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Imaging Edinburgh as the 'Festival City'

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Title: Imaging Edinburgh as the 'Festival City'

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Abstract:

We will present initial findings and emerging themes from our study into the imaging of a 'festival city', as it is represented and elicited by city stakeholders through shared online images. Our research aims to develop an understanding of how Edinburgh in Scotland is imaged as the 'festival city' through the use of a visual digital ethnographic method (Pink, 2013; Pink et al., 2016). Edinburgh is recognised as the world's foremost 'festival city', despite global competition from emerging destinations and a further 47 cities adopting similar destination brands. Since the 1947 conception of the International, Fringe, and Film Festivals, Edinburgh today hosts 12 international festivals that contribute to its visitor and experience economies (Todd, 2014; Todd, Leask, & Ensor, 2017). The evolution of Edinburgh as the 'festival city' has become of strategic concern over the past 10 years, with destination management stakeholders focusing upon leveraging the festivals for competitiveness. In 2015, a 10-year destination strategy recommended sustaining and strengthening Edinburgh's 'festival city' status by seeking to explore how infrastructure and operations can deliver unrivalled experiences for the city and its festivals' audiences, artists, influencers, and citizens. Action points outlined ownership and strategic promotion of the 'festival city' brand worldwide, and recommendations were the alignment of Edinburgh-wide marketing activities with the formal adoption of the 'festival city' brand (BOP Consulting & Festivals and Events International, 2015).

The 'festival city' concept has emerged as both an academic concern and as a destination management branding approach. The literature characterises 'festival cities' by commonly shared tangible features, including a strategic approach to staging significant or continuous city-based festivals and events to economic advantage; cultural and creative place-making; and urban development (Dooghe, 2015; Getz, 2012; Richards & Palmer, 2010). The related idea of 'festivalisation' has arisen as a top-down urban and cultural policy, being concerned with a destination's capacity of planned festivals and events for branding purposes, and the means of staging, commodifying, and consuming urban spaces (Jamieson, 2004, 2013; Smith, 2014, 2016). Further discussion revolves around the 'creative city' and the 'festivalisation' of cities (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2012; Quinn, 2005; Therkildsen et al., 2009), with suggestions that festivalisation strategies may provide competitive advantage in the context of experience-based consumption, with the 'festival city' as an outward manifestation of the 'festivalised' city (Morgan et al., 2009).

In our interdisciplinary study, underpinned by critical tourism, marketing, and urban studies, we aim to explore stakeholders' visual portrayals and photographic practices of Edinburgh as the 'festival city'. As "digital media are part of how events are conceptualised, made and experienced by participants, viewers and users" (Pink et al., 2016, p.165), through the use of a digital visual ethnographic method, we aim to gain an understanding of the contribution of Edinburgh's festivals to the city's image and to develop a sense of how a 'festival city' is perceived by stakeholders in visual terms. Our study therefore intends to contribute a new perspective to the term 'festival city' beyond that currently prescribed by the literature.

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Title: Tracing Light in Nature-Based Experiences

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Session Type: Presentation

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Title: Co-Living with Light: Autoethnography of Nature-Based Tourism in Lapland

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