CultureCase

Using street art for sustainable urban tourism

This research was conducted by **Montserrat Crespi-Vallbona** and **Oscar Mascarilla-Miró** at the **Universitat de Barcelona, Spain**

Summary

This paper looked at how ‘mature tourist destinations’ sustainably attract new and returning visitors who are increasingly seeking novel, active and affective experiences. They studied the ‘Open Air Street Gallery’ in Barcelona – an example of an urban renewal project involving the local community in its formation and governance. The research is based on a set of interviews with the project’s managers, tour guides and visitors. They found that the "gallery" was able ‘to reduce congestion in the crowded centre of Barcelona and redirect tourist traffic towards other neighbourhoods’, that its attributes of ‘participation, hedonism, knowledge, nostalgia, local identity and tasting’ fit the bill for a contemporary tourist experience, and that it benefited from the ‘collaboration and mutual understanding of the public administration, private organisations and the general public’.

Tourism managers are increasingly sophisticated in their understanding and deployment of local assets

Tourism has exploded thanks to increasing wealth and affordability of travel for unprecedented numbers of people. Mitigating the effects of tourism on local populations has become increasingly important. Coinciding with this growth in tourism is a corresponding trend in the popularity and importance of street art. This is somewhat fuelled by the rise of social media and its role in sharing visually rich experiences. It also comes at a time when attitudes to art are becoming less traditional.

The so-called gallery comprises a set of 24 street murals in a shopping area outside the centre of Barcelona

Barcelona has been a pioneer in the "bottom-up" city policies exemplified by the Open Air Street Gallery. Because the governance of the area is led by local businesses and residents, the goals of the gallery are 'to revive the area and attract people to the shops, a goal underpinned by the belief that the more embellished the streets, the more people will visit the neighbourhood'.

Keywords

cities **street art** **tourism** **spain** **interview**

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