2015) argue the HTMT approach shows superior performance, by means of a Monte Carlo simulation study, compared to Fornell-Larcker's criterion. If the HTMT value is below .85, discriminant validity should be recognised between constructs. Here, HTMT values ranged from .535 to .705. The $HTMT_{inference}$ criterion was also tested using complete bootstrapping to check whether HTMT is significantly different from 1. Here, $HTMT_{inference}$ indicates that all HTMT values are significantly different from 1 (ranged from .603 to .779), therefore discriminate validity is established.

For the formative measure, Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer's (2001) four-step procedure including content specification, indicator specification, indicator collinearity, and external validity was followed. Indicators were drawn from reviewing relevant literature, capturing the scope of brand heritage (e.g., Hakala et al. 2011; Wiedmann et al., 2011). Multicollinearity among indicators was tested using the variance inflation

factor (VIF). The VIF values were below the cut-off value of 5 (Table 2). A majority of items in the formative construct held weight higher than .1 and all items are significant. Four items had negative weights. External validation was examined to discover whether each indicator could be significantly correlated with a 'global item' summarising the spirit of the brand heritage construct. Thus, an additional statement was developed: 'In my opinion, this site is a brand with heritage'. As shown in Table 4, all indicators significantly correlated with the statement; subsequently, all indicators were included in this study (Taheri et al., 2014; Wiedmann et al., 2011). After following the systematic four-step approach, brand heritage can be regarded as valid formative measurement instrument.

[Insert Table 3 here]

[Insert Table 4 here]

Structural model

Prior to testing the hypotheses, cross validation communality and redundancy indices were employed to evaluate the quality of the structural model and predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2014). Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value was used to test the criterion of predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2014). The Q^2 value was obtained by using the blindfolding procedure in PLS. The main goal of this procedure is to use all observations for predication and, therefore, not to delete entire observation per blindfolding round (Table 5). All Q^2 values were similar across omission distances, randomly chosen between 5 and 12, which confirm the model's predictive relevance. The result concluded that the model is stable. Goodness of fit (GoF) index was calculated using procedures from Wetzels et al. (2009). Cohen's (1988) cut-off criteria (i.e., small (.10), medium (.25) and large (.36) effect sizes) was used as a model fit gauge. Overall GoF is .67, indicating

excellent model fit. All R^2 values (explanatory power) are shown in Table 5, and are greater than the recommended .10 value (Hair et al., 2010).

[Insert Table 5 here]

Hypotheses testing

The results of the analysis provide empirical support for the majority of the hypotheses. H1 ($\beta = .474$; $t = 12.134$) and H2 ($\beta = .540$; $t = 10.910$) predict a positive direct impact from brand heritage on object-based and existential authenticity. Additionally, object-based authenticity has a positive direct effect on existential authenticity; supporting H3 ($\beta = .185$; $t = 3.415$). Brand heritage has a direct impact on cultural motivations (H4; $\beta = .628$; $t = 29.138$). Hence, visitors engaging with brand heritage form deeper understandings towards a sites authenticity, furthermore, highly motivated visitors are more attracted to authentic cultural offerings.

As expected, cultural motivations contribute positively to object-based authenticity (H5; $\beta = .345$; $t = 12.134$) and existential authenticity (H6; $\beta = .133$; $t = 5.141$). H7 ($\beta = .646$; $t = 17.788$) predicts a positive direct impact from brand heritage on relational value. Moreover, object-based authenticity does not directly impact on relational value (H8; $\beta = .059$; $t = 1.804$). Object-based authenticity does not influence relational value directly (H9; $\beta = .054$; $t = 1.472$), Existential authenticity is positively related to relational value (H10; $\beta = .096$; $t = 2.135$). Commitment is also positively influenced by brand heritage, cultural motivation, and existential authenticity, supporting H11 ($\beta = .652$; $t = 12.496$), H12 ($\beta = .080$; $t = 3.016$) and H14 ($\beta = .146$; $t = 3.595$). However, object-based authenticity has a negative direct effect on commitment (H13; $\beta = -.133$; $t = 3.438$). Furthermore, results fail to yield empirical evidence for the relationship in H15 ($\beta = .037$; $t = .821$), due to non-significant t -values for the

parameters. The study further controlled the effects of participants' characteristics including age, gender, local/non-local visitors and visit group, on commitment. Gender ($\beta = .064$; $t = 2.451$) and local/non-local variables ($\beta = -.112$; $t = 5.148$) were found to be significantly related to commitment. However, age ($\beta = -.017$; $t = .652$) and visit group ($\beta = .042$; $t = 1.660$) did not have a significant relationship with commitment

Post-hoc analysis of the indirect effects

The results indicate the potential existence of mediating relationships between several constructs. Zhao et al. (2010, p. 200) state that "the one and only requirement to demonstrate mediation is a significant indirect effect". Williams and MacKinnon's (2008) and Lee, Hallak, and Sardeshmukh's (2016) procedure to calculate mediating effects based on bootstrapping analysis and use of confidence interval (CI) was followed. Thus, in this procedure, if both the indirect and direct effects are significant, the findings indicate the presence of partial mediation. If, however, the direct effect is not significant, the results show full mediation (Lee et al., 2016) (Table 6).

Following Table 6, the findings indicate that brand heritage indirectly influences object-based authenticity through cultural motivation (CI: .113-.238). Since the direct impact was significant, the results reveal that cultural motivation partially mediates the influence of brand heritage on object-based authenticity. Similarly, brand heritage indirectly influences existential authenticity value through cultural motivation (CI: .104-.218). Since the direct influence was also significant, the findings reveal that cultural motivation partially mediates the influence of brand heritage on existential authenticity. The results indicate that cultural motivation indirectly influences existential authenticity through object-based authenticity (CI: .027-.092). Since the direct impact was significant, the results reveal that object-based authenticity partially mediates the

influence of cultural motivation on existential authenticity. As to brand heritage, it was determined that it indirectly influences relational value through cultural motivation (CI: .104-.247). Since the direct influence was significant, cultural motivation partially mediates the influence of brand heritage on relational value.

In addition, cultural motivation indirectly influences relational value through object-based authenticity (CI: .009-.052). As there is no significant direct relationship between these two constructs, the findings reveal that object-based authenticity fully mediates the influence of cultural motivation on customer relational value. The findings indicate that object-based authenticity indirectly influences relational value through existential authenticity (CI: .003-.033). Since the direct impact was significant, the results reveal that existential authenticity partially mediates the influence of object-based authenticity on relational value. Finally, the results indicate that object-based authenticity indirectly influences commitment through relational value (CI: .004-.038). Since the direct impact was significant, the results reveal that object-based authenticity partially mediates the influence of cultural motivation on existential authenticity.

[Insert Table 6 here]

Discussion and implications

The confirmed measurement model and examined reliability and validity indicators in this study indicate the proposed instrument measures the constructs in the model. The tested model shows the formative brand heritage measurement performing well in relation to the consumer-based model of authenticity. We fill theoretical gaps identified in previous studies surrounding authenticity, by extending Kolar and Zabkar's (2010) model to include brand heritage and relational value, and we address the lack of scholarship exploring brand heritage by investigating the interplay between brand heritage, cultural motivations, perceived authenticity, relational value and commitment. The majority of findings are consistent with previous studies (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Ramkissoon et al., 2014; Sui et al., 2013; Wiedmann et al., 2011). In order to further investigate our model, we also used post hoc analysis of the indirect effects. As a result, brand heritage can be conceived as an evaluative judgment of authenticity that is dependent upon consumer experience.

Informed by kintsugi, our study emphasises the increased value of existential authenticity in situations of reduced historical provenance. Brand heritage has not been used in this context, nor linked - as conceptualised here - to authenticity. Preconceived notions of brand heritage stimulate the increased experience of existential authenticity, highlighting the influence of brand heritage on perceived authenticity at Japanese tourist sites. Understanding these links is vital for professionals creating marketing strategies that effectively communicate the brand heritage of a site prior to, during, and after the tourist experience. The experience of authenticity can be sustained and enhanced by deploying brand heritage even when the material components of the site are entirely reconstructed, leading to relational value, and improving consumer commitment. The suggestion is that at sites of limited historical provenance, brand heritage may be

utilised in order to stimulate existential authenticity, thus making the inauthentic a suitable and full substitute for the authentic. The notion of sustainability we present in relation to reconstructed and repaired sites is partly economic, in that increased revenue at a site may be channelled into the maintenance of the site and its surroundings, but also environmental and preventative, in that tourists returning to a preferred reconstructed site are reducing the damage done by footfall at other 'natural' sites.

Practical implications for business include attention to the ways tourist sites are 'packaged,' e.g. presentation of artefacts and information, ensuring complementarity between the experience of the site and its purported values to visitors and potential visitors. Managers of sites imbued with reduced objective authenticity should harness brand heritage through either appropriation or increased communication through marketing literature to visitors. We agree with Cohen (1988), Du Cros (2009), Ryan (2002), Wong (2013) and many other scholars that it is crucial for academics and industry professionals alike to pay close, critical attention to the ideological function of the historiographic interpretations that inform tour guide narratives. In order to address this, it is vital that a similarly critical attention is paid to that way in which the heritage of a site is marketed both prior to and during the tourist experience. The intention is not to mislead visitors, but to explicate and enhance the existential value of such objects and sites, thereby increasing the likelihood of return visits to established tourist sites.

As a philosophical practice, *kintsugi* implies that the authentic is that which displays and values its true, dynamic relation to history. By highlighting that the authentic object or site is that which, despite the ravages of time, retains cultural value (be that local, national, and/or international), site managers can refigure and promote a conception of authenticity to tourists that is not dependent upon the material originality of the object. If tourist perceptions of authenticity are aligned with the material reality

of a site's impermanence, then visitor commitment to existing developments can be maintained even during periods of renovation or repair. As an alternative to potentially ecologically unsound excursions and developments in 'undiscovered' locations, this represents a sustainable touristic choice. In the specific instance of Japanese tourist sites, an explanation of the philosophy underpinning kintsugi, and an understanding of this attitude towards repair, may better position tourists to appreciate the significance of a reconstructed site.

Additionally, our findings suggest that sites with low object-based, but strong existential authenticity should develop relational value, which can be sustained and strengthened through presentation that maximises the power of brand heritage. Relational value is particularly important in low object-based authenticity environments, as connections between visitors and the site become necessarily personal, individual and more intimate. Thus, management should encourage relational activities such as enhanced interactivity with exhibits through digital apps and hands-on experiences, visitor participation in the maintenance and protection of the site, volunteer opportunities and membership schemes.

Finally, in cases of low object-based authenticity, management should be receptive to developing close associations to high object-based authenticity sites, thus appropriating their heritage. Culturally motivated tourists are often well-informed regarding the sites they visit (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), hence association with highly object-based, authentic offerings will likely act as endorsement for less objectively-authentic sites.

Limitations and further research

We acknowledge several study limitations. First, data is taken from only three sites in Japan, therefore the findings are contextually limited. Extended data collection in Japan is required to provide further evidence therefore additional research to this effect is encouraged. Second, this is a cross-sectional study, consequently, while the theoretical reasoning is shown to be justified, complete confirmation of causal predictions is incompatible with this research design. Therefore, a longitudinal approach employing both qualitative and quantitative methods would complement our findings. Third, it is possible that the effects of brand heritage on cultural motivation, authenticity and relational value, are moderated by contextual variables such as cultural dimensions and a unique environment. Application of our theoretical model in alternative cultural contexts e.g. the Middle-East region where the effect of conflict on historical tourism sites may render themes from our research particularly relevant. This research was conducted in settings of questionable historical provenance and low object-based authenticity; further research at sites where there is consensus regarding strong objectively authentic offerings could offer deeper insights into the interplay within the model, particularly the influence of brand heritage. The full potential of kintsugi as embodying an ethics of sustainability is also yet to be examined.

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Table 1

Social demographic information.

Socio-demographic indicators	n	%
Gender		
Male	363	47.3%
Female	405	52.7%
Age		
18-25 year old	314	40.9%
26-35 year old	153	19.9%
36-45 year old	118	15.4%
46-55 year old	139	18.1%
56 years old or older	44	5.7%
Local or non-local		
Local	468	60.9%
Non-local	300	39.1%
Visiting group		
Alone	191	24.9%
With children	44	5.7%
With friends	246	32%
With family	263	34.2%
With an organized tour	24	3.1%

Table 2

Assessment of the measurement model and descriptive statistics.

Construct and indicators	Mean (SD)	Loading/Weights	t-values	α	ρ_{cr}	AVE	VIF
Brand Heritage							
This site has continuity	4.86 (1.910)	.155	4.564				3.010
This site is related to images of success	4.68 (1.774)	.180	5.334				1.685
I felt a bond with this site	3.91 (1.823)	.190	5.729				2.355
This site sets the valuation standard for other brands	4.48 (1.687)	.072	2.263				2.430
This site is a national treasure	5.27 (1.704)	.289	8.208				2.766
This site promotes a certain way of living	4.53 (1.675)	.078	2.715				2.692
I have an absolutely clear image of this site	4.36 (1.719)	.227	5.165				2.029
My familiarity with this site is strong	3.93 (1.908)	-.066	2.631				2.654
This site has a strong cultural meaning	4.81 (1.732)	-.056	4.564				2.426
This site represents honesty and truthfulness	4.44 (1.716)	-.103	2.443				2.279
This site is highly known in the society	5.28 (1.746)	.050	2.917				1.289
This site has a strong brand identity	4.97 (1.617)	.358	2.203				2.743
This site is unique compared to others	4.80 (1.818)	-.013	8.284				2.337
This site has a very good reputation	5.20 (1.671)	.114	2.092				2.282
If somebody praises this site, to me, it is a personal compliment	4.11 (2.106)	.080	2.646				2.498
				.907	.941	.843	
Commitment							
I am willing to 'go the extra mile' to remain a visitor of this site	4.55 (1.818)	.908	111.335				
I feel loyal toward this site	4.07 (2.000)	.911	98.467				
Even if this cultural heritage site was more difficult to reach, I would still go to the same site	4.23 (1.949)	.935	133.166				
				.835	.876	.558	
Cultural motivation							
Relax mentally	4.83 (1.544)	.701	27.028				
Discover new places and things	4.53 (1.635)	.712	21.447				
Be in a calm atmosphere	4.92 (1.543)	.774	46.957				
Increase my knowledge	4.62 (1.695)	.735	36.612				
Have a good time with friends	5.41 (1.522)	.711	20.718				
Visit cultural attractions	4.90	.729	39.339				

	(1.701)					
Visit historical attractions	5.30 (1.581)	.788	40.452			
Interest in history	4.69 (1.735)	.773	43.069			
Existential authenticity				.886	.913	.639
I liked special arrangements, events, concerts, celebrations connected to the site	3.67 (1.678)	.710	26.757			
This visit provided a thorough insight into this cultural heritage site's historical era	3.92 (1.738)	.870	96.721			
During the visit I felt connected with the related history, legends and historical personalities	4.13 (1.859)	.882	122.750			
I enjoyed the unique religious and spiritual experience	3.54 (1.788)	.795	29.624			
I liked the calm and peaceful atmosphere during the visit	4.74 (1.791)	.785	40.669			
Object-based authenticity		.833	49.246	.889	.924	.752
The overall architecture and impression of the building inspired me	4.47 (1.826)	.885	103.393			
I liked the peculiarities about the interior design/furnishings	4.48 (1.730)	.885	82.517			
I liked the way the site blends with the attractive landscape/scenery/historical ensemble/town, which offers many other interesting places for sightseeing	4.70 (1.688)	.903	116.615			
I liked the information about the site and found it interesting	4.11 (1.750)	.793	35.127			
Relational value				.928	.955	.875
My visits help me build a better relationship with this cultural heritage site	4.10 (1.782)	.944	197.369			
My visits to this cultural heritage site enhance my expectation of having a long term relationship with this site	4.27 (1.766)	.957	232.102			
My visits to this cultural heritage site facilitate relational connections between the site and me	3.91 (1.847)	.905	72.514			

Note: ρ_{cr} = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted; α = Cronbach's Alpha; VIF = Variance inflation factors. t -values for the item loadings/weights to two-tailed test: $t > 1.96$ at $p < .05$, $t > 2.57$ at $p < .01$, $t > 3.29$ at $p < .001$.

Table 3

Latent variables correlation matrix.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Age	n.a.									
2 Brand heritage	.054	n.a.								
3 Commitment	-.052	.751	.918							
4 Cultural motivation	.041	.628***	.504**	.746						
5 Existential authenticity	-.041	.652***	.612**	.591**	.799					
6 Gender	.357**	.086	.128	-.013	-.107	n.a.				
7 Object-based authenticity	-.006	.690**	.482*	.643**	.644**	.039	.867			
8 Relational value	.013	.703**	.612**	.557**	.652**	.017	.600	.935		
9 Residence	.359**	.020	-.123	.077	.011	.165**	.058	-.008	n.a.	
10 Visit group	-.143	-.045	.026	.059	-.074	.118	.026	-.104	-.148	n.a.

Note: The square root of the AVE is shown on the diagonal for the reflective constructs ***Significant at .01 (two-tailed). **Significant at .05 (two-tailed). *Significant at .10 (two-tailed).

Table 4

Test for external validity of formative measure.

Items	Spearman's rank correlation coefficient*
This site has continuity	.427
This site is related to images of success	.483
I felt a bond with this site	.512
This site sets the valuation standard for other brands	.407
This site is a national treasure	.560
This site promotes a certain way of living	.451
I have an absolutely clear image of this site	.336
My familiarity with this site is strong	.386
This site has a strong cultural meaning	.575
This site represents honesty and truthfulness	.436
This site is highly known in the society	.507
This site has a strong brand identity	.593
This site is unique compared to others	.560
This site has a very good reputation	.550
If somebody praises this site, to me, it is a personal compliment	.495

Note: *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed) for all items.

Table 5
Blindfolding results.

Construct	R ²	Omission distance = 7		Omission distance = 12	
		Communality Q ²	Redundancy Q ²	Communality Q ²	Redundancy Q ²
Brand heritage	n.a.	.436	n.a.	.459	n.a.
Commitment	.602	.655	.499	.640	.501
Cultural motivation	.394	.330	.174	.334	.175
Existential authenticity	.604	.493	.374	.498	.372
Object-based authenticity	.549	.577	.410	.574	.410
Relational value	.640	.715	.555	.699	.554

Table 6
Estimates of Indirect Paths.

Path	Indirect effect	t-values	Low CI	High CI
Brand heritage → cultural motivation → object-based authenticity	.217	11.308	.113	.238
Brand heritage → cultural motivation → existential authenticity	.212	5.172	.104	.218
Cultural motivation → object-based authenticity → existential authenticity	.064	3.321	.027	.092
Brand heritage → cultural motivation → relational value	.147	4.601	.104	.247
Cultural motivation → object-based authenticity → relational value	.038	2.712	.009	.052
Object-based authenticity → existential authenticity → relational value	.018	2.155	.003	.033
Object-based authenticity → relational value → commitment	.030	2.486	.004	.038

Notes: t-values for the item loadings to two-tailed test: $t > 1.96$ at $p < .05$, $t > 2.57$ at $p < .01$, $t > 3.29$ at $p < .001$; Confidence intervals (CI) obtained from Bootstrapping.

Fig.1

Research model

