Liverpool's Urban Imaginary: The Beatles and Tourism Fanscapes

Introduction

Destinations continually seek creative ways to market their destination by celebrating popular histories or individuals. For Liverpool, there is one band with such international recognition that the city seeks to capitalize on. Popular Beatles fanscapes are woven into the fabric and narrative of Liverpool and they are part of the city's unique music identity. Geographers (Kruse), destination marketers (Whang, Yong, and Ko), popular culture experts (Julien), and cultural historians (Stark) have conducted previous academic research acknowledging the Beatles. However, no study has positioned the Beatles alongside literatures that unite tourism with authenticity and fanscapes using co-constructed autoethnography. This paper utilizes a method of autoethnography to critically position meanings that align with place identity and authenticity, along with tangible and intangible heritage—thereby creating sentiment of popular memory.

The four members of the Beatles, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr, are from Liverpool and in many ways are synonymous with the city as they are embedded in the story of Liverpool since they became famous in the 1960s (Cohen). To attract Beatles fans from around the globe, destination managers, planners, and private stakeholders have found creative ways to display and disseminate sites and places of and for the Beatles. Notable spaces and places around Liverpool include: The Cavern Quarter, Hard Days Night Hotel, The Beatles Story (in the Albert Dock), John, Paul, Ringo, and George Statues in Pier Head, Magical Mystery Tour, Penny Lane and Strawberry Fields, John Lennon Airport, as well as numerous features hidden in the city, each memorialize the Beatles as part of the city's urban imaginary and popular music culture. This study critically explores these spaces and places of popular fandom, developed as an autoethnography (of the authors who are Beatles fans and new Liverpool residents). I (first-author) critically reflect on experiences as they relate to tourism and

Liverpool's urban imaginary. The co-authors (second-author and third-author) help reinforce, confirm, and challenge place meanings, popular imaginaries, and the consumption of the Beatles. Conceptually this paper contributes to the popular culture studies literature by focusing on a band, fanscapes and the urban imaginary, using a critical self-reflective approach and personal experiences while referring to academic literature on placemaking and authenticity.

Research Framework: Popular Culture, Fandom, and Tourism

Using popular culture to assess the attractiveness of tourism destinations can benefit from the conceptual and methodological considerations addressed in this paper. Theoretical understandings draw from placemaking and authenticity to help us address fanscapes and tourism imaginaries.

When considering placemaking, Yi-Fu Tuan's notion of 'topophilia' is important and relevant, referring to an "affective bond between people and place" (4). Emphasis on cultural and social meanings portrayed is relevant at different scales, and across different impacts, in particular how attractions impact on and influence visitors and (new) residents of a place (Richards). However, in the case of this paper, the affective bond is not necessarily Liverpool as a place, but the bond Beatles fans have to the music—and many of these significant places and attract fans. Nonetheless, putting Tuan's perspective into practice, the notion of placemaking refers to both tangible and intangible heritage where the Beatles are at the center of Liverpool's place identity in terms of popular culture. Placemaking arguably merges these conceptualizations, because interactions among people surface meanings embedded in everyday life and experiences (Cresswell). Just because we recognize popular visitor attractions, wider, more macro-understandings, reinforce place imaginaries influenced through encounters. Part of more contemporary urban agendas is to move away from solely physical aspects of placemaking to more purposeful staging (Richards) founded on local social and cultural programs that aim to encourage interactions or serendipitous encounters (Clark and Wise). Such arguments put placemaking central to

contemporary regeneration practices, concerning how this lends new insight into differing perspectives of authenticity.

According to Rebecca Clouser "the power of a landscape can be seen in its ability to mold thoughts, evoke memories and emotions reinforce and create ideologies, and to relay to the world the values and priorities of place" (7). Tim Edensor add the (geographic) study of landscape involves an evolution of interpreting the meanings of space and place, and such interpretations can result in popular imaginaries, which is confirmed by Dyvia Tolia-Kelly. From a tourism construct, while a cultural landscape can represent tangible and intangible heritage in a destination, this creates a destination imaginary, or fanscape—if consumed through popular meaning. Popular meaning can help create fanscapes, which we refer to in this paper as landscapes (significant to the Beatles) that represent tangible or intangible heritage in spaces and places to celebrate or locate fandom consumption.

Jason Dittmer explains that representations are a "claim about a place's characteristics" (47), interpreted differently depending on desires to visit or how people encounter places (directly or accidently). Referring to the desire for authentic experiences, Jo Waller and Stephen Edmund Gillam Lea argue people seek accurate meanings about a place, through everyday social interactions and about culture and history. While the quest for authenticity seems to be pivotal in tourism studies, debates positioning tourism and authenticity as contested. Ning Wang summarizes critical contributions on authenticity as objectivist/realist (focused on places as realities independent from the subjects), constructivist (emphasizing emergent/co-created nature of places), post-modernist (questioning the existence of reality of places), and existentialist (linked to concepts of self-expression). A performative approach, although based (to some extent on) existential authenticity, is nevertheless distinctive, shedding light on meanings attached to places based on performance in and around them. Judith Butler adds, identities are constructed performatively through acts and gestures, but also must be noted and observed in this paper that places/attractions are created, staged, and performed because some tourists

seek altered realities (McKercher and du Cros). However, more contemporary consumer demands see tourists seeking everyday (or local, or real) experiences (Rickly and Vidon). This paper argues that constructed meanings are co-constructed, consumed, and experienced based on the desired perspective of the individual.

The nature of autoethnographic interpretations co-constructed in this paper challenge us to think across differing interpretations of staged, existential, and performative authenticity. Staged authenticity draws on an objective notion of authenticity. For Dean MacCannell, it is possible to distinguish a front and a back region. Areas typically visited by tourists characterize the front region, sometimes fabricated and artificially staged to accommodate different tourism profiles. Conversely, the back region is the real-life, lived-in by destination residents (sometimes) protect from the tourist gaze. This version implies there is an original that constitutes a reference point to establish degrees of imitation/commoditization. Staged authenticity transfers the quality of authenticity onto the tour object. Erik Cohen instead argues authenticity is a sociological concept, with meanings constructed/negotiable rather than given—thus places are not interrogated in terms of their existence as objective realities, but rather subjective interpretations with relative, ever-changing and fluctuating constructions. For Wang feelings of authenticity are not guided by the fact that tourists see the object as authentic, because they are engaging in activities free from the constraints of everyday life. Hence, tourism represents a liminal space where people can more easily reach a special state of being in which they feel true to themselves (and deem authentic). Linking to popular culture and fandom, authenticity, based on Wang's insight, is not only induced feelings of liminality, but also nostalgia and romanticism.

While the previous debate is concerned about the objective/subjective (existential) notion of authenticity, Erik Cohen and Scott Cohen emphasize instead the notion of authentication, regarded as "a process by which something (role, product, site, object or event) is confirmed as "original", "genuine", "real" or "trustworthy"" (1297). This further lends to performative aspects of authenticity based on

interactions. Knudsen and Waade (2010) introduced performative authenticity, whereby not only individuals create and perform places by their action and behavior, but because places are something people authenticate through emotional/affective/sensuous relatedness to them. Nicholas Wise and Farnaz Farzin suggest performative authenticity is based on inquiry (the need for insight/new awareness), encounters (through relationships, connections, belonging), and production (based on feelings, emotions, sensations).

To build on these conceptual positions and in particular the notion of performative authenticity, this paper brings forward is the notion of affect. The concept of performative, affective authenticity goes beyond the opposition objective and subjective; affect reinforces materialism in places. However, materialism here is constituted as a matter in itself "full of propensity towards something, tendency towards something, [or] latency of something (Bloch 18). Moreover, affect is interrogative and has not yet become (emergent). We address this notion in the analysis. The point of needing to consider different approaches to authenticity to critically and conceptually support the analysis, is we view and experiences places differently, thus we co-construct interpretations that help us challenge, discuss and debate meaning so to validate and confirm our observations.

Method and Approach

From a methodological standpoint, this research design aligns with Setha Low's approach to interpret how culture has become spatialized, so to understanding the ethnography of spaces and places and the need to challenge meanings through self-reflection when we experience fanscapes and explore places within popular tourism imaginaries. Ethnographic work helps academics in the fields of tourism and popular culture studies construct and narrate explored productions of knowledge (Andrews, Jimura, and Dixon). In the process of creating narratives, researchers increasingly need to reflect upon the authority of their claims and be aware that universal and absolute rules, which are no

longer conceivable. There exist epistemological critiques to help problematizes the fixed nexus and relationship between ideas, theories and reality. Self-reflective tourism ethnographies have emerged over the past several decades to help us recognize and challenge the tourist gaze (see Low, 2017; Wise. 2018). Pertinent to the direction of this work, reflexive ethnographies aim to produce new knowledge about a place, group, or community of people.

Self-reflection, an integral element of autoethnography, argued by John Harris is important because researchers "bring [their] own individuality and personality into the text" (165) to add value to the story and frame particular meanings through interaction. Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams, and Arthur Bochner define autoethnography as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (273). Thus, authoethnographies are both a strategy of inquiry and a personal narrative of the authors as the final product. Autoethnographies aim to reveal layers that are hidden or erased in sociological research; the focus of autoethnographic is in fact on voices, emotions and bodily feelings while the focus of traditional methods of inquiry is often the final result (or product) of the research process. Sarah Wall adds "autoethnography is an intriguing and promising qualitative method that offers a way of giving voice to personal experience for the purpose of extending sociological understanding" (38).

The first author, a dedicated Beatles fan, moved to Liverpool in 2016. Since the first author's arrival to Liverpool, he has continually visited sites around the city that represent meaning and memory of the Beatles as a way to discover insight through interactions in these spaces to, as Harris adds, "find out more about how and why a particular social world is as it is" (156). Therefore, this paper's methodological rationale reflects upon 'self' and 'experience' gained through popular landscapes, or 'fanscapes' of the Beatles, with diary exerts italicized in the subsequent analysis. Moreover, a reflexive approaches also positions 'self' and 'experience' at the center of research inquiry. While concentrating

on the scope of experiences and interactions in spaces and places that symbolize Beatles presence and semblance, equally important is reflexivity where the researcher evaluates their own truths relative to the research findings (Ellis et al.). In this case, these truths are a chance to reflect on the notion of authenticity and how tangible and intangible heritage is symbolized in fanscape landscapes, and in observations of how others react in particular spaces and places that symbolize the Beatles.

This autoethnography is based on everyday residential experiences over the past three years, as someone new to Liverpool who resides, works in the field of tourism, regularly attend Beatles events, and visits associated attractions. Such residential ethnographies are important to uncover new social patterns and interactions (Keller), and such work is necessary in popular visitor attractions as well. Such work attempts to uncover new knowledge by inquiring vis-à-vis immersion and experience (Ellis et al.). Researchers do not construct knowledge in isolation (Schwandt), and this paper is the result of sharing and articulating accounts and experiences of co-authors to shape the themes and analysis. Far from being a mechanism of validation of autoethnographies as qualitative inquiry, this approach is instead adopted to increase the complexity of the analysis and illuminate different angles of the phenomena, whilst acknowledging reality will still be partial (Ellingson). Traditional ways to assess validity of qualitative inquiry should not be considered in autoethnography. Ellis et al. maintain in fact that generalizability in autoethnography is up to the readers. Autoethnographic accounts are generalizable to the extent that the story speaks to the readers about the author's experience and credibility measured on degrees of self-exposure, vulnerability and (ultimately) self-reflexivity.

When collaborating, it is important to cooperate with colleagues who share a similar experience so they can help confirm ethnographic data to validate critical observations. Thus, a co-constructed autoethnography helps the lead author confirm and validate experiential contexts, and then add to the evaluation of context and representation (Jacoby and Ochs). The co-authors also share a similar experience to the lead author. They each moved to Liverpool from abroad, work in the same program,

and recognize the impact of the Beatles on Liverpool's tourism economy. Furthermore, all authors belong to the symbolic, 'imagined community' (Anderson), of Beatles fans. Sharing mutual experiences can reinforce co-construction methodologically because it allows meaning and content to be critically discussed, evaluated, and debated because we each see and experience the same spaces, places, and landscapes differently.

Tourism Fanscapes in Liverpool's Urban Imaginary

Three sections emerged through interpretations, analysis, and reflections of experiencing the Beatles in Liverpool. The first section reflects on observations of emotions, concerning popular imaginations and the initial encounters with Beatles spaces, places, and song attractions. The next sub-section notes key sentiment spaces, places, and landscapes in the city of Liverpool. The presence of Beatles markers help us reflect on tangible and intangible heritage, authenticity, and placemaking, and the creation of a tourist pathway made through encounters with other fans. The final section is concerning with regenerative strategies in Liverpool around the re-making and commodification of Matthew Street and the Cavern Quarter which challenges our perceptions and offers new insight into staged authenticity.

Popular Imaginations and Initial Encounters

Once I arrived in Liverpool and began settling in, the first thing I did was make my way to Penny Lane so to invoke my popular imagination by moving from a name in song lyrics to something that was real. I must admit that my arrival and anticipation of excitement was short lived because Penny Lane is simply a regular road that crosses a train line (at least when approached from Greenbank Road)! In many respects, although bluntly put, a sheer disappointment. However, after making my way along Penny Lane to where

Smithdown and Allerton Road merge, you 'see the shelter in the middle of a roundabout'. It is then images from the song, depicting the barbershop, and then I imagined the banker, a fireman and a nurse 'beneath the blue surburban skies'. My imaginations of Penny Lane were thus fulfilled—as the lyrics began to come to life.

Something that strikes me about Liverpool is the city seems to lack a clear destination identity. I am originally from the United States and I used to live in Glasgow, where the city marketing bureau used different campaigns from *Glasgow: Scotland with Style* to *People Make Glasgow*. These defined Glasgow's unique place identity. I find caption or logos in Liverpool lost, but something that I always identified with Liverpool has been the Beatles. They do not require any introduction because they are known around the world, and their global popularity has made Liverpool synonymous with them.

My introduction to Beatles came in Middle School growing up in the United States. I quickly became a fan, I knew all the lyrics, and since then I wondered what Liverpool was like. Then, Liverpool seemed a distinct place. I read about Liverpool in the Beatles lyrics; back then, I would imagine 'Penny Lane' or 'Strawberry Fields' not as real places, but as words that fulfilled some distant popular imagination of Liverpool, where they were in the city, I did not know yet. At that time, I would have never imagined moving to Liverpool (some 20 years later). I was fitting that when I moved to Liverpool in 2016 my apartment was less than half a mile from Penny Lane.

Moving to or traveling around Liverpool, people seek the top attractions where to find and experience memories of the Beatles. Visitors or colleagues come to visit, ask me 'where is this or that Beatles attraction?' I still do not know about every attraction so in 2018 after spending two years in Liverpool I came across a paper written in the *Liverpool Echo* with a prescribed 'Beatles bucket list' (Browne). In this past year I have attempted to visit as many of these as possible, I sometimes feel that having something prescribed takes away from the more spontaneous encounters though:

My first time passing the Eleanor Rigby statue was caught at a passing glance on my bicycle when I took a different way to work one morning, cutting up Stanley Street in the city center. It was sheer surprise and as soon as I saw the name 'Eleanor Rigby' I immediately began thinking of the song, but it occurred to me that the lone standing statue also reinforced the dark connotation with the song about loneliness.

I later returned to the Eleanor Rigby statue, but it remains a unique fanscape to me because of an accidental encounter. Turns out Amy Browne mentions this attraction in the *Liverpool Echo*, so I was happy I encountered it before reading about it. Experiencing spaces based on the meaning they convey to my popular imagination (to me) is the formation of a fanscape—as they display particular sentiment per my popular imagination.

Sentiment Spaces, Places, and Landscapes in Liverpool: Beatles Markers as Placemakers

My first visit to Liverpool was in 2015 when I interviewed for my current position. I arrived to the city on a cold November afternoon and took a black cab to the 'Hard Days Night' Hotel. Chance would have it 'Hard Days Night' was the song that Paul McCartney opened with when I saw him live in Philadelphia a few months later just before moving to Liverpool. I find myself back at the Hard Days Night Hotel on occasion for university catering events, and the function room beneath the hotel is its own (makeshift) museum of Beatles memorabilia.

In terms of sentiment, Penny Lane is just one place, iconic song scene, like Strawberry Fields that comes to life on the suburban tourist trail around Allerton. I moved to this area because I wanted to live near where the Beatles grew up. However, I soon found for someone moving to Liverpool, or the tourist attending to consume the various fanscapes of the Beatles, it is overwhelming the number of attraction

fanscapes one can visit. I get many international visitors, and the chance to visit iconic sites become (sort of) a pilgrimage, while others get overwhelmed when they enter spaces that define the Beatles. One colleague was on the verge of fainting when she first entered Matthew Street, making a surreal connection with the spaces attributed historic narrative of fame. While I often entertain international visitors, I have created my own pathway where I take my colleagues so to enhance serendipitous encounters, and embrace performative and existential authenticity. I always take colleagues to the Cavern Club to peer at the reconstructed stage. I like ending the evening at the Philharmonic Dining Rooms on Hope Street, to simply relax in a pub that John Lennon frequented, and where to him the price of fame meant: "not being able to buy a pint at the Phil" (Browne *online*). This pub also sits just far enough away from the concentration of city center Beatles attractions and marks a spot where we like to reflect on the day and our popular memories—and a bit of nostalgia.

I find urban and a suburban consumption contrasts when exploring popular Beatles markers. The suburban focus on placemaking I see as more performative and existential as the encounters with these attractions to me are more real in terms of the history and making of popular culture heritage that symbolizes the homes where these four men grew up. Going back to my reflections in the previous sub-section it is the narratives also captured in the song lyrics that describe the Beatles experiences and familiarities with the spaces and places they encountered. Such experiences that the Beatles reflect on through song, we can now consume—which helps connect visitors with intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences. The experience and memories that we engage with in these fanscapes (Beatles spaces, places and landscapes) represent sentiment where we can authenticate meaning, and this is where co-constructed autoethnographies help us to reflect on different encounters. I have taken the Magical Mystery Tour and have spoken with visitors who were on Fab Four Taxi Tours (that follow a similar route). Such tours enable Beatles fans to connect while gazing at the homes of the John, Paul, Ringo, and George or seeing and visiting places such as St Peter's church in Woolton where John Lennon and

Paul McCartney first met in 1957. There is an instant feeling of nostalgia peering at St Peter's Church, because without a mutual friend introducing John and Paul in that very structure, this church is known as "the most important meeting in popular music history" (St Peter's Church *online*).

All of us reside in suburban Liverpool, and we have each made our own connections to Beatles fanscapes, heritage and their memory. To me this is real, authentic history, reinforced by popular fandom encounters. While historical markers have gone up and I regularly see the Magical Mystery Tour bus pass by on weekends, this keeps the story and the memory alive and the structures in focus are just a part of the landscape and the story of Allerton or Woolton merely frozen in popular memory. Even when I fly from Liverpool John Lennon Airport the name itself suggests placemaking as visitors who arrive to Liverpool by air first encounter not only the name but also the Yellow Submarine out front and the airport slogan: 'Above Us Only Sky'. The next section turns differences in perspective when evaluating the re-making of Matthew Street. Matthew Street is a space, and a place, with both tangible (e.g. John Lennon Statue) and intangible (Mathew Street Festival, International Beatleweek) Beatles heritage, and how authentic each heritage would be affected by our views towards authenticity. To me, city center spaces are staged; however, the co-construction of meaning and interpretations of my co-authors challenge my evaluation as we see and present differing perceptions based on differing experiences of the Cavern Quarter.

Re-Making Matthew Street

I learnt about the Cavern Club in The Beatles Story museum. I was actually more familiar with the sites outside England as I have read about their presence in Hamburg's Reeperbahn area before they were famous or when they performed live at Shea Stadium in New York in 1965. The Cavern Club, surprisingly, was something that I was not aware of when I moved to Liverpool. Walking through The Beatles Story museum sparked my curiosity. I was visiting the museum with three colleagues from

Russia who were avid Beatles fans and following our visit we went for a photo-op with the John, Paul, Ringo, and George Statues in Pier Head that I have done so many time now, before proceeding to the Cavern Club. Oddly enough, I stayed right around the corner in the Hard Days Night Hotel, walked down Matthew Street several times, taken a picture of the Cavern Club's entrance, but was not actually aware of its significance until after visiting The Beatles Story museum.

Referring back to urban and suburban attractions:

I would say I prefer the suburban Beatles attractions than the nightlife attractions because they take on a special meaning in the story of the Beatles. I appreciate how they mark the humble beginnings of John, Paul, Ringo, and George.

Liverpool is renowned for its nightlife, and perhaps the epicenter of Liverpool's nightlife/nighttime (tourism) economy is along Matthew Street in the city center 'Cavern Quarter'. Not only is there a concentration of Beatles lived experiences but the location is fitting given Liverpool's nightlife reputation. The shear hodgepodge of Beatles sentiment on Matthew Street and corresponding Temple Ct., Rainford Square, Rainford Gardens, and Stanley and John Streets to me have transcended meanings by, in some respects, what I recorded as: *overdoing it with the Beatles*. Beatles placemaking attempts are everywhere; however, I see this as the Disneyification syndrome, somehow encompassing/masking Matthew Street in a way that commodifies the surrounding area, with the restored Cavern Club being the iconic attraction. However fitting an attraction such as the Cavern Club is, other remnants around this area have been embedded to maintain (and reinforce) the Beatles theme. For instance, the bar 'Imagine' sits at the other end of the Cavern Quarter, and is semblance to John Lennon's solo career, post-Beatles, as well as the solo statue of Lennon on Matthew Street.

My interpretation is just one construction of thought here concerning the examples I reflect on; my co-authors critique my gaze of a staged authenticity. The third-author has been a Beatles fan since childhood when he listened to 'Please Please Me' on a TV advert in Japan. His first visit to places associated with the Beatles sparked this memory (similar to mine), but nowadays he feels almost all Beatles heritage represents staged authenticity: Cavern club, Mendips, and 20 Forthlin Road are there physically, and look seemingly authentic. However, a considerable amount of time has passed and he feels these places have lost some emotional links:

> *The first time I visited places relevant to the Beatles (1994) I got emotion—over the moon. I didn't know exactly why, probably because it was the first time my imagination became reality after 15-years. My next visit to these places was after I moved to Liverpool in 2015. This visit did not make me emotional and I understood them as visitor attractions or touristic spaces as all appeared to be presented as the 'front region'. At that time, I already knew that I could NEVER get into the 'back region' where authenticity existed, or had once existed.*

The second-author adds while although being a Beatles fan, the Cavern Quarter, the story of the Beatles, or the statue of the Fab Four are not the first places she had visited when she first arrived in Liverpool. However, her encounters with the Beatles happened spontaneously:

> *I was at a friend's house, also an Italian academic who moved to Liverpool around 5 years ago I was visiting her for the first time, I remember observing the furniture and décor of the house when my gaze fell into a LED Light Box Cinematic Message Board with the writing: all you need is love.*

Her friend did not grow up in Liverpool, nor was she aware if she was a Beatles fan—but there was inspiration.

Our collective accounts suggest some Beatles encounters in Liverpool are serendipitous: despite the existence of dedicated touristic routes or the multiplicity of undetermined path which reveal experiences/encounters with the band. This is the result of performative acts, or gestures of affect that reinforce Beatles fanscapes in Liverpool, adding complexity to personal narratives determined and undetermined in spaces full of latencies and propensities—that are ultimately emergent landscapes (as fanscape) of possibility, nostalgia, meaning and heritage. Beatles' heritage should be regarded not for its tangible manifestation in buildings on Matthew Street or in statues near Pier Head but rather, through spontaneous intangible encounters based on personal, or intimate, attitudes of people towards the band's heritage.

Different perspectives and perceptions among the authors raises questions concerning the apparent Disneyification of the Beatles as part of the landscape/fanscape narrative in Liverpool. Moreover, this goes beyond any discussion of original or copied replicas. The production of fanscapes are different across Liverpool, especially in the city center and suburban areas. As reflected on earlier, Beatles narratives are found outside touristic routes. In suburban Liverpool, Beatles encounters are already been identified, but arguably there is also a domestic level that MacCannell would refer to as the 'back region'; furthermore, Tolia-Kelly observes that the domestic realm participates in cultural identification. Visual and material culture (such as the LED light box) contribute to situate/unite members of an imagined community without geographical boundaries (as these transcend the city of Liverpool) into a shared structure of feelings and affect. This ultimately contributes to the performative authentication of Liverpool's popular fanscapes—as Beatles tributes.

Conclusion

While we acknowledged work has focused on the Beatles and Liverpool, this paper offers new insight from experiences and self-reflections of three academics who share a similar journey to Liverpool, now living in close proximity near different Beatles attractions that surround our residential area. We all moved to the city at different stages, and with us all being Beatles fans, this allows us to critically (and holistically) evaluate spaces and places that represent the band. Co-constructed ethnographies allow us to reinforce experiences and meanings to help us confirm and validate social and cultural understandings. This paper linked at number of conceptual understandings to evaluate popular culture, fandom and tourism by exploring interpretations of authenticity or tangible and intangible heritage. The notion of fanscapes gives presence to the very spaces and places where people can experience the Beatles—directly or accidentally. Nonetheless, experiences are encompassed in Liverpool's urban imaginary, thus helping reinforce Liverpool's destination identity centered on the popular 1960s band.

Future work will look to assess further meanings associated with representation and authenticity among tourists to Liverpool so that we can continue to assess how we interpret and challenge notions of authenticity, fanscapes, and popular urban imaginaries. Such work is important for destination managers, planners, and private stakeholders who continually seek ways to commoditize and present the Beatles to visitors from around the world. While the work only reflects on three experiences, the academic interpretation of the tourist gaze offers critical insight and consideration for destination managers, tourism planners and vested stakeholders because the work evaluates meanings and such insight on authenticity has practical value. As discussed, authenticity is been an important theme in heritage and/or tourism studies, and is important in fanscapes. There have been various contested views towards authenticity. For example, if the perspective of objectivist/realist towards authenticity is employed, both intangible and tangible heritage can be authentic in its own right. Thus,

there is no room for tourists to judge whether the Beatles heritage is authentic or not. On the contrary, if the standpoint of constructivist is adopted, authenticity of associated fanscapes are socially 'constructed' by each tourist—following their own understanding of 'real'. Hence, there is room for tourists/fans to decide if the Beatles heritage is authentic or not through their own personal engagement with such heritage.

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