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Role of Media in Communicating the Visual Aura and Emotions to Impart Image to the Place: A Case of Chandni Chowk, Delhi, India

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Abstract: Memories contribute to creating an image of a place. We remember the scenes in reference to their context and the transpired events associated with them. In a large country like India, where every zone is unique and the uniqueness transmutes every hundred kilometres, it is essential that this distinctiveness imparting identity and image to the place is cherished and enhanced. Media, be it associated with literature, paintings, photography, cinema and modern digital media has played a significant role in conveying and promoting the character of a place. This paper focuses on the role of media which communicates, perceives, articulates and fosters the persona of a place. The Street as a quintessential socio-cultural democratic public place is discussed. Chandni Chowk, Delhi, a Bazaar Street is considered as a case to validate the statement since it is associated with multiple distinctive tangible and intangible aspects of past, present and future crafting memories and conveying an identity to the place. Different mediums of communications are analysed which inferred that the Media is an effective tool to communicate the information of the place that can be accessed globally and conveys visual aura and emotions, thus imparting an exclusive and unique image to the place.

Index Terms - Memories, Media, Bazaar Streets, Chandni Chowk, Visual Aura and Emotions, Image

INTRODUCTION

Memories can be conceptualized as an amalgamation of ideas, remembrance and images of how one perceives and experiences a place. It is a process of recalling facts and experiences that assist in creating a sense of place and so image formation. A medium is required to cherish the memories be it visual, physical or emotional as they cannot be created in isolation but need a context. Places are collections of multiple layers of attributes that have witnessed their transformation and are safeguarded through some medium.

Places are spaces of social encounters and opportunities reflecting through their tangible elements which support the intangible aspects Such as culture, tradition, and aspirations of the people. Place and identity are intricately bonded to one another. As quoted by Winston Churchill, "People identify themselves with where they live and shape the environment accordingly, and are in turn shaped by their environment". In psychological term, place identity refers to "the symbolic importance of place as a repository for emotions and relationships that gives meaning and purpose to life, reflects a sense of belonging and important to a person's well-being", Proshansky (1995).

STREET- CRAFTING IMAGE OF A PLACE

The major component that binds the elements of a place is its ever expanding, complex and the web-like nature of the Street. "More than any other element of the urban infrastructure, streets both record and determine the history of city form." (Mehta, 2013) . This phrase truly captures the importance of the street, as it never dies. It is evolved and transformed in accordance with the need of the user giving meaning to the space, which can be accessed, utilized, and experienced by all. It creates unnoticeable and subtle memories and opportunities for the user to flourish and therefore the place to mature and craft a distinct character. "The street is a shorthand for the urban world." (Moudon, 1987). It is not just a noun anymore, but an adjective too. It describes an activity, a thing or even mannerisms and majorly in urban setup they are synonymous with the unruly aspects of urban scenes, activities, markets, eateries, displaying graffiti, art, literature, music, and culture. The street being the biggest public realm welcomes everybody. (Moudon, 1987) (Mehta, 2013) . It is a democratic lively place captured prominently in various forms of media representing its distinct characteristic and function such as:

- Physical character: A more or less narrow linear space limited by buildings and used for circulation. (Rapoport, 1987) .

- Social Public lively space: It is where strangers encounter one another, interact, and make the place dynamic. They are places; not just connections and way of movement.
- Political Democratic place: The streets are a subtle political statement. The elaborate political processions take place in the busiest part of the place i.e. the street. Being a democratic space, it is quintessential place for political encounter.
- Economic facet: Streets have always been a hub of business ranging from showrooms, local shops to vendors creating opportunities for all.
- Celebration value: The streets are not only the thoroughfare but places that symbolizes the cultural value of the place. It is a place of celebration performed through activities and events.

The streets can be classified depending on the opportunity they offer, and the activities performed on and along the edges. A Market street is one of the most prominent, dynamic and ideal space because of the charisma and allure evolved over the time. The vibrant features of these market streets assist towards the uniqueness and so needs to be captured to represent the unique image of the place.

The market street is one of the most democratic spaces in a city used by all, hence making them one of the most social and interactive spaces in a chaotic city. People depend on streets for functional, social, economical and leisure activities. Being a major part of the urban atmosphere it has developed its own genre. A representation of the city; it truly reflects the character through physical, social, cultural, economical and political status of the place. A stroll through the streets creates an image and a judgement of the place. They offer an experience, not just through buildings but more because of the encounters faced. (Jacobs, 1992). These streets empower to glorify the ordinary and the everyday routines, behaviour and the mannerisms of the mundane. (Hall, 2012). The tangible and the intangible elements creates a wholesome experience and image of the place that expressed the aura of the place and creates an impact on the memory which provides a reference and so an image of the place.

MEMORY AND IDENTITY IMPARTING IMAGE

Multiple memories tend to create an identity and image by which the place is referred. The streets are places of maximum encounters exhibiting tangible and intangible elements creating lasting memories. These memories are remembered not in isolation but with context. The built form is what gives these memories a structure through which they can be remembered. (Somekh Nadia, 2000)

This forms an identity creating a sense of belonging and eventually sense of responsibility. Memory and history are two distinct concepts, memory is unique, subjective, and personal, based on individualistic ideas but enhanced by physical evidence whereas history is the documentation of event that have happened in the past, it is factual and universal. In the book 'Invisible Cities' author Italo Calvino explores imagination through the description of the cities by an explorer Marco Polo, and this creates an impression or image about the imaginary cities.

MEDIA AS A TOOL TO COMMUNICATE IMAGE

Media is an effective communication tool to deliver information about a place. In today's modern and techno-savvy world it plays a major role in imparting image to a place. It does this either by directly being read, heard or watched, or indirectly through the narration given by friends, relatives and other sources." (Hall, 2002, pp. 458-459). Perceptions of places are influenced by the ways in which they are represented by the media (Boisen et al., 2011). Media is represented through graphics, art, architecture, photographs, literature, cinema and many more mediums that convert spaces into places communicating visual aura and emotions of the place The paper highlights on the role of media in enhancing and communicating the image of a place. Bazaar street; Chandni Chowk, Delhi is considered as a case whose image has been glorified through various mediums since ages.

People have a very strong and personal connection to the street. They identify themselves with the place they belong to, hence, it is subtly embedded in the upbringing to personalize and metaphorically own the place, making it the identity. Various references from past and present are exhibited that define the role of media in communicating the essence of the place. Indian political activist and poet Sarojini Naidu (1912) in her poem describes the picturesque scenery of the bustling market streets. She dedicated the verses to the colourful atmosphere of the market, the warm relationship of the vendors with their customers, touches upon the activation of all our five senses and also how the streets assist to promote and encourage traditional Indian culture. 'Meghdoot' by Kalidas an Indian Poet is known for nature and love poetry depicting the astonishing beauty of North India. In Indian movies streets are captured to reflect the spirit and conveys the contextual background and the essence of the place. Photographers have also captured the essence of the place through their lenses. Image of every place is elaborated and conveyed to the modern world through 'world wide web', where every individual can record and document their own perception about the place. These are just a few examples where media has contributed to express connection between people and street propagating it as a quintessential socio-cultural-economic aspect and so endorsing the aura.

Chandani Chawk, Delhi a significant bazaar street with heritage significance is considered as a case where media represents an important role to communicate the spirit of the place.

“There seems to be a public image of any given city which is the overlap of many individual images. Each individual picture is unique with some content that is rarely or never communicated, yet it approximates the public image, which, in different environments, is more or less compelling, more or less embracing.” (Lynch, 1960)

Chandni Chowk is a Mughal era addition in the walled city of Shahjahanabad in the 17th Century which has survived every era and evolved accordingly. It has been one of the most valued pieces of Delhi's history, which had numerous narratives which defined & re-defined its spirit. It is one of the most iconic parts of the city, with the Fatehpuri Masjid at one end and the Red Fort at the other with a 350-year-old bustling bazaar which is alive even today. It had a large chowk with a pool at the center which lay shimmering on a moonlit night and so the name, 'Square with Stars - Chandni Chowk. It is immensely popular not only amongst the citizens of the city but also local and international visitors who come to experience the city spirit.

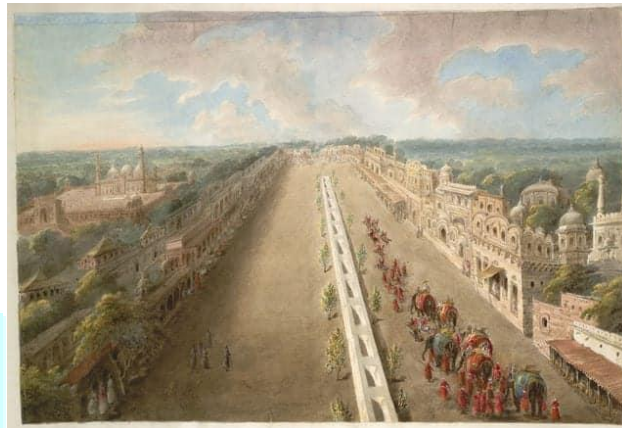


Figure 1: Chandni Chowk from the top of the Red fort, by Sita Ram, 1814-15

Chandni Chowk has a very rich cultural and historical heritage. It was designed and established by Princess Jahanara Begum, Shah Jahan's daughter, in 1650 CE in the old city of Shahjahanabad. The market was beautifully designed with water bodies that would have the moon and the stars reflect in them, hence the name, translating to moonlight square. To the north of the square was a sarai - staying facility and south a hammam- a public bath. After the Revolt of 1857, the chowk was demolished by the British and a town hall with a clock tower was built.

This bazaar is an extremely successful example of a mixed-used space where the market and the residential coexist. The market gives the residents a reason to socialize and communicate and also true the other way round, where because the residents socialize the markets have become successful with a strong cultural influence evident even today.

The plethora of literature and art representing the media of that time illustrate the lives, character and grandeur of the place.

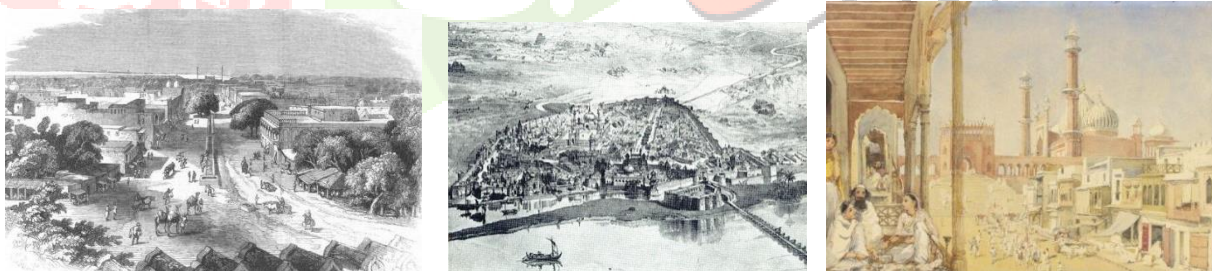


Figure 2: Representation of Chandni Chowk in ancient Media

Since the atmosphere is so vibrant and lively, it has become an inspiration to many artists who have expressed it in numerous media for ages.

ROLE OF DIFFERENT MEDIA TO COMMUNICATE THE VISUAL AURA AND EMOTIONAL OF CHANDNI CHOWK

According to the literature study, initially, the role of media was majorly for entertainment which gradually transformed to conveying information. Today the media contributes to sharing the socio-cultural responsibility and also imparting an image to the place. J.H. van den Berg (Pallasmaa 2005: 115) has remarked that poets, novelists, photographers, film directors and painters are born phenomenologists, who use media to analyze and convey the meaning of the place. Various mediums discussed, showcase its contribution in communicating the aura of Chandni Chowk.

1. LITERATURE

Malcom (2018) states that literature frames real and imaginary pictures and experiences of the places and how literature assists the way we remember a place that conveys and shapes the image of the city.

Mirza Ghalib (1797-1859) a prominent Urdu poet who lived in Old Delhi wrote exceptional 'Shayaris' poems based on the beloved City-Delhi. He was a symbol of Delhi's cultural heritage where his 'Shayaris' recreated the scenes of the city's market street witnessed from the window. His poems became the biggest inspiration to many other poets after him. His *haveli* in the centre of the market was a place where he wrote his poetry and recited them in front of audiences, dwellers, shoppers and sellers. It is said, his ghazals used to echo in the streets of the bazaar and created an ambience of love and romance. Ghalib is one of those personalities who should be credited in capturing the essence of the old bazaar and its vibe. It is because of his writings, form of poetry, ghazals and shayaris which have been a peephole to history.

City of Dijn's (Dalrymple, 1994) is a travelogue that describes Chandni Chowk in a completely new light involving the personal experiences of the traveller. It digs the history of the place through the people and their life. His memories soon became the image of the place that brings forth minute details of the history unknown to the people.

2. PAINTINGS

The places in paintings have helped in exploring and reimagining the complexities within the places and between the places. They convey the social, cultural and physical character of a place with reference to the timeline and contribute in imparting an image to the place.

A hilarious example of painting influencing the image of the place dates back to late 18th century, when an artist Jacques Chereau (1688-1776) of Paris who had never visited the Delhi, created an illusion of Chandani Chowk that looked like the European cities with the Red Fort and the broad street in front of it. Neither does the Red fort look like the way depicted in the painting nor does the attire of the women. The image is presumably from hearsay that has produced the illusion of the European city.



Figure 3: View of Chandni Chowk, by Jacques Chereau 18th century

Miniature paintings for example capture the minutest character of the place reflecting the tangible and intangible environment relevant to the particular period. The painting below depicts the procession of the last Emperor of Mughal Bahadur Shah II on Chandni Chowk in 1843.

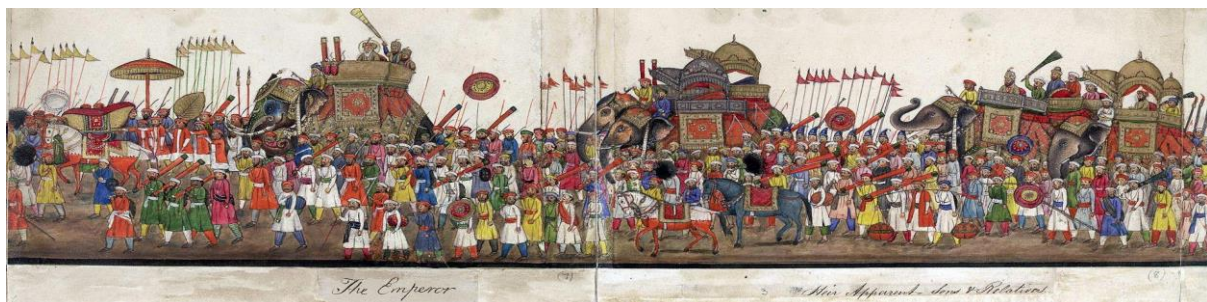


Figure 4: The procession of the last Emperor of Mughal Bahadur Shah II on Chandni Chowk in 1843

3. CINEMA

Cinema and places are historically related. The background of a particular place with its distinctiveness gives a rich and dynamic cinematic setting recites both reel and real quality of spaces that creates an image of the place for the viewer. It articulates and narrates both the tangible and intangible aspects of the place. Kracauer (1997) claims the city and especially the streets are ideal and essential cinematic spaces that showcase the image of the place.

The 1954 film *Chandani Chowk* a classic Muslim social drama directed by B. R. Chopra, is a social drama set in the 1920s. This movie was successful in creating the image of the rich atmosphere of the place. The attire, the language and most importantly the architecture of the havelis and street bazaars became an image for a long time. In 2001 the movie *Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gham* directed by Karan Johar portraying the ideal life of a middle class family makes people visualize the reel place as a real place. These examples illustrate that the Indian cinema and film are interlinked.

The historic past of Chandni Chowk has always fascinated the film producers with its maze of lanes, the chaotic bazaar street, mixed culture, havelies and the people, that captures the true essence of the Indian culture and tradition. Today the place is transformed

and evolved physically but the spirit of the place remains unchanged which the media promotes and compels people to visualize it in a certain way.

4. PHOTOGRAPHY

Norberg-Schultz (1996) states, if the purpose of architecture is to make a space become a place, to uncover the potential, then photography can capture the essence of a place at a certain moment; contributing to the human need for an existential foothold. Lenses have always been the best media to explore and experience the multi layered fabric of Chandni Chowk, a place weaved with threads of commerce, heritage, history, culture, and built / unbuilt heritage across centuries from Mughals, British and contemporary. The photographers prefer the place as it captures the glorious history and chaotic existence of the place and people.



Figure 5: Lenses capturing the essence of Chandni Chowk

5. DIGITAL MEDIA

Digital media is the most popular and convenient platform to share information that is easily accessible to everyone over the globe. This has made a dramatic impact on the way we experience and imagine a place. It includes digital images, web pages, social media, digital audio and video, electronic documents and electronic books which are in contrast to print media. The impact of the content generated by the people is growing rapidly and so increasing the success of image building of a place (Camprubi, R.; Guia, J.; Comas, J. The new role of tourists in destination image formation. *Curr. Issues Tour.* 2013, 16, 203–209. The new generation of millennials and Gen-Z are using ‘Hashtags’ at their full potential, which are capable of creating a huge impact on ever-evolving cultures. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are fast, youthful and have the energy to bring about almost any kind of change. It is the need of the hour to take advantage of such powerful tools to remind, evoke feelings of nostalgia to promote the image of the place.

Chandni chowk is one of those places which has extreme potential to be picturesque and photogenic, which becomes extremely essential when it comes to promoting through social media, because its user interface, photographs catch the most attention. Social Media becomes an important tool to establish cities or places as tastemakers. There are numerous blogs, hashtags and posts which highlight food, fashion, shopping and photogenic spots in Chandni Chowk. Instagramers and bloggers narrate stories through their posts, videos and articles which are almost instantly consumed by thousands of viewers either just scrolling through their feed or actively looking for something specific.

For example, the most content on Chandni Chowk today is based on “Wedding Shopping” because of its diverse footfall, availability for all and unique experience. This market was set up right from the era of Shahjahanabad, and is still popular today not just because of the spread of word of trust from older generations, but also because of contemporary digital media which displays the content promptly, is entertaining, relatable and eye-catching to grab the attention of the viewer. A quick video or a beautifully clicked photograph uploaded on digital sites is enough for an image to be created in the mind of the spectator which has the power to encourage them to visit Chandni Chowk to observe and experience the place that is important for its image building.

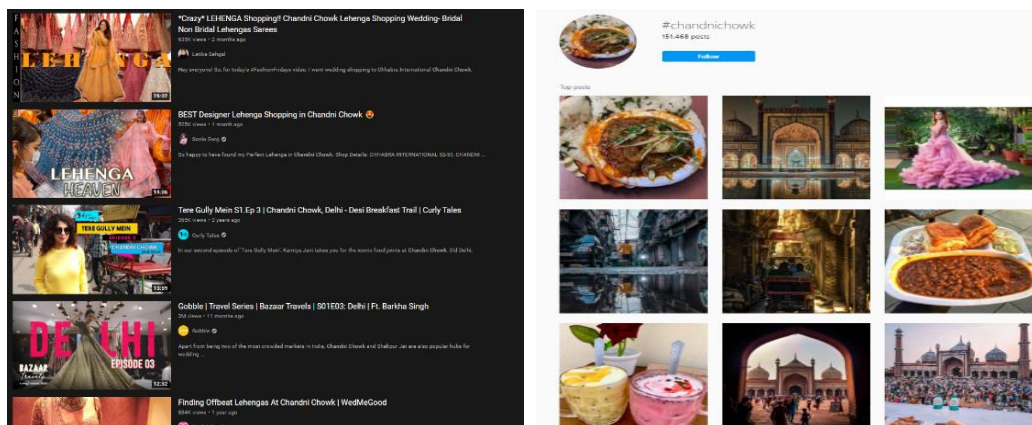


Figure 6: Digital Media – New avenues that influence the Image of a Place

Since the establishment of Shahjahanabad, painting, poetries, and written memoirs have acted as a catalyst to evoke emotion of the public with an intention of describing their adventures. However, in addition to sharing their escapades, these documents have created a bank of sentiments creating an image of the place. Chandni Chowk was always perceived as a happening, busy, diverse and a prosperous market for opportunities for all.

In time, this image declined because of numerous reasons from change in political power to change in demographics but, to an outsider Chandni chowk still remains one top on the “Things to-do in Delhi” list.

CONCLUSION

The wide use of digital media has facilitated new avenues that influence the image of a place. It functions as a catalyst between the people and the place which has a dynamic and complex relationship with each other. As stated by De Lange and De Waal (2013), with the rise of social media, new ways of influencing local place identity production have become available. This media has given local stakeholders new possibilities for organizing and sharing their own agendas regarding place image which easily and quickly gets scaled up.

Places have a collection of memories that evolve with time and give the place a character and an aura which are built on personal observation and experience, when these are portrayed through a media, it assists to impart image to the place. With the rise of social media, place-making has new opportunities to redefine places and influence the viewers to look at them with a different perspective. Social media has given power to a single citizen to change the outlook and in-turn change the image created in the viewer’s mind. With communication done via uploading content on digital platforms so easily and almost instantaneous, it is important to create multiple picturesque locations to represent the place and build its image. Global trends and perspectives also play a major role in influencing the minds regarding a place. Travelers’ views and ratings are extremely impactful to communicate the visual aura and emotions of the place that contribute towards crowd pulling creating, memories, and so making the place successful and sustainable socio-culturally and economically in true sense.

Media is an effective tool to communicate the information of the place that can be accessed globally and conveys visual aura and emotions, thus imparting an exclusive and unique image to the place.

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