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A critical examination of cultural heritage aspects of tourism place branding, with a focus on Tula, México

by

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Abstract

One of the main growth segments in tourism is the creation and promotion of cultural and heritage communities intended to enhance the tourism experience. Branding is a strategy commonly used to market cultural heritage sites. A literature review of theory and examples shows that place branding and destination branding are often confused. Furthermore, within destination branding, individual and umbrella brands are often conflated. This thesis will unpack these concepts then go on to review claims that destination branding can achieve economic and social regeneration. The main focus of my research is a case study of the never before researched town of Tula, Tamaulipas in the context of the *Pueblos Mágicos*, or Magical Towns, place branding program in Mexico. It is argued that claims of economic and social regeneration are justified only when communities are empowered to participate directly in the project. Using an anthropological and ethnographic perspective and qualitative field work I find that the magical towns programme has had beneficial effects, reviving many aspects of the local culture including folklore, music, dance, religious festivals and cuisine. There have been some economic benefits and local people feel that the authenticity of their culture has not been seriously compromised. However, many local people feel that the program lacks leadership and has done little to build social capital or improve public services in the town. These findings align with case studies in other Magical Towns and my research concludes with a series of recommendations for improvements in the operations of the Magical Towns programme.

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Glossary of Spanish terms and abbreviations

Alarde	An annual religious festival in Fuenterrabia, Spain
Barrios	An area/district of a town
Callejoneada	A festival on the streets of Tula

Casa de la Cultura	House of Culture
Cerros	Hills
Chichimecas region	An ancient nomadic people of the Tamaulipas
COEPRIS	State Commission of Sanitary Risk Protection
CIES	Interdepartmental Committee for Evaluation
Creatividad e Innovación Turística	Creativity and Touristic Innovation
Cultura Turística	Touristic Culture
Desarrollo de Productos Turísticos	Development of Tourism products
Diezmo	Tithe *(a contribution of 10% of income for the church)
Ejidos	Rural lands
Entrada de cera' celebrate the	Wax entry (part of the annual procession to saint's day of St Antonio de Padua
Escudo de Tula	Logo/emblem of Tula
Feria Nacional Pueblos Mágicos	National Fair of Magical Towns
Fiestas	Festivals and celebrations
Formación de Agentes de Cambio	Training of Change Agents
Gestion de Destinos Turísticos	Management of tourist destinations
Gobierno de la Republica	Government of the Republic (of Mexico)
Grecas decorate *La Cuera*	Illustrations of local wild flowers used to
Gruta	Grotto
Haciendas house	Rural estates usually centred around a large
Hecho en Tamaulipas	Made in Tamaulipas
Historias vivientes	Living history
Huastecos	An ancient civilization from the Tula region
La Cuera	Traditional dress of the town of Tula
La cuna de la Cuera Tamaulipeca	The place where the traditional dress of the State was created (Traditional slogan)
Mestizos descent	People of mixed European and indigenous

MORENA Movimiento de Regeneracion Nacional	National Movement of Regeneration
Plan de desarrollo Estatal y Municipal	Development Plan of the State and Municipality
Plan Nacional de Desarrollo	National Development Plan 2013-2018
Plan Sectorial de Turismo	Sectorial Plan of Tourism 2013-2018
Por que somos un pueblo Mágico workshop)	Why are we a Magical Town (title of a training
Programa de desarrollo Turístico municipal	Municipality tourism development programme
Programa de Reordenamiento del programme *semifijo y/o ambulante*	Reordering of commerce in busy public spaces
Reglamento de la Imagen Urbana	Guideline of urban image
Peón	Agricultural labourer
Primer cuadro	The main square or tourist centre
Pueblos Mágicos	Magical Towns
Rutas de Mexico	Routes of Mexico (tourist itineraries)
Secretaría de Turismo (SECTUR)	Secretariat of Tourism
Turismo de Romance	Wedding-based tourism
Trecenario	A religious festival lasting 13 days
Tultecos	Residents of Tula

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Firstly, I must thank my principal supervisor Dr. Donald Macleod at the University of Glasgow who has provided support and advice throughout the duration of this project.

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Signature:

Date: February 2020

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1   Setting the Scene

This introductory chapter will present an overview of the use of cultural heritage, place branding and tourism for development around the world followed by a brief summary of the current state of the tourist industry in Mexico and its contribution to the national economy. That will be followed by an introduction to a cultural initiative '*Pueblos Mágicos'* (Magical Towns) in Mexico. From now on, the English term Magical Towns will be used in line with the approach used by others (Lopez Ramos, 2017; Alvarado-Rosas, 2015; Luyando-Cuevas,

2016; SECTUR, 2001-2019). The central part of this thesis is a case study of Tula, a town located in the north eastern state of *Tamaulipas*.

Field work research was were conducted in strategic local places, such as the '*primer cuadro*', a term used in the tourism industry in Mexico that refers to the main square or touristic area of the destination, usually downtown, traditional markets, workshops and cultural events in the town. To collect data, different methods were used including venue observation, a survey of a representative sample of residents and visitors and semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with officers from the Tourism Board of the municipality of Tula, and tourism agents from the region and host community (see Chapter 3).

It is a central claim of this thesis that tourism itself, and the study of tourism, are important because they illuminate and energise our relationships with everyday life. Tourism encourages us to engage in exchanges of culture, ideas and experiences with residents of other places. In the process tourism reminds us of one of the most vulnerable and precious aspects of modern life: the infinitely subtle relativities of defining and relating to other people. In the modern world, full of both connections and disconnections between humans, tourism matters because it creates unique insights into the lives of others and those matter (Jack and Phipps,2005:1). As a practising tourism professional, I have seen the potential in my home country, Mexico, that Jack and Phipps describe. I am convinced that tourism in general, and cultural heritage tourism, can bring people together and deepen cross cultural understanding. This research project was born out a personal desire to deepen academic and professional understanding of the conditions necessary and the processes involved in achieving that aim.

I start from the belief that tourism, culture and heritage are about people first and other issues such as economic and environmental impacts are secondary. That is also the view of Benavides- Cortes and Levi-Levi (2017) who stated that "The Magic of a Magical Town is its people". The best way to get behind academic abstractions and discover the views of those participating in and affected by tourism is a case study. That insight is, admittedly, not new and most of the limited number of research studies about the Magical Towns in Mexico have been based on fieldwork interviews with locals and visitors. However, people are unique and so are places. Any well conducted case study will identify truths which are

replicable elsewhere, but no single case study can capture all the possible wisdom of local people and visitors. Theoretically, as with any qualitative survey research, there comes a point of "saturation" where all the stakeholders' voices have been heard, all the important responses to questions have been recorded and all the emergent themes have been analysed. However, in my experience as a tourism professional engaged with the Magical towns of Mexico, that saturation level is a long way off. Furthermore, the way in which tourists and tourism service providers interact with each other and with tourism officials is changing rapidly as a result of the growth of social media. Hence the justification of a case study.

A lot has been written about the significance of cultural heritage and its concern with the creation of experiences and memories that allow us to understand the meanings of the past and the present (Graham, 2007) and that are selected for contemporary purposes, such as social, cultural, economic or political reasons. Heritage is then 'Regarded as a knowledge defined within social, political and cultural context' (Graham, 2007:249). The elements and manifestations of cultural heritage are created by a society through time and distinguish one region from another with the potential to give each region a distinctive identity (Casasola, 2011).

However, there has been concern regarding what heritage societies choose to preserve. Scholars have argued that somehow heritage has been responsible for negatively impacting on the present. Urry (2002:99) stated: 'The protection of the past conceals the destruction of the present', as in some circumstances there is a difference between authentic history and heritage. My thesis argues that even though some elements of heritage can be modified to suit different present-day circumstances, the conservation of heritage has created awareness of the importance of protecting and conserving important cultural objects. As communities' perceptions of what these may be differ from place to place, an additional case study can bring valuable additional insights.

According to Marciszewska (2006), it is recognised that cultural heritage has always been included in the development of tourism, as visitors pursue new types of experiences focused on the value of culture in a broader way. However, in recent years, there has been an evident rise in interest in the use of aspects of cultural heritage presented for consumption to satisfy tourist requirements both national and international. This coincides with the

growing demand for cultural tourism described by McKercher and Du Cros (2002), following the emergence of a broader section of society that considers it imperative to protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage assets, but also searches for tourism experiences. Today, cultural heritage is regarded by some scholars as an economic resource and a vital element for tourism strategies that promote economic development and local regeneration (Graham, 2007). It has the ability to lead to the creation of new initiatives based on the revitalisation of local traditions and development.

1.2 Tourism in Mexico: Facts and Figures

Data on tourism in Mexico comes from a range of Mexican government sources at national and state level. The national ministry of tourism (SECTUR) publishes monthly and annual statistical compendiums. Some state tourism boards also publish local statistics but the quality and accessibility of these varies widely. Mexican official material is supplemented by external sources such as the Organisation for Economic cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations world tourism organisation (UNWTO) and the CEIC database. But several issues make using the data problematic. The first issue is that there is far more data for international tourism than domestic tourism despite the fact that domestic tourism accounts for 88% of total expenditure in the sector (OECD, 2017: 18). Much of the available data aggregates both domestic and international tourism and data on domestic tourism is patchy. Some states such as Jalisco publish comprehensive figures (Jalisco, 2020). But for others, including Tamaulipas the subject of this study, there is little or nothing. This makes it difficult to assess the economic impact of primarily domestic programmes such as Magical Towns; an issue which will be addressed further in Chapter 7 on governance.

An additional problem is that some sources quote figures in US Dollars but others use Mexican Pesos. The exchange rate has been volatile for years which not only makes converting figures tricky but has also had significant effects on the flow of international travellers particularly from the key market of the USA (OECD, 2017: 41). Exchange rates between both the US Dollar and the Peso to the British Pound have Also been volatile in recent years. This makes comparability and the construction of data series problematic.

Overall, tourism is a significant contributor to the Mexican economy and to sociocultural and economic development. According to the most recent published figures from the

Secretaría de Turismo (SECTUR) in 2018 Mexico was the seventh most popular tourist destination in the world attracting 41.3 million inbound visitors. The number of international visitors rose slowly from 2010 to 2013 broadly in line with global trends but growth has accelerated since 2013 partly due to favourable exchange rate movements (OECD, 2017: 40; Figure 1)
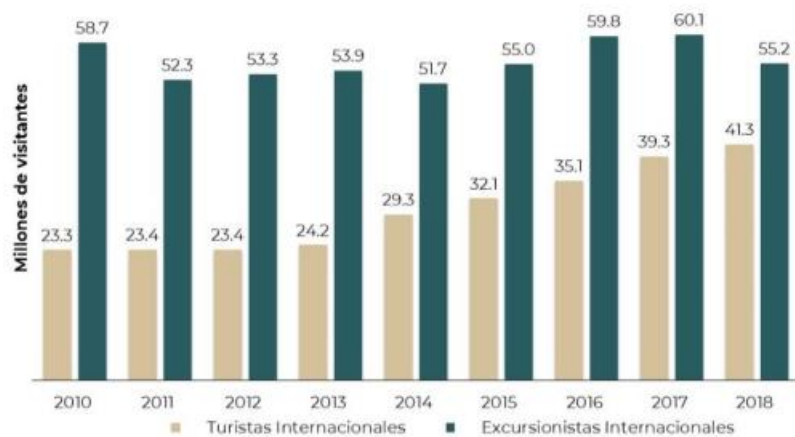
Figure 1: International tourist numbers in Mexico 2010-2018 (SECTUR, 2019: 7)

Inbound international tourists spent $20,082 million in 2018 (SECTUR, 2019: 5, 7) but this ranked only 16th in terms of tourist income suggesting that Mexico attracts mainly low budget tourists. However, receipts did rise by 44% in real terms between 2005 and 2015 (OECD, 2017: 41).

The United States remains by far the most important source country (Figure 2) for geographical and historical reasons which will be explored in Chapter 8.
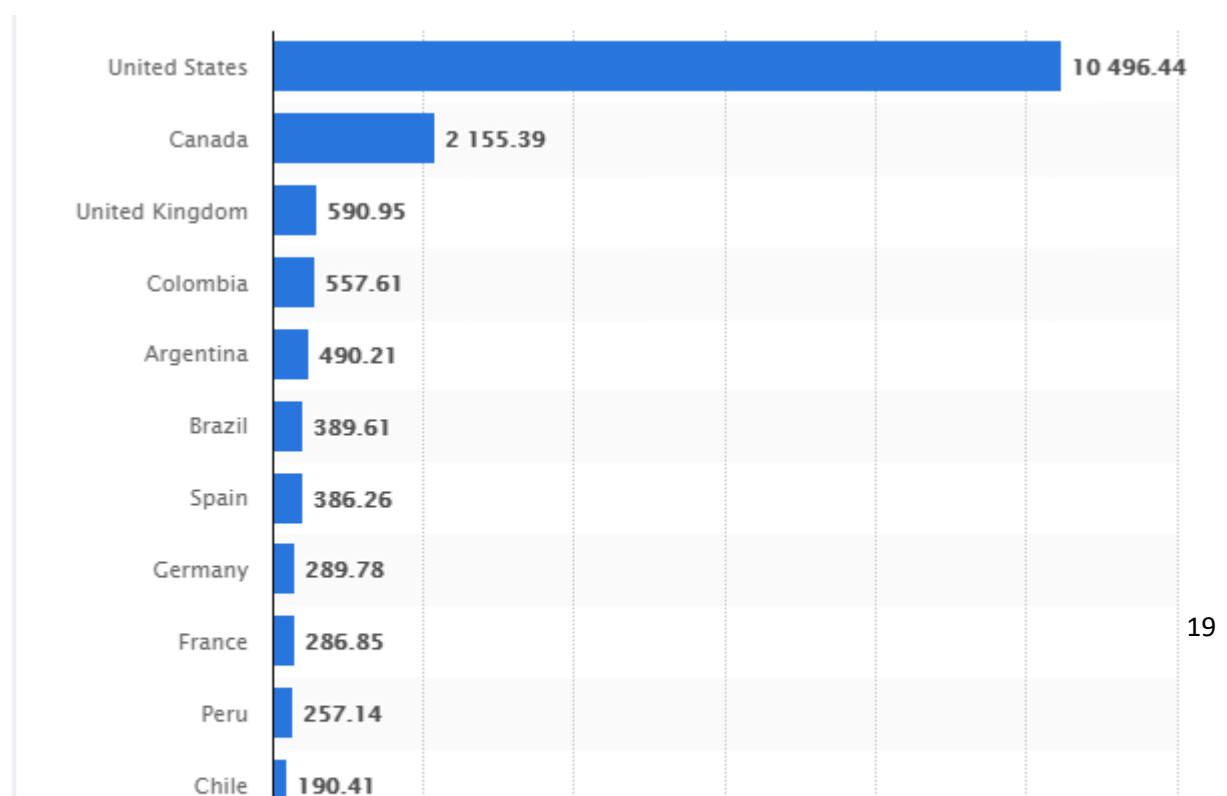
Mexican tourism is not one-way traffic. The country is now an emerging market with an expanding middle class and the number of outbound tourists has also increased in recent years. The latest available figure was 19.067 million in 2017. (OECD, 2017) which is still less than half of the numbers inbound. More than half of outbound trips were to the United States and only 3.2% outside the Americas (Figure 3). While there are no available figures for outbound expenditure, it can be safely assumed that tourism makes a highly positive contribution to Mexico's balance of payments. In fact, it accounted for 5.136% of Mexico's total exports in 2017 (CEIC, 2020).
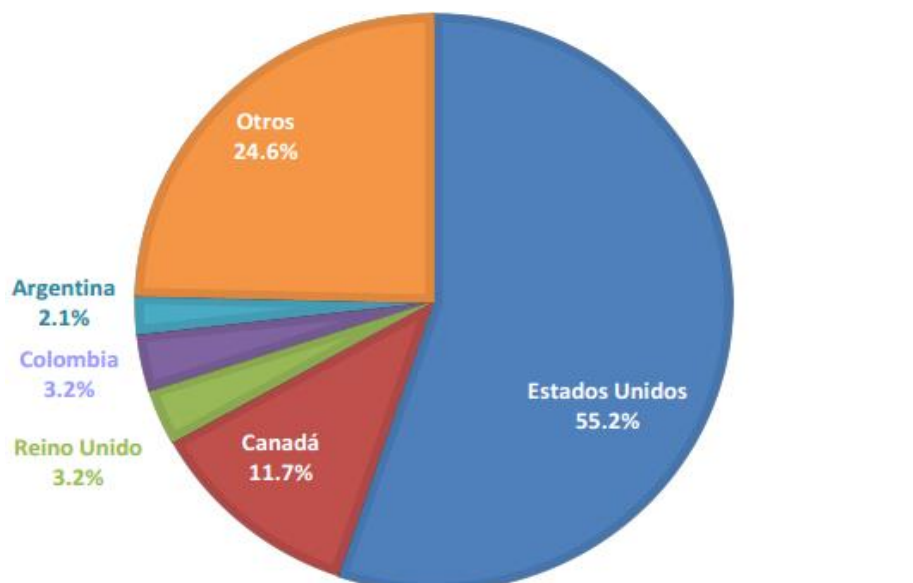
Figure 3: Destinations of outbound tourists from Mexico, 2019 (SECTUR, 2019: 13)

Tourism accounts for a significant chunk of Mexico's economy. In 2018 it accounted for 8.8% of the GDP of Mexico (SECTUR, 2019, p.6). According to Trading Economics (2020) using data from Banco de Mexico, there has been a steady increase in recent years but also a strong and consistent pattern of seasonality (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Tourism Revenues in Mexico, 2016-2019 in USD (Trading Economics, 2020)

There are also very large variations between different states of Mexico with international tourism in particular heavily concentrated in Cancun and four other coastal states (Figure 5). These receive cruise ships and are destinations for beach holidays (OECD, 2017: 46; Subsecretaría de Planeación y Política Turística, 2018: 21).
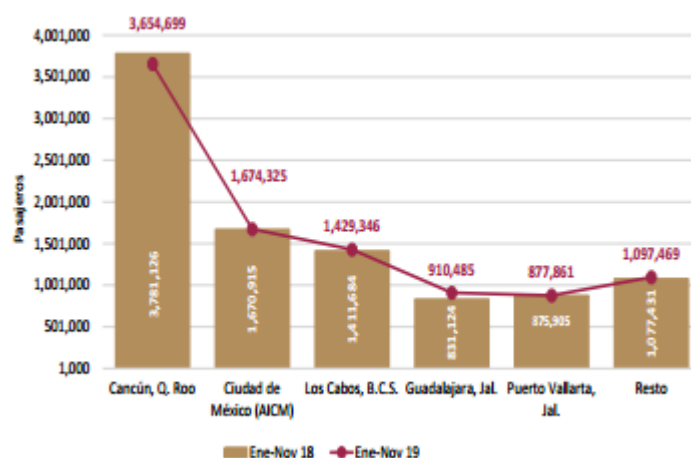
*Figure 5: States visited by inbound American tourists, 2018 (*Subsecretaría de Planeación y Política Turística,2019: *14)*

This makes domestic tourism, which reaches parts of the country that international visitors do not, particularly important for overall economic and social development (OECD, 2017, p.45). The Mexican government is well aware of this fact and its role in creating the Magical Towns programme will be explored in Chapter 7.

Statistics for the impact of tourism on Mexican economy and society are patchy. But as in all countries, the tourism sector is labour intensive and employment is the first area to consider. But figures for tourism employment in Mexico are inconsistent. In 2016 SECTUR claimed that 9 million Mexicans lived directly and indirectly from Tourism of whom 5.5 million derived their livelihood from the Magical Towns initiative (SECTUR, 2016). But 2018 figures from Subsecretaría de Planeación y Política Turística (2018: 25) state that the sector employed an average of 4,063,300 people in 2018, a 3.6% increase on the year before. The difference is probably the result of many people working part time in tourism alongside other activities often in the informal sector. The OECD (2017: 40)) reported that 54% of accommodation and food service businesses supplying tourists operate in the informal sector. There is also a strong element of insecure, seasonal employment so that figures vary depending on the time of year when surveys are carried out. There is no data to show how much of the total tourism employment is generated by domestic as opposed to international tourism. Tourism generally has a reputation for providing low paid, unskilled jobs but in Mexico there is no reliable data to show average earnings compared with other sectors because such a high proportion of tourist employment is in the informal sector and income goes unreported and untaxed. As will be shown in chapters 8 and 9 this makes quantifying the benefits of the Magical Towns programme in Tula problematical and necessitates a mainly qualitative approach in this thesis.

As mentioned above, much of the available data aggregates international and domestic tourism which makes it difficult to assess the economic impact of primarily domestic programmes such as Magical towns. But there are some, albeit dated and patchy, figures which give clues as to the extent and nature of domestic tourism. According to data from the Mexican National Household Tourism Spending Survey 59% of households took at least one trip during 2013, (the latest figures available) but only 39.4% of these stayed in a hotel and only for an average of 1.77 nights; much shorter than the average for international visitors. The rest stayed with family and friends (OECD, 2017: 46). The impact of the Magical Towns programme on local hotels will, therefore, need to be explored further in Chapters 8-10. Meanwhile, nationally, hotel occupancy was still only 60.4% in November

2019 suggesting that there is further scope for expansion in the tourist industry (SECTUR, 2019: 27).

However, hotels are not the only significant beneficiaries of domestic tourism spending. Figure 6 gives a more breakdown of where that expenditure is going.

	2016		
	Domestic tourism expenditure	Inbound tourism expenditure	Internal tourism consumption
Total	..	..	..
Consumption products	2 156 993 p	462 813 p	2 619 806 p
Tourism characteristic products	1 951 601 p	461 562 p	2 413 163 p
Accommodation services for visitors	469 495 p	124 209 p	593 705 p
Food and beverage serving services	423 299 p	114 856 p	538 155 p
Passenger transport services	617 359 p	79 890 p	697 249 p
Air passenger transport services	..	..	..
Railways passenger transport services	..	..	..
Road passenger transport services	..	..	..
Water passenger transport services	..	..	..
Passenger transport supporting services	..	..	..
Transport equipment rental services	..	..	..
Travel agencies and other reservation services industry	25 904 p	780 p	26 684 p
Cultural services	9 749 p	16 074 p	25 822 p
Sports and recreation services	13 262 p	31 469 p	44 732 p
Country-specific tourism characteristic goods	392 534 p	94 283 p	486 816 p
Country-specific tourism characteristic services	..	..	..
Other consumption products	205 392 p	1 251 p	206 643 p
Tourism connected products	..	..	..
Non-tourism related consumption products	..	..	..

Figure 6: Mexico, domestic tourism expenditure by sector 2016 in Pesos (OECD, 2018)

Figure 6 supports data from SECTUR (2019: 6) which shows that 89.4% of tourist expenditure goes to the service sector. That suggests that there could be scope to expand production of souvenirs and other consumption products. This topic and its implications for cultural heritage and authenticity will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

In recent years Mexico has sought to diversity its tourism offer beyond the traditional beach holidays towards gastronomic tourism and cultural heritage tourism. Figures for the effectiveness of this shift are still patchy. However, we do know that museums and archaeological sites received 25.1 million visitors in November 2019 of whom 77.3% were domestic tourists but this is increasing only slowly, at 1.7% per year (SECTUR, 2019: 25).

There are no national statistics for the demography of the domestic tourist population. But some local figures do exist, particularly from the State of Jalisco. These show that the composition of visiting parties varies significantly from town to town and between domestic and international tourists. The largest group were families and on the whole this tendency was more pronounced among domestic than international tourists. Groups of friends were the next most common but again the percentages vary widely between different towns for reasons unexplained. Surprisingly few tourists (1% to 9% in different towns) arrived with an organised tour company. If this is typical of the whole country then Mexican tourism policies need to focus on the needs of independent travellers rather than tour groups. For example, the absence of tour company guides will probably create a need for more mediation in the form of signs, maps and visitor centres at attractions (Jalisco, 2020, Yearbook 2018, table 2.3.2.1).

We have seen that domestic tourists tend to take shorter trips than their international counterparts and are less likely to stay in hotels but more likely to visit cultural heritage sites. But how do these facts correlate with their incomes? Again, data from Jalisco provides clues but not a complete answer. The vast majority of domestic tourists fall into the middle-income groups between 5,000 and 20,000 pesos per year but some destinations attract significantly more visitors with incomes towards the top end of the range than others. Once again, the data does not explain these variations (Jalisco, 2020, Yearbook 2018: table. 2.3.3.1). Domestic tourists derive their incomes from a wide range of occupations but with a concentration in professional and managerial jobs and in some destinations, students (Jalisco, 2020, Year book 2018: table 2.3.3.2). Unfortunately, the data does not allow any conclusions to be drawn about whether particular groups such as students are more or less likely to visit destinations which promote their cultural heritage.

The data from Jalisco is interesting but it cannot be assumed that this state is comparable with Tamaulipas because it contains the major urban attraction of Guadalajara which means

it draws a far higher proportion of international visitors than does the little known and relatively inaccessible Tamaulipas. This means that I had to collect basic demographic data for domestic tourists in Tula as part of my primary research. The findings are presented in Chapter 8.

1.3 The emergence of place branding as a development strategy for regional development

Branding is a growing phenomenon with many variants. It can be used for companies, products and services as well as places. For example, if it is used for place branding, the approach will consist of the implementation of effective initiatives to transform a place or region to enhance its assets for local development. According to Lichrou, et al (2017:173) "Place brands are social constructions intended to reinforce a sense of place to a local audience and a 'unique' offer to potential investors and tourists". In this context, place branding has become enormously popular around the world, labelling towns and cities with 'themes' has become a popular strategy for place branding. Destinations, such as 'book towns', 'art towns', 'cultural cities' or 'creative cities', are part of the initiative that leverages the appreciation of culture through a brand to attract visitors.

1.3.1   Theme towns: A global cultural trend

Themes to categorise destinations and regions are commonly employed and their effective global implementation has drawn scholars' attention. Such is the case with the worldwide expansion of book towns. According to Seaton (1996) this was an innovative concept created by Richard Booth in Hay-on-Wye which has inspired countries around the world, such as Belgium, France, The Netherlands, Norway and Finland. To illustrate this model the author used the specific case of Wigtown, a small market town in a rural area of Scotland which has been branded as a book town. It will be shown that this case has both similarities and important differences with the small-town case study used in this thesis.

The implementation of Magical Towns, and measurable progress in some of the towns, has inspired Latin American countries, such as El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Chile to use the Magical Towns model and strategies to strengthen their tourism offer (de la Rosa, 2012; Vargas and Rodríguez, 2014). This thesis will investigate the extent to which the Magical Towns model may also be replicable elsewhere in Latin America and the conditions required.

1.3.2 The Magical Towns initiative in Mexico

The Mexican brand initiative Magical Towns does not refer to magic, such as wizards or spells, but to a unique destination with authentic culture and history on offer. In a national context, the Magical Town brand is the most important cultural initiative in Mexico and was launched in 2001. It was started as a complement to the sea and sun tourism strategy (SECTUR, 2016). It has branded 121 rural communities and is claimed to have reinforced traditions, created new products and generated a different source of employment that allows an improvement in the quality of community life. This tourism strategy intends to raise awareness of the local cultural heritage of potential destinations. The symbols presented in every Magical Town are specifically used to attract visitors and they are directly linked with the character of the host community with an aim to preserve identity. The implementation of this branding initiative was strongly supported by SECTUR and exemplifies the revitalisation of culture and heritage of the host community as an asset for tourism, with the aim of leading it into a positive transformation.

1.4 Tula Magical Town: The revitalisation of culture for regional development

At the local level, Tula, a rural town in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, proved to have the criteria necessary to be selected as a Magical Town in 2011 due to its cultural and historical heritage that dates from the indigenous people in the area, the Spanish colonial period, sites of revolutionary events in the country and the significance of its trade route to Central Mexico and the southern USA. Although Tula was considered by some of the residents as a town in decline (see Chapter 10), the initiative represented an opportunity for progress where locals had the chance to highlight the elements of their culture and identity.

The most important examples were identified for tourism consumption following a proposal by the Tourism Board of Tamaulipas (2007), in which cultural heritage aspects were examined for consumption and resulted in the development of tourism products. The principle aspects were the creation and commodification of traditional dress, local cuisine based on local products and the celebration of beliefs and religions.

Achieving revitalisation of traditional local culture is significant because in developing countries in Latin America, such as Mexico, lack of protection still jeopardises significant elements of culture. Losses continue to occur through neglect. The sale of cultural heritage elements to traffickers, such as oleo paints, sacred art, religious objects or archaeological artefacts is also common, due to the absence of an accurate record of cultural items, and disregard from the authorities concerning complaints and information (INAH, 2010).

1.4.1 Producing Tula: The commodification of culture

The ability of heritage to adapt to a globalised tourism industry is reflected in the commodification of culture. A cultural tourism product represents an asset that has been transformed and commodified by tourism (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002:8). This is a controversial topic and the relevant literature will be reviewed in full in Chapter 2 and analysed in Chapter 6. The cultural aspects that have been commodified in Tula due to visitor demand are the traditional dress, religious festivities the local cuisine, and folk music and dance, but it is important to highlight that some the community agreed that they were not changing their authentic traditions: 'We are not changing our products, only innovating and maintaining the original meaning' (Appendix B, Interview 6, 2017).

1.4.2 The traditional dress (La Cuera) and it's use as a representative icon

One of the most symbolic cultural aspects in Tula is the form of traditional dress known as '*La Cuera*'. It is important to mention that before the town was branded as Magical Town it was known as '*La cuna de la Cuera Tamaulipeca*' which means 'The place where the traditional dress of the State was created'. This situation created confusion for the host community when the implementation of the brand Magical Towns began, as their identity

was related for decades to the traditional dress. However, *La Cuera* is still an icon, not only for the town, but for the region. It is also an example of commodification in which the makers have had to transform their creation into new products, such as handbags, wallets and briefcases to satisfy demand from the younger generation and tourists (see Chapter 9).

1.4.3   The degree of interest of the host community in religious festivities

The popularity of religious festivities is a significant part of the culture of Mexicans and their communities. Being a Catholic country, these celebrations are linked with the transcendental habits and lifestyle. Mexico has its own unique blend of Catholic and indigenous religious practices stemming from the cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This has long been controversial among Catholic theologians and historians of Latin America such as Mong (2018) who discusses the importance of this phenomenon and states that: "A model of inculturation, devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe symbolises the religious triumph of the indigenous people as they responded to and adopted the conquistadors' faith as their own, but with native characteristics" as Our Lady appeared with a *mestiza* face, that the indigenous people recognise as their own (Mong, 2018:79). Today, Our Lady of Guadalupe represents one of the nation's most significant elements of cultural identity.

The uniqueness of its religion and its association with colourful art, is part of the attraction of Mexico for tourists because other Catholic countries, especially Spain, promote their versions of Fiesta for tourist purposes. Tula's residents denote their strong identity in their *'Fiestas'* (a Mexican term that refers to festivities and celebrations) as a way for them to show what they represent, such as traditional music and dances. In this type of event most of the host community is involved (see Chapters 9 and 10). Since Tula became a Magical Town, these cultural events have been promoted as tourism products, that offer an experience to visitors.

1.4.4   The integration of culinary experiences through local cuisine

'Recent research shows that purchasing local food, has a significant impact on the rural economy' (Farrell and Russell, 2011:100). This conclusion about rural tourism in general has relevance for Mexico. Regional food in Mexico is distinctive and valuable for the host

community and visitors; the diversity through the regions and preservation of traditional ingredients and methods makes it unique. The 'local cuisine' concept as a product has attracted visitors and benefits the host community. But it is not only economic benefits that have resulted. The food festivals have encouraged the host community to be involved in cultural events organised by local authorities and the Tourism Board of the state.

1.5   Possibilities for community-based development

Scholars frequently associate the use of tourism with community development, in which the host community plays an important role in the sociocultural and economic development of the town, and the possibility of having community-based development depends on their integration and support. However, there are concerns regarding the attitudes of a host community as they expect fast economic results. Scheyvens (2002) believed that it was ideal for a community to have most of their members involved in tourism development and receive benefits from it straight away, but this does not always happen. However, it has been argued that the continuous promotion of cultural activities in a region is a reminder for a host community of the importance of preserving their cultural heritage and that plays a vital role in enhancing the tourism experience of visitors.

1.5.1 Sociocultural transition of a host community with a new brand

The role of the host community in supporting the brand is vital; it encourages them to value their own culture and preserve their traditions for development. In the process of transition for a host community from one identity to another, the ideal will be that the locals perceive the new brand as an opportunity for development. In Tula, community participation has created a visible change in attitudes towards the brand and tourism over the past few years and the participation of the host community in cultural activities organised by the Tourism Board has expanded alongside new initiative stemming from the community themselves in an example of bottom up leadership.

1.5.2 The post-branding impacts on the host community

The presence of visitors suggests that the tourism initiative has produced changes in the destination as there is evidence of the creation of new products and sources of employment post-branding to fulfil the visitors' necessities. It has also created awareness about cultural heritage resources among residents of Tula. This thesis argues that all the elements of culture used to brand and sell the town as a product have been beneficial for the revitalisation of culture, and along with the place branding, have improved the livelihoods of the community. Qualitative data obtained in this research shows tangible benefits in terms of enhanced infrastructure and higher incomes for craft producers as well as intangible benefits in terms of higher levels of civic pride and greater awareness of the community's own heritage. However, essential work remains to be done as there is lack of coordination between the municipality, the Tourism Board, the Magical Towns Committee and the host community. With more collaboration among the host community and effective leadership of the Magical Towns brand, along with adequate management of tourism, Tula will have more possibilities for prosperity and development.

1.6   The purpose and rationale of the research

This purpose of this research is to examine, firstly, the significance of the revitalisation of cultural heritage as a key element for local development. Secondly, to explore the role of place branding as a strategy capable of identifying cultural aspects of a destination that can be exploited in the creation of tourism products. Finally, the thesis considers whether the implementation of a place branding strategy helps or hinders sociocultural and economic development of a host community.

The originality of this research project is the analysis of a previously unresearched town, Tula in Mexico, and the implementation of the Magical Towns brand there. To my knowledge a few researchers; Alvarado-Rosas (2015), Lopez Levi et al (2017), Perez-Ramirez & Antolin-Espinoza (2016), Gutierrez-Nieto (2017) and Benavides-Cortes & Levi-Levi (2017), have considered the consequences of the implementation of the Magical Towns brand elsewhere in Mexico and compared it to similar strategies in other parts of the world. However, much of this material is available only in Spanish and one of the purposes of this research is to make it available to a wider audience in English.

The author was born and raised in Mexico which has allowed her to supplement the limited secondary literature with primary fieldwork. This has achieved a better understanding of the 'emic' perspective of the participants in this research and enabled her to obtain interviews which have been transcribed verbatim and translated by the author from Spanish to English. Quotations in the text come from this interview material. To the best of the author's knowledge this is the first post-branding analysis undertaken in Tula, Mexico and, therefore, fills a gap in knowledge.

The significance of this thesis is to identify issues and find alternatives to improve the development of a place brand for the benefit of future scholars and future projects in other host communities. In particular:

1. Identify appropriate roles for national and local leadership (Chapter 5).

2. Explain the importance of community engagement or resistance in achieving successful outcomes and identify the factors which determine the attitude of the hoist community (Chapter 5).

3. Distinguish between the applicability of global destination branding theories and relatively small-scale national programmes of place branding. In particular to shed light on whether the effectiveness of place branding as a strategy is geographically, historically or culturally path dependent (Chapter 6).

4. Establish whether there are significant differences and similarities between the Magical Towns initiative and apparently similar national place branding schemes such as those in France, Belgium, Spain and Scotland (Chapter 2, Chapter 6).

5. Place the Magical Towns initiative in the context of current debates about branding and current trends (Chapter 6).

1.7   Research questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1.   In what ways does Place Branding help or hinder the development of a small town/rural tourist destination?

2. To what extent, and under what circumstances, can the implementation of the Magical Towns place brand in Tula, Tamaulipas, Mexico be made more effective   with participation by the host communities?

3. Is revitalisation and commodification of cultural heritage as tourism products in Tula, Mexico compatible with maintaining the authenticity and integrity of local traditions and enhancing the tourism experience?

Answers to these questions based on the findings of primary research in Tula can be found in Chapter 11.

1.8   The structure of this thesis

This thesis consists of a further eleven chapters. Chapter 2 (Literature Review) provides an overview of existing academic literature within the tourism context, primarily focusing on the use of cultural heritage and significance of place branding including case studies from around the world. Existing literature on tourism in Mexico and the Magical Towns initiative is also critically reviewed as is literature on the historical and cultural heritage of Tula, the subject of the case study in this thesis.

In Chapter 3 (Research Methods), a detailed description and justification of the research methodology used in the fieldwork in Mexico is given along with an explanation of how and when the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were arranged and conducted in the tourism board offices and in the host community from July to August of 2016, 2017 and 2018. Information on the process of interpretation and safeguarding of data is also given.

Chapter 4 (Cultural Heritage and Tourism in Context) contains a review of cultural heritage and its relationship with tourism and the use of tangible and intangible heritage as an asset to attract visitors to a destination. In this chapter, the rise in cultural interest and awareness among tourists of cultural elements is related to the growth of cultural tourism and the phenomena of authenticity, commodification and cultural involution.

Chapter 5 (Local community development through tourism) unpacks the meaning of key terms such as "community", "participation" and "empowerment" and shows their significance for place branding strategies to create an identity for tourism destinations around the world, and also considers the role of national and local governments and barriers to the engagement of the local community in the successful outcome of place branding strategies.

Chapter 6 (Place Branding) distinguishes between the global phenomena of destination branding and place branding and between individual and umbrella forms of the latter. The chapter identifies the Magical Towns programme as a prime example of destination place branding. The meaning of identity in the context of tourism is also reviewed and the use of themes in which the features of branded destinations are labelled to represent the essence of the place, is also analysed.

Chapter 7 (The Magical Towns Initiative), describes the origins, policies, funding, governance, marketing and chain of accountability of the Magical Towns initiative. The chapter demonstrates the richness of cultural heritage in the brand Magical Towns and how it reflects the diversity of traditional aspects that every host community possesses. It will be shown that the creation and continuity of a development initiative such as Magical Towns, exemplifies the significance of culture for Mexico.

In Chapter 8 (Introduction to the Region) there is an introduction to the geography, population, history, economy, government and culture of Tamaulipas State in the north of Mexico and their relevance to the use of cultural heritage and tourism, focusing on a specific town, Tula, where the fieldwork was carried out.

Chapter 9 (Producing Tula: The Presentation of Cultural Heritage in Tula) is an exploration of the absorption of the cultural heritage aspects of Tula's Magical Town into its products. The commodification of these elements for consumption has played a very significant role. The presentation of these cultural assets in local events represents an opportunity for the host community to intensify social interaction and involvement with the Magical Towns brand. Religious festivities and traditional cuisine events are found to be the most popular in the region.

Chapter 10 (Case Study of Perceptions of Tula, Magical Town). Qualitative and quantitative data regarding the use of cultural heritage and branding for tourism purposes, its effects on the host community and on visitor's perceptions is presented.

Chapter 11. (Discussion and conclusion) The aim of this chapter is to provide answers to the research questions (see 1.6 above). The findings are compared with previous studies of place branding in other parts of the world and with existing theoretical frameworks. The question of whether the Magical Towns initiative is effective for local development in Tula and can be replicated in other parts of Latin America is also discussed and recommendations made for future improvements to the operations of the Magical Towns strategy. The limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are stated. Finally, it is concluded that the findings and discussions of the contribution of the Magical Towns brand in Tula, Mexico, suggests that even though there is a lack of leadership in the development initiative, the implementation of the brand has facilitated local development rather than obstructed it, has not seriously compromised the authenticity of local culture and may be replicable in certain circumstances.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter aims to provide an overview of relevant academic literature concentrating on the use of culture and heritage in niche tourism and the significance of place branding as a strategy for promoting such tourism. A particular strand of the literature concerning the delivery of place branding in terms of governance and the participation and empowerment of host communities as well as the outcomes for economic development will be considered in more detail. This will include a review of case study research carried out around the world. The topic will then be narrowed down and the extant literature on tourism in Mexico and the Magical Towns initiative and the town of Tula, Tamaulipas will also be critically evaluated. The study of tourism is a focal point for a multitude of academic disciplines. It draws on insights from anthropology, economics, ethnography geography, management, marketing and sociology.

2.1   Culture and cultural tourism

Tourism has long been divided by both practitioners and academics into niches (Macleod, 2003). Weiler and Hall (1992) provide a useful classification. They identify cultural tourism as one of the major niches and a growth area both in terms of visitor numbers and academic research. For a good introduction see Timothy (2011). Cultural and heritage tourism has now developed a voluminous specialist literature. For an up to date bibliography see Richards (2018). Timothy (2018) provides a useful guide to current research trends in the field.

However, the starting point for all this literature is an understanding of "culture". In fact, the literature on culture is immense and "culture", as a concept, can vary in definition and perspectives among academics from different disciplines. This thesis is only concerned with tourism but there is still no universally agreed definition of the term "culture" in relation

to tourism in the literature. Historically, culture was regarded as the pursuit and acquisition of truth and knowledge of what matters most to us. This was traditionally regarded as excellence in art, music, literature, theology, manners and so on which was then expressed to others through education as elucidated in the 19th century by Mathew Arnold (Arnold, 1971). That philosophy passed into schools and universities of 19th and 20th century Europe. The 20th century tourism literature put forward an intellectual definition of culture exemplified by Burns (1999) who defined culture in terms of what is to be found in museums and art galleries. He expanded this idea to argue that those who appreciate such places as tourist attractions can be said to be "cultured".

In 21st century literature more inclusive definitions of culture have become generally accepted. For example, Casasola (2011) includes the totality of knowledge, skills and habits acquired over a lifetime by people as members of society. Casasola's understanding of culture is dynamic and interactive based on shared experiences which are continually evolving and creating bonds within a community. Other writers such as Smith (2003) prefer the term "malleability of culture" rather than calling it dynamic. However, the point is essentially the same that culture is a construct which changes over time and which can be interpreted differently by different generations

Crucially, for tourism purposes Casasola (2011) believes that one of the community bonds forged by tourism is the process of enculturation by which knowledge, traditions, values and behaviour are transmitted from one generation to the next. Timothy (2018) makes even more explicit the view, in modern heritage tourism, that what matters most and is therefore worth preserving and making available to outsiders via tourism does not have to be exceptional. He accepts that there is a place for highbrow art and iconic world heritage sites, but he regards every day, living culture as being of equal value although he accepts that some selection has to take place.

Cultural Tourism is responding to changing social trends and visitor tastes. As far back as 1989, Herbert detected a trend towards cultural and heritage experiences among leisure consumers. The essays edited by Rojek and Urry (1997) further explored this insight. Among the contributors Craik (1997) identified several key trends.

The culture of tourism has been modified in response of a range of contradictory developments occurring in the field of culture. These include the commercialisation of culture and cultural products; the restructuring of cultural production into cultural industries; greater government investment in culture accompanied by increasing demands for accountability and demonstrations of value for money: increasing cultural consumption by a wider range of people; and expanding opportunities for training in cultural production (Craik 1997:113)

In this pattern, according to Coathup (1999) the dominant actors are not hotel chains or airlines as is sometimes supposed but social agents such as education, the media, environmental management, governments and technology. As globalization and digital transformation have accelerated the role of technology in the media and in education has intensified. Awareness of other cultures and curiosity about them is growing and cultural tourism is adapting in a changing world as described in the volume of essays edited by Smith and Robinson (2006). According to the contribution of Marciszewska in that volume, visitors are pursuing new types of experiences focused on the broader understanding of culture discussed above. This stems from the emergence of a larger market among consumers whose values lead them to choose destinations, and seek out experiences, based on the belief that it is essential to protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage assets (McKercher and Du Cros (2002).

Tourists arrive with their own "cultural baggage", knowledge or preconceptions (Butcher, 2001). Tourist authorities and local communities can and do interpret the cultural message through face to face or online interaction with visitors. In recent years the academic literature has begun to pay some attention to this process. According to Herbert (1989a:191) the role of interpretation is 'to make people more aware of the places they visit, to provide knowledge which increases their understanding and to promote interest which leads to greater enjoyment and perhaps responsibility'.

Regeneration programmes and place branding strategies may bring visitors but how they understand and interpret what they see is crucial. Interpretation is defined by the Association of Heritage interpretation (AHI) as 'the art of helping people explore and appreciate the world' (Association of Heritage Interpretation, 2018). This kind of interpretation or mediation is required because: 'Heritage sites visits can also be key in

providing informal educational experiences for visitors…interpretation is nearly always required because the meanings of places and their significance are difficult to grasp without the assistance of interpreters'. (Timothy and Boyd, 2003:198). There is general agreement among researchers that mediation is best provided by the active participation of members of the local community, but their efforts need to be supported by infrastructure such as heritage centres (McDonald, 1997). Academic case studies have identified ways in which such combined efforts can make sense of sites, including those from remote eras such as Hadrian's Wall in northern England, (Timothy and Boyd, 2003:231-232). Such studies have been utilised in the preparation of professional guides to best practice such as that produced by the Association of Heritage Interpretation (2018).

2.2 Heritage

The inclusive definitions of culture currently in vogue in the tourism literature can refer to either heritage or present day, living culture, or, increasingly, a fusion of both. But what exactly is meant by heritage in the context of the globalized world and modern tourism is the subject of another strand in the literature

The term "heritage" is used by Hardy (1988) to describe things such as cultural traditions and artefacts that are inherited from the past. The tourism literature distinguishes between tangible and intangible heritage both of which form part of the contemporary understanding of culture. Most of the academic literature follows the definitions developed by international bodies. In the case of tangible heritage, the generally accepted definition comes from The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) which regards tangible heritage as "natural and cultural environments, encompassing landscapes, historic places, sites, and built environments" (ICOMOS, 1999). UNESCO (2000a) elaborated on this definition and refer to tangible cultural heritage as the physical monuments and natural aspects of heritage in the landscape that we can touch and see. (UNESCO 2000a). However, there is some controversy in the literature about the sites the sites selected by UNESCO to include in its list of world heritage sites. These tend to be large, iconic, exceptional sites. Cheah (1983) sees value and tourism potential in this approach. The inclusion of natural aspects in UNESCO's definition is also supported in the literature. For instance, Casasola (2011) stresses the diversity of cultures which can exist within a single country that have often evolved from natural aspects such as climate and terrain. The most recent academic

definition includes material objects that have some physical embodiment of cultural values such as historic monuments, archaeological sites, heritage buildings, cultural artefacts and objects, rural landscapes, villages, gardens and art collections (Timothy, 2011). Timothy is perhaps the most prominent of critics of UNESCO's focus on the exceptional in tangible heritage.

Recognition of the importance of intangible cultural heritage dates from the 1990s and the generally accepted definition in the literature comes from UNESCO (1998) who define intangible cultural heritage as: 'Folklore or a tradition-based recreation of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals, and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity'. In academic terms intangible heritage has been seen "as a knowledge defined within social, political and cultural context' (Graham, 2007:249). Several researchers have offered lists of living manifestations of intangible heritage including 'live' heritage performances, non-material elements such as, music, dance, local festivals and events, oral traditions, ceremonies, rituals and folklore (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002; Casasola 2011; Timothy, 2011).

There is now a large degree of consensus in the academic literature about the meaning and scope of heritage, tangible and intangible. Discussion has therefore moved on to the nature of cultural and heritage tourism and its effects on both the tourists and the host communities.

2.3   The nature and effects of cultural heritage tourism

According to Smith and Dawson (2006) and Graham (2007) cultural heritage tourism is mainly concerned with the creation of experiences and memories that facilitate understandings of the meanings of the past. The academic literature tends to stress the benefits for the tourists who gain a deeper understanding of the country or culture that they are visiting (McKercher and du Cros, 2002). However, the experiences and memories visitors receive are selective and are grounded in contemporary economic, social, cultural, or political contexts. This is controversial in the literature. Urry (2002) talks about "the tourist gaze"

meaning the way in which the element of selectivity in what heritage societies choose to preserve, and tourists expect to be preserved, can negatively impact the present and conceal its destruction. The topic will be discussed further in the context of authenticity and commoditization (2.4.1 below).

Another, anthropological strand of the literature looks at the effects of recognition of intangible heritage on the host community. Some researchers regard those effects as positive. Smith (2003) argues that because intangible heritage is grounded in a place, it can lead to renewal of cultural pride, the revitalisation of traditions and customs, and opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and integration with measurable, beneficial effects within local communities. One of these is claimed to be the creation over long periods of elements which distinguish one region from another and create distinctive identities (Casasola, 2011). In some cases, cultural tourism strengthens or even creates these because it has been pointed out that local communities may practice enculturation to such a degree that they do not recognise what is worth preserving in their local culture, or appreciate its value until it is pointed out to them by tourism development authorities or tourists themselves (Smith (2003; Graham, 2007). Several case studies in Scotland looking at the revival of Gaelic traditions from an ethnographic and anthropological perspective support this view (McDonald, 1997; Macleod, 2004). This study will investigate whether such positive effects on local cultural self-esteem have been replicated in Tula, Mexico and why or why not.

However, another strand in the literature takes a less positive view. These studies look at the reactions towards tourists of members of the host communities in cultural heritage sites. Getz (1994) carried out one of the earliest such studies in the Spey Valley of Scotland and found that opinions among the local community were polarised and tended to remain stable over long periods, although they could shift towards the negative if tourism development failed to bring the promised developments. The theme of non-homogenous opinions recurs in Snaith and Haley (1999) in their study of York, UK; in Prentice (2003); and in Schofield (2010) whose study of Salford, UK also found that a majority believed that the negative environmental impacts of tourism outweigh its positive economic and social benefits. A more recent study by Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy (2017) in Jamaica uses quantitative methods to discover that varied reactions are mediated specifically by gender, cultural identity and occupation inside or outside the tourist industry.

2.4   Cultural heritage tourism for economic regeneration

The economic perspective of some researchers concentrates on cultural heritage tourism as an economic resource and a viable strategy that can stimulate regeneration by revitalising local traditions and promoting infrastructure development (Graham, 2007). Typically, the literature focuses on the regeneration of decaying industrial cities (Zeppel and Hall, 1991). But a study of rural tourism in the EU by Ray (1997) and studies of remote areas in China by Li (2006) show that similar effects are possible in previously marginalised areas.

2.4.1   Commoditization and Authenticity

Cultural and heritage tourism as a strategy for economic regeneration requires marketing. Marketing in turn tends to commodify culture, particularly intangible cultural heritage. A major controversy in recent tourism literature has been the conflict between that marketing and commoditization on the one hand and the need to preserve the authenticity of traditional culture on the other. One of the first studies to address the commoditization of culture was Greenwood (1977) who analysed the commoditization of local cultural in the case of Fuenterrabia in Spain, and pointed out how the use of 'local color' by the tourism industry can have a potential effect on host communities and how the lack of research available at the time of writing left communities unable to find an effective way to overcome a problem. Greenwood argued that when "a ritual has become a performance for money, the meaning is gone' (Greenwood, 1977:135). That negative view of tourist marketing remains significant and *Alarde* has reverted to an annual event, which suggest that lessons have been learned and the dangers of inappropriate commoditization and the importance of authenticity is now understood by practitioners as well as the many academics who have made the point.

The term commoditization has been defined by Cohen (1988, p.380) as 'The modification of cultural elements such as, traditional music and dances, religious festivities, regional dresses or local cuisine fusions adapted for visitors.'   Cohen defended this process on the grounds that 'commoditization often hits a culture not when it is flourishing, but when its

actually already in decline… Under such circumstances, the emergence of a tourist market frequently facilitates the preservation of a cultural tradition which would otherwise perish.' Cohen (1988:382). Further support for commoditization has come from McKercher & Du Cros (2002:101) who claims that: 'A unique asset, culture, or building is not a tourist attraction unless its tourism potential is actualized by enabling its consumption'. The authors go on to argue that such actualization is only worthwhile if it meets the expectations of paying customers.

Mckean (1989) investigated the extent to which indigenous peoples could resist commodification or devise alternatives. He uses the term "Cultural Involution" and points out that "Few analyses exist of alternative mechanisms available to indigenous populations to resist change, or to retain and even revitalize their social fabric and customs within the changed conditions wrought by the tourist industry". However, McKean goes on to argue that, although socioeconomic change has taken place in Bali, "it goes hand-in-hand with the conservation of culture". His field data supports the hypothesis that "tourism may in fact strengthen the process of conserving, reforming, and recreating certain traditions" (Mckean, 1989:120). This conclusion is crucial for the evaluation of the impact of place branding in Tula and this study has therefore been selected among the many dealing with cultural involution for comparison with my empirical findings.

But what remains in dispute is the extent to which meeting those needs compromises the authenticity of the tradition. There have been attempts at official guidelines (WTO 1995) and general claims that sensitive management can avoid the worst abuses (McKercher and du Cros, 2002). But critics remain. For example, Casasola (2011:50) argues that parallel with the growth of tourism, changes are perceived in the use of crafts which evolve from having a practical function in a community into items which have only a decorative function as folklore. A new, post-modernist conception of "staged authenticity" has also been developed, mainly in Scandinavian literature. This concept argues that commodified performances provide a surfeit of experience and emotion based on what tourists see or do in places which gives the feeling of authenticity that tourists desire without necessarily destroying the original (Timm Knudsen and Waade, 2010). The validity of these contested concepts of commoditization and authenticity, in the case of the Mexican Magical Towns, will be examined in chapters 10 and 11.

2.5 Place branding and theme towns in cultural and heritage tourism

In the recent literature, the economic and marketing perspectives on cultural and heritage tourism are increasingly dominated by the concepts of "place branding" or "destination branding". The difference is more than semantics. According to Govers and Go (2009) (2010) and Briciu (2013) 'place branding' provides a broader perspective such as the interaction of a place with its environment which includes all economic activities carried on there not only those which are tourism related. "Destination branding" on other hand involves a more specific definition of place as destinations to visit which may be countries, regions, cities or towns". Hankinson (2010, p.306). Using the term "destination branding" allows marketers to select or discard aspects on offer to promote a destination by giving it a reliable, constructive image which differentiates it from its competitors and moves it up market (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002; Cai, 2002; Park and Petrick, 2006; Ashworth, 2009).

There is now a substantial literature which views destination branding as the most powerful and practical tool kit for marketers who need to take positive action as well as identify the distinctive selling points of a destination in order to enhance sociocultural and economic development (Anholt, 2010). That tool kit focuses on both promotion of elements of local culture and heritage and strategies for doing so. Local culture such as, religious festivities, traditional cuisine, music, art and crafts, dances and lifestyle are claimed to be the elements to promote (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). More recently, Ashworth (2009) has identified the three core tools as "personality association", "signature buildings and design" and "event hallmarking". Gilmore, in Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (Eds, 2002) discusses the strategies, stressing the need for a highly targeted, evidence-based approach using consumer market research as well as multiple agencies and channels of communication.

Within the literature on place branding in general a sub-genre has developed looking at "theme town strategies". According to Moore-Cherry, (2015:361) themes can be customised and can focus on one single aspect, or many depending on what a town has to offer. Anholt (2009) suggested that place brands should be kept simple and clearly identifiable and Ashworth returned to the subject arguing that place brands need to be comprehensive and clearly thought through (Ashworth, 2015).

Implementing the tool kit for effective place branding requires substantial resources. Hence the technique is often perceived as a solution to urban problems (Davies, 2015). This is emphasised by Kolb (2006) who focuses on the capacity of cities to host major events in order to brand themselves and attract tourists. Moore-Cherry (2015) also sees place branding as an urban phenomenon, in her case leveraging the creativity of large cities. But Seaton (1996) has shown that destination branding can be effective for a small town such as Hay-on-Wye, England, if the brand is sufficiently novel and eye catching. An alternative approach put forward by Cai (2002) is for small towns and rural areas to act collectively to establish an effective brand. As we shall see the Magical Towns initiative in Mexico is a good example of this concept in practice.

Much of the debate about theme towns has taken the form of case studies. Hall (2002) has considered Eastern Europe, Hospers (2004) the Oresund region of Europe and Macleod (2003), (2009) has written extensively about Scotland. But of particular relevance in the context of this research are case studies in Mexico. These highlight an important additional requirement for success; community participation.

2.6   Community participation and empowerment

As illustrated in case studies of destination branding and theme towns, a major theme in recent tourism literature has been the importance of community participation in tourism development programs. "Community", like culture, is a term which has slightly different meanings in different academic disciplines. In the tourism context one of the founding definitions comes from Murphy (1988:96) who argues that community: "represents a bonding of people and place, which creates its own distinctive character and force for survival in an increasingly impersonal and big business world". The fusion of people and place is also central to the definition offered by Ander-Egg (2003) who regards a community as a group of people who provide each other with mutual support while sharing a geographical space, traditions, and customs. Campelo et al (2013) build on this work to argue that community is one of the four constructs, along with time, landscape and shared ancestry, which form the sense of place. Understanding this is crucial, they argue, to successful place branding.

There is general agreement in the literature that successful place branding and successful local community development are integral and are both based on the participation of the hosts, who are able to identify local natural and cultural resources available in the community that can be used for effective development (Serrano et al, 2011). As Murphy (1988) points out this is an opportunity for localities to satisfy tourist's desire for authenticity. There is also general agreement about the aim of community participation. Lenao and Saarinen (2015:203) in their study of rural tourism development in Botswana state that the purpose is to facilitate participation and integration of communities in tourism planning and operations in order to improve the quality of life of the host community. That aim of improving the quality of life is often related, in both government documents and academic studies, to sustainable tourism (Clausen and Gyimothy, 2016).

Literature reveals mixed reactions among host communities to tourism development because communities are not homogenous. Case studies of community participation have come to the same conclusion. Clausen and Gyimothy (2016), for instance show how different sections of the community seek to use their representation on the Magical Towns Committee of Alamos, Mexico to argue for different development agendas.

Despite conceptual studies such as Simpson (2008) which seek to identify what constitutes a successful Community Benefit Tourism Initiative (CBTI), there is still no consensus about the necessary nature or extent of participation. For some writers it is sufficient that the economic benefits of tourist development are spread widely. Prentice (2003), in a UK study, found that positive effects on household income was the key determinant of community support for tourism development. Li, (2006) came to the same conclusion in a study of Tibet in which he explicitly denied that participation in decision making was necessary. Liu et al (2014) agree provided that this approach is consensual and not imposed by state enforced restrictions on community participation. Smith and Robinson (2006) add that tangible economic benefits have to be seen rapidly and communities do not feel empowered by long term promises. However, the view that it is only employment opportunities and higher incomes which are important for community economic participation has been challenged. Involving the local supply chain is important according to Scheyvens (2002) and according to Mtapuri and Giampiccoli (2013), in their study of Community Based Tourism (CBT) in Namibia, it is also essential to encourage common ownership of physical assets to prevent domination by the state or external big business.

Other researchers argue that shared economic benefits even including opportunities for entrepreneurship and ownership are not sufficient and look for community development in addition. For example, Murphy (1988:97) states that: "The tourism industry needs to become a facilitator of community aspirations as well as a business." This includes the empowerment of entire communities or specific, previously disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities and women; the building of social capital; and participation in decision making and governance.

Empowerment through community development may refer to either the entire community or groups. Scheyvens (2002) is a strong advocate of empowerment of the entire community. She believes that there are three aspects, social, economic and political empowerment. If the state permits all of them it shows "faith in the abilities of its residents, is relatively self-reliant and demonstrates pride in their traditions and culture." (Scheyvens, 2002:59).

One benefit of empowering the entire community is often claimed to be enhancing the sense of place and its connection with the community. A case study in Poland by Marciszewska (2006:93) found that: "The community not only preserved their local culture and heritage but also created a feeling of togetherness and an appreciation of local traditions. Improving the town's appearance and creating a 'sense of a place'; a vital part of the community empowerment". Boyle, Strzelecka and Watson (2018) take the same view and argue that entire communities can be psychologically empowered and given increased civic pride and individual self- esteem through recognition by tourists that their traditions and culture have value.

However, Tosun (2000) argues that the total community empowerment approach of many western theorists is impractical in many developing countries unless there are wholesale changes to remove existing operational, structural and cultural barriers. Unless, or until, that happens, local host communities will have no control over the nature, or scale of tourism development.

The empowerment of specific sectors of the community has received increasing attention in recent years following a pioneering study by Richter (1995). Vujko et al (2018), in a case

study of rural communities in Serbia, have demonstrated the potential for tourism to empower women by giving them independent income and creating mutual support networks. Casasola (2011) suggests that tourism development can also empower indigenous and Mestizo communities by attaching value to their traditional crafts and customs but can also impose pressure to conform to outside norms and thus compromise authenticity. These studies highlight further issues around community participation and empowerment on which the research in Tula can shed light.

The tourism literature rarely explicitly defines social capital but has long recognised its importance. Implicitly social capital involves developing public services including education and training and this is a stated intention of tourism development in Mexico (SECTUR, 2001). Among academic researchers, social capital also appears to involve the facilitation of networking and the strengthening of civil society. The importance of building social capital in this sense is stressed by Liu et al (2014) and Luvando-Cuevas et al (2016) and shown to occur in the studies of Scottish theme towns by Macleod (2009). However, the creation of social capital through tourism is not automatic. For instance, Casasola (2011) questions the extent to which it happens in Mexico and Lopez Ramos (2017) has used quantitative techniques to show that inadequate quality of social capital was a major cause of consumer dis-satisfaction with the Magical Towns experience.

2.7   Management and governance of tourism development

There is growing global interest in governance, especially in the field of development economics, and tourism has borrowed much from this and contemporary management theories. According to Mayntz (2001), writing from the perspective of Argentina, the ideal of modern governance is collaborative and distinct from traditional top down models in which governments maintained a high power-distance from civil society organisations and individuals. Luna and Chavez, (2014) agree that good governance is about seeking inclusive and cooperative solutions for community problems based on greater participation in public matters. Guidelines from international heritage management bodies such as ICOMOS (1999) also stress the importance of consultation and collaboration.

In line with the generally accepted theories outlined above, the understanding of governance in Mexican federal programmes has shifted in recent years towards

decentralization, collaboration and the integration of governance structures into the local community with monitoring and follow up taking place through the mandatory Magical Towns Committees. (Chavez and Rosales, 2015:42). However, critics such as Castaneda et al (2016) and Perez-Ramirez and Antolin-Espinoza (2016) assert that the official Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) pay little attention to the perceptions of the host community. They prioritize the satisfaction of the tourist's needs whilst neglecting the building of social capital in the form of education, health and public services. However, the study by Lopez Ramos (2017), continues to look for ways to monitor performance against objectives, in his case by constructing indices of customer satisfaction with the delivery of the Magical Towns initiative. The ongoing controversy over how to measure the effectiveness of governance and analyse the effects of programmes such as the Magical Towns initiative informs the direction of this research.

2.8   Tourism in Mexico, Tamaulipas and Tula

The literature concerning tourism in Mexico consists of two largely separate streams; published official documents and academic papers. This study has made considerable use of official documents produced by SECTUR and local Magical Town Committees. The national tourism plans such as SECTUR (2001a) and Gobierno de la Republica (2014). Supporting statistics can be found in Lopez and Gonzalez (2012). Also, detailed regulations for the implementation of the Magical Towns programme such as SECTUR (2001b), (2014) and, marketing materials such as SECTUR (2016), (2018). Useful though they are for understanding the official decision-making process, political considerations and objectives, there is an obvious element of selection and potential bias in official documents of this kind and they need to be read in conjunction with independent academic studies.

2.8.1   The Magical Towns initiative

Academic studies have concentrated on the Magical Towns programme. There are several useful overviews of different aspects. The policy making process of setting the objectives has been studied by Velasquez (2013) and Vasquez (2015). As one of the primary purposes of the Magical Towns programme was regeneration, some the earliest studies of its effects focused on its economic impact (De la Rosa, 2012). In line with trends in wider tourism research emphasis has shifted more recently to governance, community participation and the building of social capital. The former has been treated by Luna and Chavez (2014), and

Hernandez (ed) (2015) focusing specifically on the role of civil society organisations. In the latter volume the comparison between discourse and reality by Chavez and Rosales is particularly useful. Rovo and Ruiz (2009) pick up a related theme from the wider tourism literature; the attitudes of residents to rural tourism. The role of community participation is the subject of an overview by Balsey Clausen and Gyimothy (2016) which, unusually, comes from academics outside Mexico and therefore offers an interestingly different perspective. The effectiveness of the Magical Towns programme in building social capital has been reviewed by Rodriguez (2012).

There are a growing number of case studies of the impact of the programme on individual towns. These can usefully be divided into two groups; those which study the impact on the tourist experience and those which assess the impact on the host community. In the first group, tourist satisfaction attracted the attention of Lopez Ramos (2017) in Calpulalpan. Studies of the impact on the host community are, however, more numerous. Tepoztlán, has been studied by Alvarado Rosas (2015) focusing on the preservation of cultural heritage. Garcia et al (2015) chose San Pedro, Tultepec to localise the theme of community responses to tourism. Jacobo-Herrera (2015) has analysed Cuetzalan and the effect of the Magical Towns brand when the host community learn how to detect problems, such as water supply, and participate to try to find a solution or at least made the issues evident to the government. Tapijulapa has been studied from the point of view of sustainability by Luyando-Cuevas et al (2016). Fuentes-Carrera (2015) fused the two perspectives tourists and locals in a study of Huamantla. He found it had 'ephemeral magic' as the locals formed a negative perception of the programme and claimed to feel excluded from their own town due to the relocation of their street markets to improve tourist perceptions that it is one of the requirements of the Magical Town programme.

2.9   Gaps in the literature

There are 121 Magical Towns in Mexico spread across its 31 states, each with its own distinctive traditions and experiences of the programme and many concerns remain unanswered:

a) Are the conclusions of existing studies of Magical towns replicable in the state of Tamaulipas where no previous studies have been carried out?

b) Does geographical proximity to other neighbouring Magical Towns or to large cities impact the effects of the programme?

c) Does community participation have to involve a say in social and political and economic decision making in order to empower the community and what extent does this have on community support for place branding?   Studies in other countries have come to contradictory conclusions and this question remains open in the Mexican context.

This study aims to fill those gaps. In doing so this study will draw on the anthropological, ethnographic and historical literature about the State of Tamaulipas and the town of Tula in particular. The ethnographic approach has been reviewed from a general theoretical perspective by Uhnak (2014) and applied in numerous studies of traditions. Chemin Bassler, (2004) focuses attention on the indigenous culture of the area and Contreras Islas (2005) collects and preserves the oral history of Tula at a time when he argues the town is undergoing transculturation. Myths and legends of the Tamaulipas region have been studied by Ramos Aguirre (2008), (2011). Garmundi (2013) has done the same for Tula in particular. Their efforts have been supplemented by images of local cultural traditions collected in an online resource for marketing purposes by the state government (Culturas Tamaulipas, 2019).

Overall, research in Mexico has closely followed trends in the wider discourse community of tourism and case studies have been shown to be a particularly useful method for drilling down into the deeper meaning of broad concepts. That is the approach that will be adopted in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to present and justify the use of research methods selected to carry out a qualitative primary research project among the community and visitors of a branded Magical Town, Tula Tamaulipas in Mexico.

3.1   The research design: Choosing a research philosophy

This study uses a post-positivist and constructivist approach. According to Wisker (2008:66), with this approach:

> *"it will be your belief that,……. we can ask questions but never gain absolutely final answers; that all data collected will need to be interpreted in context; that we make meaning rather than discover it is a fixed entity; that we understand through making links, interpreting contexts, and perceiving; and that our understanding of the meaning we determine from the findings produced by our research could be differently interpreted in different times and places by different people".*

3.2   Research methodologies

In order to implement the post positivist and constructivist approach this study uses a mainly qualitative research methodology to gather primary materials. The principal reason for choosing a qualitative, rather than quantitative, approach is that the study is based on the perception and development of a host community which is necessarily complex and subjective and so, cannot be easily captured by quantitative data. Cresswell (2013:48) stated: "We also conduct qualitative research because quantitative measures and the

statistical analyses simply do not *fit the problem.* Interactions among people, for example, are difficult to capture with existing measures"

According to Walle (1997) over the past 20 years, a variety of qualitative techniques have gained prestige within anthropology, education, sociology and marketing research, as well as in tourism research because: "Tourism strategies, for example, increasingly consider and cope with personal feelings of hosts and the impact of tourism activity upon them." (Walle,1997:534). The qualitative method allows a depth of understanding of the tourism context and valuable data, as the aspects to analyse can only be reached by being in the field.

However, Cresswell (2003) has shown that quantitative and qualitative techniques can be combined in mixed methods approaches in order to triangulate data and allow "the results from one method (to) help develop or inform the other method" (Cresswell, 2003:16). For example, in this study issues which emerged from analysis of a questionnaire survey were raised in subsequent interviews.

The use of a mainly qualitative but mixed approach is considered most appropriate in the context of the research questions for this thesis (See 1.6) because they are concerned with understanding how people interpret their meaning (Bryman, 2012). This approach has enabled me to observe and describe the reality of Tula, Tamaulipas, Mexico, based on the perspectives of the people involved such as the host community and visitors and their understanding of the process of place branding development. Qualitative methods are often considered appropriate when little previous research has been done on a topic or location. They can be useful in helping in establishing general areas of interest and concern and to formulate more precise questions of follow up studies. This consideration applies in this case because, as the literature review in Chapter 2 has demonstrated, there is only limited literature on the Magical Towns initiative in general and no previous studies of Tula.

3.3   Qualitative Approaches

3.3.1 Backyard/Practitioner Research

I have followed the advice of Cresswell (2003:182) who stated that "the qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study." I am Mexican, from the State of Tamaulipas. Reflecting on this I realized that I started with advantages having worked for the Tourism Board of Tamaulipas for six years, 2008-13. I had visited the observed town and had access to the cultural behaviours of the local people prior to Tula becoming part of the initiative, Magical Towns. I understand the spoken language and I am also aware of some of the local cultural practices, for example if the local community is wearing white on religious festivities, I know that the colour has a meaning of purity and respect for the saint in the celebration etc. This helped me understand and gather accurate information about the real situation of the community and the town after the Magical Town place brand was granted.

Therefore, this study is what Glesne and Peshkin (1992) call "backyard research", also known as "practitioner research". I am a tourism professional carrying out research in their own backyard. In education, it is generally understood that, subject to a set of well understood and documented safeguards, such practitioner research can result in both practical solutions and new and valuable theoretical insights (Greenwood and Levin, 2006). This study has been carried out to perceive the reality of the implementation of a cultural initiative in a town in Mexico.

However, in backyard research, as with all qualitative research, the issue of objectivity has to be faced. As Gadamer (1975) suggested in approaches to research, we recognize that the effect of historical events through 'lived experiences' influences our interpretation and understanding of a phenomenon. Nevertheless, Hass (1988) implores researchers acknowledging their 'lived experiences' to also ensure an authentic outcome. This means attempting to understand the whole situation and the interrelations of all factors, whilst also remaining open to new and unanticipated meanings (Elliott and Timulak, 2005).

One of the first recognised hazards of practitioner-research is losing objectivity by approaching the subject with preconceptions. But as Coupal (2005) states, "One of the

educational goals of post-secondary educators is to help practitioners become more reflective about their practices, to step outside the goldfish bowl and view a situation from multiple perspectives." This applies equally to tourism, and achieving it involves developing a semi-insider's view sometimes called 'Reflexivity' to recognise preconceptions.

What the researcher notices is inevitably conditioned to some extent by topics to which the researcher's attention has previously been drawn by the literature and by personal observation. Consequently, before the commencement of my research I was aware that during the development process of the place brand, locals had different perceptions about the social transformation underway in Tula, such as changing roles for tourism and the modifications to infrastructure. The researcher also admits being not free of feelings, assumptions and opinions about the topic.

Another issue regarding objectivity in practitioner-research is what Cresswell (1998:114) termed "dangerous knowledge". By this he meant personal and political problems associated with having access to information, either pre-existing or uncovered during the research which can impact the livelihoods of colleagues or subjects and create conflicts of interest. In some cases, in this study, some of the interview respondents were personally known to the researcher prior to the research. They were approached for their ability to provide insights rather than being randomly selected. Ethical concerns and the potential for disruption mean that access for practitioner-research is becoming increasingly difficult, at least in education (Ratner, 2002). However, this research was possible only as a result of the author's experience as an employee of the Tourism Board of the State of Tamaulipas. That prior experience helped to easily contact tourism professionals who are the "gatekeepers" of required information and set up interviews. Far more importantly, it enabled the author to engage with them on a peer- to- peer basis, thus producing responses at a level of honesty and depth that would otherwise have been impossible.

This industry experience gave rise to the research questions and the interpretation of the findings presented below has undoubtedly been influenced by an experiential lens situated at a specific socio-political and historical location in space and time (Cresswell, 2003:182). A substantial bank of transcripts has been collected and the author believes that the discussion of this evidence which follows in Chapter 11 justifies the conclusion that in talking to a fellow professional rather than a detached academic, some of the respondents were

able to confide, probe, vent and engage in reflexivity. Some remained guarded, adhering to the official line, but others proved willing to express strong views or reveal contradictions and discrepancies. This has made available unique insights into some of the conflicting attitudes and emotions underlying a case study of place branding.

3.3.2   Ethnography

Given the lack of previous theoretical research into the application and effects of the Magical Towns place brand in Mexico, an ethnographic model has been chosen for this study because theory building rather than theory-testing is the usual objective of an ethnographic study. Consequently, no attempt was made to replicate the methodology or test the theories of the few previous studies of Magical Towns. Instead the objective was to follow where the empirical evidence led.

The role of ethnography and its application as a tool for tourism planning was discussed by Sandiford and AP (1998) using as reference Getz's tourism planning model to identify how can this be done. They believed that: "The approach to tourism planning suggested by Getz's model seems to rely heavily on relevant and valid research at each stage of the planning process. For instance, research data are required to help understand the area to be developed and the tourists to be targeted and to evaluate the plan itself from conception to implementation. (Sandiford and Ap 1998:4).

In ethnography the researcher's objective is to personally experience the phenomenon under investigation. This kind of hands on experience requires fieldwork which enables the investigator to represent as objectively as possible the multiple realities encountered. The outcome is value "thick" descriptions of the phenomenon being evaluated (Yin,1992:125).

3.3.3   Etic and emic approaches to ethnography

Ever since the terms "etic and "emic" were coined by Pike in 1967 they have tended to be seen as being in conflict. The etic approach is based on the observations of an outsider. Typically, it is based on the application of pre-existing theories which are assumed to be

universally true. It usually involves brief observation and the collection of measurable data which can be compared to the results of similar studies elsewhere. At the time I started my fieldwork in 2016 I had not absorbed the existing body of theory. I also believe that the etic approach can discourage the derivation of new, evidence driven insights and concepts. As a Mexican, I could not conduct the research as a pure outsider.

The emic approach, by contrast, is based on the observations of an insider. It is an approach which requires prolonged observation and the collection of extensive, empirical data. I did not do emic fieldwork in its purest form. That would have required immersing myself fully in the community, living there for an extended period in a local family, which was not personally and economically possible. However, I followed the underlying emic philosophy to obtain the perspective of the individuals in Tula. I did talk to the host community in detail, about what are they doing. I took part in local events, engaging with the local people as well as other visitors. I also benefitted from the suggestions of a local member of the community who make it easier to access to different members of the community, such as artisans, hoteliers, a local historian and local teachers, as well as explaining the traditional food, rituals, dances etc.

The combined etic and emic approach was adopted as a result of my personal circumstances rather than methodological convictions. Some disadvantages are that I did not experience at first hand some of the daily issues described to me such as problems with the water and electricity every weekend or in the peak season. Some of those who complained about certain issues, may also have assumed that I was acting in an etic capacity, as an outside expert, and expected me to intervene for them with the Tourism Board.

On the other hand, Tula is a small town, where people are quite shy to talk to visitors. I suspect that no matter how much time I had spent there in a fully emic, immersive approach, they would never have seen me, or trusted me completely as a local. However, adopting a partially emic approach, combined with my practitioner's experience did encourage the local community to be more open and responsive than they would have been with a purely etic approach.

3.4   The Context

The combined etic/emic approach described above was applied in the town of Tula in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico.   Tula was researched in order to understand local perceptions about the Magical Town brand which has been implemented there since 2011. The aims are to supplement the limited literature about the local people's real feelings about the development of the place brand and the integration and participation of the host community and about whether, after seven years of the place brand, there has been a positive impact on the development.

Field-work was carried out with local and visitor participants who have experienced the place branding development during the months of July and August of 2016 (observation), 2017 (in-depth Interviews and questionnaires), and 2018 (observation and follow-up interviews). In December 2018 and August 2019, I made further visits and attended a local celebration as a tourist for two days which allowed me to administer additional questionnaires in order to obtain a statistically significant sample size for quantitative analysis and also observe the town in a different season when demand was noticeably lower than in the summer months.

Throughout my field work I was based in Ciudad Victoria, where the Tourism Board offices are located, and at the University of Tamaulipas, which was useful to conduct in depth semi-structured interviews 1, 1a, 2, and 5. The observations and questionnaires were conducted in Tula, Tamaulipas, Mexico which is located one hour away from the research base. I travelled on weekdays and stayed overnight on some weekends when the town is busier. However, my schedule was flexible enough to travel, especially if there was a local festivity, performance or event for the host community and visitors. The observations and questionnaires cover the main square of Tula, arroyo loco, *barrios (*areas of the town), artisans' workshops and local the market. The sites were chosen due to their association with tourism activity.   From my prior employment and local knowledge, I made the presumption that these were the places where the most interactions between the local community and visitors take place. On reflection, this assumption has proven to be correct.

3.5   *Qualitative Theories: Grounded Theory*

The coding, analysis and discussion of the meaning of the primary data gathered in this study is based on Grounded Theory which "sets out to discover or construct theory from data, systematically obtained and analysed using comparative analysis." (Chun Tie et al, 2019).

Grounded Theory was first developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 who described how inductive reasoning could be used to generate theory from data. Their ideas challenged the norms of using a structuralist approach and deductive tests to establish a theory. Glaser and Strauss did not invent qualitative research but they did argue that it lacked rigour as practised previously.   They put forward Grounded Theory as a method of comparative analysis that enables the generation of more rigorous results by insisting on gathering of evidence from multiple sources and the application of comparative techniques involving conceptualisation and identification of repeated ideas using codes.   Grounded Theory researchers try to avoid preconceived hypotheses and allow the evidence to drive the emergent theory.   Grounded Theory also rejects the concept of seeking an absolute truth and, in intention at least, is non-judgemental.   Instead Grounded Theory is about asking "What is going on; what are the subject's problems and how are they trying to deal with them? To answer these questions Grounded Theory takes a distinctive view of the nature of evidence arguing that "all is data" (Ralph, Birks and Chapman, 2014). This approach challenges the idea that nothing is valid unless it is referenced in an academic journal and is particularly applicable to the exploration of topics, such as this study, where the existing academic literature is limited and incomplete. Grounded Theory aligns well with the research questions in this study and it is for these reasons that it has been used.

However, Chun Tie et al (2019) go on to explain that Grounded Theory has evolved and fragmented in recent decades with the emergence of additional philosophical perspectives and methodologies from subsequent generations of grounded theorists such as Strauss and Corbin's theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism and the Constructivist Grounded Theory developed by Charmaz, Clarke and Corbin that are interested in methodologies for capturing human interactions.   They assume relativist epistemology in which neither data nor theories are discovered, but are co-constructed by researchers and participants.   But, inevitably, the result is coloured by the researcher's biography which influences perspectives, values, privileges, positions, interactions, and geographical locations (Charmaz, 2014; 2017). This is particularly important in "backyard" research in which

researchers should aim for a high degree of reflexivity in order to maintain an acceptable level of objectivity.

According to Glasser and Holton (2004) in pure Grounded Theory the literature review takes place only after the data has been collected and coded in order to avoid loading preconceptions onto the data. The literature review is used solely for the purpose of comparing the theory which has already emerged from the study with other research.

However, Constructivist Grounded methodology argues that the literature review should evolve in parallel with the collection of empirical data and is used in a constructive and data-sensitive way without forcing pre-existing theories onto the data (Ramalho et al, 2015). I did carry out a preliminary literature review before commencing fieldwork. However, my field of study is developing continuously, and I have discovered both additional existing sources and newly published material in the course of my work. Therefore, the Constructivist Grounded approach fits the realities of my study.

3.6   Qualitative Techniques

The term qualitative research in tourism covers a wide spectrum of techniques, many of them borrowed from other "soft sciences" (Wilson and Hollingshead, 2015). The starting point for evaluating the techniques to be employed remains Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2-3). They list the empirical materials which can be collected and studied as including:

- Case studies
- personal experiences
- introspective materials e.g. diaries and reflections
- life histories
- observations
- interviews
- historical, interactional, and visual texts

All of these describe "routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives". This study relies primarily on observations and interviews. However, both require careful attention to procedural and ethical considerations in order to produce strong and valid evidence.

3.6.1   Qualitative techniques: Observation

It is generally recognised in qualitative research that decisions about where and when to carry out observations are not neutral (De Walt and De Walt, 2011). I followed the suggestions of a local tourist guide and member of the Magical Towns Committee who is knowledgeable about locals and visitors preferred places such as the market, the main square and the newly constructed sidewalk *Arroyo Loco*.   However, the decision to administer questionnaires in the *barrios* was my own as I wanted to have some points of view from locals that are not in the tourism areas.   The choice of times was informed by both the tour guide and my own preliminary observations in 2016.   For example, according to my observations in 2016 there were no people present at the Pyramid of Cuitzillo during the week. But on weekends I observed a group of visitors with a tour guide 3 times out of the 4 weekends I visited the site.   The validity of qualitative research depends on observing the totality of the target phenomenon.   While I cannot be 100% certain, I am reasonably sure that my rational approach to selecting times and places for observation and data collection mean that I have not missed anything significant within the town.   However, this approach did conflict with my original research purpose of investigating the impact of Magical Towns on the entire region and I had to narrow down my topic.

3.6.2   Interviewing techniques: Non-probability sampling

After careful consideration, the most appropriate sample strategy for this thesis was considered to be a non-probability sampling technique in which networking, or snowball sampling identifies key participants. According to Burton (2000:314-315), network sampling involves the researcher establishing contact with a suitable respondent who then suggests other contacts with the required characteristics. According to Parfitt (2005:99) these characteristics should be selected so that the profile of the sample reflects that of the target population.   However, the concern is that: "Networks tend to be homogeneous in

their attributes, rather than providing links to others who have different social characteristics". (Burton,2000:314-315).

The interview sample derived from non-probability sampling is, admittedly, small. However, it is justified for two reasons. Firstly, the key principle in qualitative interview sampling is not size but "saturation". The researcher needs to be satisfied that sufficient interviews have been carried out to cover the spectrum of opinions on a given topic. Additional interviews beyond the saturation level merely makes the data more time consuming and difficult to analyse (Mason, 2010). In this case, saturation has been achieved by interviewing a range of stakeholders both internal and external to the tourism authorities and including both supportive and critical voices.

Secondly, extending the number of respondents would have weakened the way I have worked with the material. This involved a conscious rejection of qualitative coding software such as NVivo that can often become a mechanical routine and impede reflexion about how the researcher's own interests and prejudices may be interfering with the interpretation. Instead, I have used an iterative, discursive and reflexive approach. This involves repeatedly listening to the tapes as well as reading and re-reading the transcripts comparing the views of different respondents and probing for underlying meanings. I constantly iterated between the primary evidence and the findings of other researchers, both conceptual and in the form of case studies.

3.6.3 Semi- structured interviews

According to Valentine (2005:111) qualitative interviews are: "generally unstructured or semi-structured. In other words, they take a conversational, fluid form, for each interview varying according to the interests, experiences and views of the interviewees. They are a dialogue rather than an interrogation". This type of interview was considered the most appropriate way to obtain the data required.

For the first round of semi-structured interviews, prior appointments were made for separate meetings with each of the two professionals from the tourism board of the State

of Tamaulipas, part of the team directly involved before the Branding of Tula as a Magical Town and who remain involved with its development. Two further professionals from the Tourism Board of Tula also provided valuable information about the local community and the opportunity for the researcher to participate as a semi-insider at local events organised by the Magical Towns Committee and Tourism Board. The other interviewee was a historian from the University of the State of Tamaulipas. He was chosen for his widely recognised contribution to research and investigation of the regions of the state of Tamaulipas, and authorship of books related to the history and heritage of Tula and Tamaulipas. He was interviewed partly informally and partly by following guiding questions regarding the diverse perceptions of locals and visitors regarding the Magical Towns brand in Tula.

3.6.4   Interview procedure

I introduced myself and briefly explained the purpose of the research. A consent form was given to the participants to sign. They were asked for permission to voice record the interview with the sole purpose of not losing any valuable information and they were informed about the security and safety of their data, that will be destroyed after the time established for this research by the University (see Appendix B). They were also reminded that they had the opportunity to ask about the research in case they have any doubts or concerns. All the data gathered in the interviews has been translated and transcribed by the researcher.

The interviews took place face-to-face for between 45 and 60 minutes in the participants offices, restaurants or home offices. The conversations were based on semi-structured lists of questions in order to have the flexibility to change depending on the responses of the participants. A copy of the question guide used is included in the appendix. Some of the interviews were done before the questionnaires (1, 2,3,4, 5, 6). In line with the Grounded Theory methodology of Corbin and Strauss (2008) further interviews, 1a and 3a, were carried out after the question data had been analysed to explore some issues in more depth as required by the stage of theory generation then reached. Some of the questionnaire responses were also explored by observation and then discussed in the later interviews

3.6.5 Thematic analysis

Once both rounds of interviews were complete the recordings were transcribed and translated by the author. The data was then combined with material obtained from the surveys (see 3.7 below). Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to analyse and interpret the entire database. TA is defined by Clarke and Braun (2016:297) as "a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ("themes") within qualitative data." TA was chosen because it provides a greater degree of flexibility than most other qualitative analytic techniques. The flexibility of TA is not merely conceptual, but also includes flexibility in terms of practical considerations such as sample size and approaches to sensemaking. It is applicable to small as well as large data sets and is therefore well suited to the "restorying" methodology used in this study. TA is also flexible as regards interview techniques including the semi-structured approach used in this study. TA is ideal for use with Constructivist Grounded Theory because it is "experiential" research which offers the opportunity to identify patterns of reality without preconceptions and without imposing existing theories onto the data. These are the key features of the data as prioritized by the research question. TA can identify relevant patterns within and between participants testimonies in relation to their views, perspectives, feelings and practices even when the material at first sight appears unconnected. Furthermore, TA provides accessible and systematic procedures for generating codes and themes which can be presented as a schematic diagram making the reasoning process accessible to other researchers.

3.6.6 Narrativization and restorying

Once thematic analysis had been carried out this study utilized techniques of narrativization and restorying to make sense of the patterns emerging. The restorying technique consists of taking raw data compiled from interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses, breaking it down into recognizable aspects of narrative such as location, themes, characters and then reformulating the story as a coherent text. Restorying can be used to aggregate individual narratives into a collective narrative of the experiences of a community. The advantage of this method is that that it overcomes one of the major drawbacks of Grounded Theory, the fact that data collected without a defined organisational/theoretical framework is not always chronological, consistent or coherent. It needs to be organised in some way to make sense to the reader of the finished thesis. It has been used in this study to make

sense of different aspects of the collective narrative of the community of Tula's experience with the Magical Towns brand.

However, there are two possible pitfalls in narrativization and restorying as a methodology. The first is that construction of such a collective narrative inevitably goes beyond the raw data and involves the application of empathy and creative imagination to bridge gaps in the material itself and between the empirical material and conceptual formulations (Taylor, 1971). This is particularly important in cultures using high context languages where what is left unsaid is often as important as what is explicitly stated, a point raised by Charmaz (2014) which proved to be important as I attempted to construct a collective narrative from field work interviews. The second danger is exaggerating the level of conflict between protagonists in the story, in this case between the local community and the tourism authorities. Care has therefore, been taken to look for points of agreement and co-operation, as well as tensions.

3.7   Quantitative techniques

This study makes use of the concept of "all is data" in grounded theory to add some simple quantitative materials in a mild example of the mixed approach suggested by Cresswell (2003). The techniques used are very basic but did require consideration of issues regarding the size and selection of a survey sample and the design of appropriate questionnaires.

3.7.1 Questionnaire design and administration

The quantitative instrument used in this study was a pair of questionnaires administered to members of the local community and visitors to Tula. Principles in the design of the questionnaire were derived from suggestions in Burgess (2003:3). A mixture of open and closed questions was used in accordance with the mixed methods approach. Open questions are considered useful as they produce a wide variety of answers to differentiate issues which cannot be easily reduced to a Likert scale. (Burgess, 2003:8). This aligns with the qualitative non-probability sampling principle of aiming for saturation; capturing all possible viewpoints. Both types of questions were worded to be concise and unambiguous, free from double negatives and avoid leading questions. Closed questions used Likert scales in order to provide quantifiable answers which could be easily input to an Excel database.

The questionnaires were administered in person to locals and visitors on the streets of Tula in the locations previously chosen. A pre-prepared letter that explained what the questionnaire is about and why their response is important was provided to the participants (see Appendix C).

When administering questionnaires in person, the proximity of the researcher can intimidate some respondents or lead to responses the respondent believes the researcher wants (Parfitt, 2005). To avoid these dangers, I tried to avoid indicating preferred answers and gave the respondents personal space and did not impose any time limit. However, 2 or 3 elderly locals did ask me to write down their answers for them, possibly because they are illiterate. I did as they asked. All the participants were previously aware of the Magical Town initiative, and some were directly or indirectly linked to the development of the brand. All the data gathered in the survey has been translated and transcribed by the researcher.

3.7.2 Sample size and selection

According to Burgess (2003:4) it is vital to consider whether the sample you have chosen is truly representative of the population you are studying. Nowadays, a sample is often chosen at random from a database containing all the members of the population known as a sampling frame. Assuming the sample is large enough it will capture a cross section of the demographic. These norms were rejected in my study for several reasons. Firstly, large samples drawn from representative databases usually require the use of e mail sampling. Burgess (2003) admits that e mail questionnaires produce both a very low response rate and a tendency to bias because people with extreme views are more likely to take the time and trouble to complete them than those with middle of the road opinions. Furthermore, e mail sampling can only be used in locations with very high levels of digital connectivity otherwise the poor are automatically excluded. Tula does not have that level of connectivity and I feel that failure to recognise that limitation in e mail sampling is precisely the kind of cultural bias that researchers warn against.

At the time the survey was carried out, 2017, the population of Tula was 10,043. Using the standard formula for calculating sample size at 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of +/- 10% the required sample size should be 95 (Prel et al, 2009). This means that, for example, if 80/100 people say they like Magical Towns, I can be 95% confident that between (70-90) percent of the entire population will be in favour of the Magical Towns. To comply with this statistical requirement 100 questionnaires were administered in equal numbers to residents and tourists (see Appendix C).

The survey results in this study are not claimed to be statistically significant. However, they do complement the interviews and observations and, taken together, provide substantial evidence from which to base conclusions using Grounded Theory and thematic analysis.

3.8   Secondary materials

In addition to the primary materials collected, some secondary research material has been consulted and used in this study. In line with the Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach a preliminary literature review of secondary sources was carried out which helped to formulate the initial research questions. However, collection of additional secondary materials, not available in university libraries or English language academic databases, continued in parallel with the empirical research throughout the project. These additional materials include the archive of policy documents of the implementation of the Magical Town and an official document presented to the Ministry of Tourism in Mexico putting forward the case for Tula as a candidate to become a Magical Town. This important document is not in the public domain. It was provided by a tourism officer in an interview to a fellow practitioner and provides justification for the use of a practitioner research model. Ethical questions regarding intellectual property rights can arise in practitioner-research situations of this kind where organisations are more concerned with protecting their political interests than in knowledge production (Coupal, 2005). However, in this case I had previously explained that the information will only be used for the investigation and the tourism official seemed comfortable making the information available to a researcher. Nevertheless, as Wilson and Hollingshead (2015) recognise, there is an ever-present danger in practitioner research that material obtained from internal sources may contain unrecognized assumptions or "received wisdom" defined as, "The set of beliefs and standards that people have come to accept as true in a given organization" (Sims and Sauser,

2013:76). For the purposes of this study received wisdom is an organisational synonym for the preconceptions and prejudices discussed in Grounded Theory. Received wisdom is often the result of the operation of what Janis (1972) termed "groupthink". To guard against preconceptions, prejudices, received wisdom and group think and maintain an independent perspective, I have drawn on the advice of Wilson and Hollingshead (2015) and tried to engage in reflective practices.

In addition to material from government sources, other secondary data was also collected such as promotional brochures, audio-visual materials, historical books, a list of tourism services such as hotels and restaurants in Tula and local newspapers.

3.9   Ethics and objectivity in observation and interviewing

The researcher always sought to be respectful towards the community and the area of observation. As discussed above, a brief written description of the purpose of the study and its implications was provided to all respondents before their voluntary participation (See Appendix). Permission was also obtained before any notes or recordings were made.

Due to the privacy requirements of the University, the principle of anonymity has been applied in this study. Interview transcripts and completed questionnaires are numbered in my record system to preserve anonymity. Quotations from in-depth interviews are referenced in this thesis as Interview 1, 1a, 2, 3, 3a , 4, 5 and 6. The respondents were informed that their identities would be concealed to allow them to express themselves confidently and tell their stories or perceptions, as some participants are likely to withhold valuable information fearing that the researcher might know someone they know. (See ethics forms in Appendix A).

Chapter 4: cultural heritage and tourism in context

The use of cultural heritage has played an important role in the tourism development context. Various elements and manifestations have been used to represent and differentiate identities between nations, regions, and towns around the world. Their awareness of the importance of cultural heritage has inspired many countries to create a wide range of development initiatives that are mainly focused on engagement with cultural heritage, enhancing the tourism experience and improving the quality of life of the host communities.

4.1   The evolution of cultural tourism: pilgrimages, the Grand Tour, mass culture, diasporas and beyond

The attraction of cultural heritage is not new. As Marciszewska (2006) has pointed out it has always been part of the repertoire of attractions. Timothy (2018:178) has identified several types of cultural tourism. One of them, "pilgrimage or religious tourism" is probably the earliest type of cultural tourism. He defines it as 'an important form of heritage tourism wherein people travel to gain access to divine blessings, draw closer to deity, satisfy religious requirements, seek forgiveness for sins or simply to improve their spiritual selves.' Such journeys were common in medieval Europe to sites branded by association with a particular saint such as St James at Santiago de Compostela in Spain and Thomas a Becket at Canterbury in the UK. The Islamic world also engaged, and continues to engage, in pilgrimage and religious tourism, principally to Mecca. The practice also continues today among Catholics at Lourdes, in France, or in my case, a visit to see the Virgin of Fatima in Portugal. As we shall see in Chapter 10 religious tourism continues to play an important role today in Tula.

The cultural tourism phenomenon grew further with the popularity of the Grand Tour among the sons of the European nobility in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This involved a lengthy journey to cultural and historical sites that were associated with the classical

civilizations of Greece and Rome and the most advanced and sophisticated courts of Baroque Europe, in order to prepare and educate young gentlemen for political careers that required a depth of knowledge and the learning of other languages (Craik ,1997).

For years the Grand Tour only permitted men in their excursions. As Richter (1995:73) suggested, traveling was: 'seen as compromising the reputation of a young woman', and women had to travel with chaperones. The involvement of woman in cultural tourism did not begin until the 1800's, when Thomas Cook tours offered a respectable context for 'well-bred ladies' to travel (Craik 1997). Thomas Cook is considered as the creator of the tour company and a pioneer in organised, mass tourism. He was one of the first to realise the potential of railways and steam ships, first developed in England in the early 19th century, for tourism purposes. As Feifer (1985) has stated: 'The once fashionable and genteel Grand Tour evolved into a mass tourism experience through the onset of cheaper forms of transport, social and economic change and the commercialization of travel'. In the 1860s, Thomas Cook began offering tours via train and ship to destinations in Europe and the United States, and, from the beginning, the journeys were culturally oriented (Timothy, 2011). Although it seems like some modern tourists continue to believe that class and status will rub off on them by visiting places associated with high culture such as Florence or Venice my research shows that visitors seeking culture in Tula come from all walks of life in the tradition of mass cultural tourism established by Thomas Cook.

Then diasporas of several peoples around the world added another element of nostalgic heritage tourism with people looking to return to the culture of their roots. According to research into the Scottish homecoming by Sim and Leith (2013:262): "diaspora tourists have particular motivations, the reason for making the journeys that they do. While they may seek a leisure experience while visiting their 'homelands' they are essentially motivated by nostalgia and by an interest in exploring their heritage." Which leads to activities such as the Homecoming event in Scotland that attracts tourists each year. Another example is the descendants of former black slaves returning to Africa today, the diverse meanings of the slave trade and heritage tourism are explored by Fumanti (2016:448) who described the experiences of diaspora Africans and Ghanaians touring, working, and living by the historical sites associated with the transatlantic slave trade. The advent of mass education in the 20th century and globalisation, multi-cultural education and the internet in the 21st century have all added to the perceived necessity to visit diaspora sites to gain knowledge. Given this history of diaspora tourism it would have been no surprise to find evidence in Tula of homecomings from the huge diaspora of Mexicans to the United States in the 20th and 21st

centuries. That evidence did not materialise but I did find significant inward investment from the Mexican diaspora in the United States (see Chapters 10 and 11).

Other new forms of heritage attraction developed in the 20th century. Timothy (2018) has identified two of them; dark tourism and sport tourism. The first concerns battlefields, cemeteries, war zones, places of incarceration or sites of natural disasters for various reasons. However, a particular place does not have to embrace all types of cultural tourism to achieve a successful brand presence in the market place and I did not discover any examples of dark tourism in Tula. The 20th century also saw the growth of sport tourism which is "known to help reinforce national identities and build solidarity among fan groups and communities." Timothy (2018:178). In this instance my research has uncovered further examples connected with motorcycle sport in Tula (see Chapters 10 and 11).

Place Branding initiatives such as Magical Towns in Mexico are likely to fit in the longer-term evolution of the concept of cultural tourism for domestic travellers, as they present diverse aspects of cultural heritage that are related to the destination's roots and identity, which will attract visitors to experience something different and acquire a deeper knowledge of their own country. However, the growing evolution of cultural tourism might affect the decisions of local authorities and local communities regarding what aspects of culture should be preserved and how culture can be commodified.

4.2 Modern understandings of culture

Culture, as a concept, can vary in definition and perspectives among academics from different disciplines. Within the field of tourism, the traditional, narrow definition of culture was expressed by Burns (1999:56) who argued that culture: "May mean high art such as to be found in galleries or museums. A person who is familiar with art and music is, in some societies said to be *'Cultured'."* Recently, wider definitions have become more generally accepted. In his definition of culture, Casasola (2011:32) states that: 'culture, is constituted by knowledge, skills and habits acquired by man as a member of a society'. These experiences of a lifetime are shared in a society, that will create bonds between its members. Thus, culture is dynamic, and involves the interaction of people and

communities, learning from each other, passing on their knowledge, traditions, values and behaviour through generations. Culture also involves the pursuit and acquiring of knowledge of what matters most to us, and is then expressed to others (Arnold, 1971: 6). What matters most does not have to be exceptional, highbrow art, or iconic sites (Timothy, 2018).

4.3   Modern understandings of heritage

The term "heritage" can be used to describe things such as cultural traditions and artefacts that are inherited from the past (Hardy,1988:333). Timothy (2018:177) adds a future facing element, 'Heritage involves an inheritance from the past that is valued and utilized today, and what we hope to pass to future generations." Other writers focus on the temporal malleability of culture. Heritage is described by Smith L (2003:11) as: 'A cultural practice, involved in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings.' This understanding of culture as a malleable construct which evolves dynamically across time informs my work in Tula.

Heritage is concerned with gathering experiences and memories to be preserved between families, communities and civilisations for the understanding of their past and present. Thus, heritage has the ability to be interpreted differently through generations. People may not consider certain aspects of their culture as being as significant as others due to contemporary socio-cultural, economic or political demands (Smith, L, 2003). Graham (2007:254) agrees and defines heritage as: "that part of the past which we select in the present for contemporary purposes". This process of construction, selection and interpretation raises issues to which we shall return in Section 9 below and in the findings and discussion of the authenticity, interpretation and malleability of culture in the context of heritage tourism as practised in Tula (Chapters 10 and 11).

4.4   Modern understandings of cultural heritage tourism

A lot has been written about what happens when the concepts of culture and heritage are combined in cultural heritage tourism. Cultural tourism enables visitors to engage in more intellectual activities than beach holidays, for example. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), cultural tourism can be defined as: 'Movements of persons essentially for culture motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to

festivals and other events, visit sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art, and pilgrimages.' (WTO, 1985:6). It is important to recognise that the motivation for cultural tourism of this kind involves interrelationships between people, places and cultural heritage (Zeppel and Hall, 1991). It also involves a new appreciation of that heritage. Cultural heritage tourism is concerned with the creation of experiences and memories (Smith and Dawson, 2006), that allow us to understand the meanings of the past and the present (Graham, 2007) and that are selected for contemporary purposes, such as social, cultural, economic or political reasons. Heritage is then: "Regarded as a knowledge defined within social, political and cultural context" (Graham, 2007:249).

According to McKercher and DuCros (2002:2): "The growth of cultural tourism coincided with the emergence of a broader society with an appreciation of the need to protect and conserve our dwindling cultural and heritage assets. The demand for cultural heritage products, is evidence of the global concern of society about the welfare and integrity of cultural values." Consequently, cultural tourists are motivated to learn about the history of the place and local culture especially any unique aspects of the place they are visiting (Marciszewska 2006:73). The elements and manifestations of cultural heritage are created by a society through time and distinguish one region from another with the potential to give each region a distinctive identity. This often involves accessing interesting stories that have been preserved by older generations that reflect the ways in which mankind has reacted to issues throughout their existence on Earth. This can be related to the diversification of cultures, sometimes even in the same country. For instance, in communities that lived in arid or humid zones cultures can have very different traditional dresses or cuisine because they had to adapt to their local environmental resources Casasola (2011:31). My research has shown that this diversity is one of the keys to successful place branding strategies because it allows each Magical Town to develop a point of differentiation and to build a strong corporate culture, to use marketing terminology.

One consequence of using an ethnographic, as opposed to an economic or marketing approach, in this study has been the recognition of a difference of view between sociologists and ethnographers on the one hand and business sand marketing professionals. The former view cultural heritage as strongly linked to a sense of place but not necessarily coterminous with the borders of modern nation states. But nearly all discussions of the role of culture in the international business and marketing literature assume that they are. This misunderstanding is based on the influential works of Geert Hofstede who assumed that

cultures and their "dimensions" in terms of behaviour and relationships are measurable national characteristics and did not allow for the existence of sub cultures or ethnic minority cultures at all. When tourism strategies, such as place branding, are designed by business leaders and marketing experts in national governments to facilitate economic regeneration, they may be bringing this assumption with them. My research shows that this matters in terms of community understanding of, and willingness to participate in, place branding strategies. For example, different subcultures may have different patterns of behaviour regarding openness; willingness to share their culture with outsiders. Similarly, the masculinity/femininity dimension may be different between ethnic groups or generations within the same country. That has implications for the role of women in community participation and decision making in heritage tourism. If these differences between subcultures are not recognised, strategies imposed by national tourism authorities may be overcentralised and may clash with aspirations towards local diversity and local empowerment. This issue will be discussed further in Chapter 7 in relation to the governance of the Magical Towns programme.

The conception of cultural heritage adopted in this study is that it is the essence of the past selected for transmission by one generation to the next within a community. In the context of tourism selected culture is also transmitted from insiders to outsiders; from local residents to visitors who may, or may not be of the same generation. Their interpretation and experience of the host community's culture in turn becomes part of the visitors' cultural capital and may form part of their cultural heritage and be passed on within the visitors' community as well. This study accepts the views of Casasola (2011) that the process of selection and transmission of culture in cultural heritage tourism is dynamic and has effects on both hosts and visitors' culture and heritage.

4.4.1 Tangible and intangible cultural heritage

Opinions about what constitutes cultural heritage have shifted greatly in recent years. Many laypeople still regard cultural heritage as comprising World Heritage Sites; a status awarded by UNESCO to major tourist attractions, such as the old city of Dubrovnik in Croatia, the palace and gardens of Versailles in France and the Pyramids of Egypt (Cheah, 1983). Some governments, including Mexico, take the same view and still actively lobby to get their sites listed. In Mexico 35 sites are inscribed on the world heritage list. However, almost all

modern definitions of cultural heritage include both tangible and intangible aspects of our past. For instance, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) defines heritage as: 'A broad concept that includes tangible assets, such as natural and cultural environments, encompassing landscapes, historic places, sites, and built environments, as well as intangible assets, such as collections of, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge, and living experiences' (ICOMOS, 1999).

4.4.2   Tangible cultural heritage

Tangible cultural heritage refers to the physical monuments and natural aspects of heritage in the landscape that we can touch and see. (UNESCO 2000a). According to Timothy (2011) tangible heritage includes material objects that have some physical embodiment of cultural values such as historic monuments, archaeological sites, heritage buildings, cultural artefacts and objects, rural landscapes, villages, gardens and art collections. As Chapter 10 will demonstrate Tula has a number of tangible sites. Local people attach more importance to some than others but all the tangible sites are being actively exploited for tourism although tourists do not always rank them in the same order of importance as local people.

4.4.3   Intangible cultural heritage

In the tourism context, intangible heritage plays a significant role as it enhances the visitor's experience. It was first widely recognised and defined by UNESCO (1998:5) as, 'Folklore or a tradition-based recreation of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals, and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity'. Manifestations include 'live' heritage performances, non-material elements such as, music, dance, local festivals and events, oral traditions, ceremonies, rituals and folklore (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002; Casasola 2011; Timothy, 2011).

Intangible heritage enables visitors to have a deeper understanding of the country or culture that they are learning about because, according to McKercher & Du Cros (2002: 83): 'The setting or cultural space is important, intangible heritage is intrinsically linked to a place or context'. Intangible heritage can have a beneficial effect on the visitor's interest and

knowledge about the culture of the place they are visiting such as: 'The renewal of cultural pride, the revitalisation of customs and traditions, and opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and integration perceptible within local communities.' (Smith 2003:56). As this study will show, intangible cultural heritage can give rise to feelings of ownership, or alienation, just as powerful as tangible items and tends to involve the participation of wider cross sections of the community once that sense of ownership is instilled. In the case of Tula, intangible heritage is arguably more important than the tangible variety.

However, too much is sometimes made of the distinction between tangible and intangible cultural heritage as this study of Tula indicates that the potential benefits, for economic and social regeneration, are most likely to be realised when events are created in which the two actively complement each other.

The remaining issue to be addressed here is how important an artefact or an intangible tradition must be to count as cultural heritage and who decides what is important. The traditional view enshrined in the concept of world heritage Sites is that to qualify a site or tradition must have meaning which transcends its spatial location and must be exceptional or iconic. According to Millar (1989:14) heritage attractions are frequently the main reason for a tourist to travel and sites such as Notre Dame and the Eifel Tower in Paris can motivate people to visit a city or country.

However, some scholars, notably Timothy (2018,) argue that a site, or an intangible tradition, does not have to be exceptional or iconic to qualify as cultural heritage and that if it is important to the local people then it is of value and should be preserved and shared. There is also evidence that iconic and exceptional sites also present an opportunity for host communities in nearby towns and surrounding rural areas to promote themselves as part of the tourist experience. One example from the author's personal experience is the hinterland of Marrakesh, in Morocco. A local tour guide in Marrakesh talked about changes from the last decade, when travellers stayed in the city for their whole vacation. Today tourists demand to explore more, which has inspired local travel agencies to offer cultural tours that involve a different approach with the host community. It has inspired them to provide a one-day excursion to nearby towns, that includes; a stop in a Berber village welcomed by women who play an important role in their community, wearing traditional dresses and talking to visitors about the importance of their identity and culture, while producing Argan

oil, makeup goods and crafts. The tours that are provided by locals, continue with a visit to Essaouira where the tourists have the opportunity to ride camels, wander around the unique markets and try local cuisine.

In agreement with Timothy's position, this study has deliberately chosen not to study a UNESCO World Heritage Site or even the hinterland of an iconic site but to explore feelings about cultural heritage among ordinary residents of an, at first sight, unexceptional small town in Mexico in the belief that the findings will be worthwhile and widely applicable.

4.5   "Ownership" of cultural heritage

Another important dimension of cultural heritage, as it is conceived in this study, is the question of "ownership". Cultural Heritage is not an abstract, it is real to those involved with it and can give rise to feelings of ownership. Ownership does not have to be in the narrow, legal sense, although it can be in the case of intellectual property rights (IPR) over a design such as *La Cuera* in Tula and this can give rise to disputes (see Chapters 9 and 10). Ownership of cultural heritage more commonly involves the assumed right to preserve or change an aspect of culture without outside interference or restriction, a sense of shared identity derived from use of the artefact or participation in the tradition, a sense of pride and a sense of distinctiveness arising from being a member of the culture as opposed to the "other".

Ownership in the non-legal sense described above implies a tendency to resist outside interference in the form of commodification or over regulation. It has also given rise to academic concern regarding what heritage societies choose to preserve and why. Scholars have argued that somehow cultural heritage has been responsible for negatively impacting on the present. Urry (2002:99) stated: 'The protection of the past conceals the destruction of the present', as in some circumstances there is a difference between authentic history and heritage. if cultural heritage is only promoted and recognised for economic reasons, the local community could lose sight of the reason the heritage is worth preserving and it could become simply a commodity tailored for the needs of the tourist. Sack (1992:158-159) suggested that: 'Landscapes of consumption…tend to consume their own contexts'. The real challenge will be to join cultural heritage elements with tourism requirements, to create a product that attracts visitors, while preserving their authentic past (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002). This thesis argues that McKercher and Du Cros challenge can be met. Even though

some elements of heritage have to be modified to suit different circumstances in present times, the dynamism of living cultures allows this to occur without alienating the local community. Furthermore, cultural heritage tourism can create awareness of the importance of protecting and conserving other important cultural objects and traditions unchanged.

On the other hand, the absence of a sense of ownership makes this process of consensual adaptation of cultural heritage less likely to occur. Instead, it is likely to lead to feelings of alienation from a dominant outside culture. This is likely to give rise to negative feelings towards government and tourism officials and refusal to buy into place branding based on cultural heritage which communities do not feel belongs to them. It may also lead to negative attitudes towards the tourists who come to enjoy that cultural heritage.

A sense of ownership of cultural heritage can be vested in a small group of community leaders or representatives, often male and elderly, or it can be much more inclusive and involve forms of representative democracy. This study will suggest that cultural heritage tourism and place branding can combine with other social forces, particularly the rise of social media, to transform the nature of ownership of cultural heritage. The study will also suggest that only when there is a widespread sense of ownership among the host community will the use of cultural heritage lead to dynamic and economically successful place branding because ownership brings control of the process of interaction and adaptation between local culture and tourist needs known as "cultural involution".

4.6   Cultural involution

It has been argued by Ashworth (2009:79-83) that: 'In many instances around the world, it was the outsiders in the form of cultural tour operators who 'discovered' the heritage attraction of a place of which the locals were unaware.' For example, when a potential tourism destination is chosen to be part of a cultural development initiative such as theme towns or art villages the appreciation by outsiders of local attractions, may cause awareness among locals of a place they previously took for granted. When locals understand the significance of their cultural heritage and its importance for preserving their culture, they can become solid protectors of their own heritage. This phenomenon is known as cultural involution and has been the subject of a full-length case study by McKean (1989) in Bali. McKean found that traditional roles of "folk" or "ethnic" cultural performers in Bali have not only survived but been added to. There has been a complex process of selection in a conscious attempt to avoid the homogeneity of the western industrial world and in a manner, which provides alternative and additional sources of income for individuals and has

increased the cohesion of local communities (Mckean, 1989:124). During this process of cultural involution McKean found

A continuous syncretic process has occurred in Bali through which elements of the traditions are mixed so that it is practically impossible to distinguish them, yet it is possible to see adumbrations of each in the current blend. Modernization in Bali is occurring; tourism introduces new ideas and is a major source of funds. Yet, the tourists expect the perpetuation of ancient traditions, especially in the performing and plastic arts, and would not visit in such numbers if Bali were to become thoroughly modern island. Both conservatism and economic necessity encourage the Balinese to maintain their skills as carvers, musicians, and dancers in order to have the funds for modernization. (Mckean, 1989:126).

McKean found that through the process of cultural involution the Balinese people's aspirations gradually changed to include more education, improved health care, and technological development. The latter, it is believed will enable the local people to engage with and attract even more international tourists thus creating a virtuous circle (Mckean, 1989:127-138). However, those aspirations have not caused the younger Balinese population to lose their identity but has framed it in the mirror of tourism and led many to celebrate their own traditions (McKean, 1989:132). Interestingly, McKean also found that the success of tourism in Bali gave the local people new found power within Indonesia (McKean, 1989:138).

The possibility of a similar phenomenon of cultural involution guided my research in Tula. However, before my fieldwork started, I was aware that McKean's study is now 30 years old and Bali differs from the Mexican Magical Towns in one important respect, so I approached the topic with an open mind. Bali is aiming at international tourists whereas visitors to the Magical Towns including Tula are almost entirely domestic tourists and significantly less wealthy. Nevertheless, a similar process of cultural involution is very apparent in Tula with comparable economic benefits. Similar aspirations to an improved level of services were also found in Tula but these have so far not been satisfied and there has been no discernible improvement in the power or status of Tula or the State of Tamaulipas within Mexican politics.

4.7   The use of cultural heritage for consumption and regeneration

In recent years, there has been an evident rise in interest in the use of aspects of cultural heritage presented for consumption to satisfy tourist requirements both national and international. This coincides with the growing demand for cultural tourism described by McKercher and Du Cros (2002), following the emergence of a broader section of society that considers it imperative to protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage assets, but also searches for tourism experiences. The use of both tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage as assets to attract tourists to potential destinations is a widely used strategy, in which culinary tourism, religious festivities, events, traditional music and dances seem to be the most popular elements.

Indeed cultural heritage is sometimes seen as a magical solution to problems of economic and social regeneration because: "Place-based, vernacular heritage appears to offer a magical fusion of two seemingly corresponding contemporary phenomena: the shift in heritage towards living history, and the ground-level desire within local groups to put their identity on display and stake the claim for ordinary local history in the construction of official heritage" Dicks (2004:142)

4.7.1   Authenticity and commodification: Creating products for tourism

Authenticity and commodification have become hot topics in cultural heritage tourism in recent years but as Alberts and Hazen (2010:62) state: "The concept of authenticity is not easy to define. Authenticity is socially constructed, so it has different meanings in different cultural contexts". According to Shepherd (2002:192) something authentic is distinguished from something fake "by tying a particular culture to a specific people and a particular place, distinct from market relationships with outsiders, particularly tourists." His examples focus on China and Bali but the point that authenticity requires culture, people and place, this is equally relevant to Tula where my research shows the local cultural performers, artisans and restauranteurs are members of the local community rooted in the place who make crafts or perform for the love of their own culture as well as money. Most have other jobs and are not outside, full time professionals.

Tiberghien (2018) investigated how authentic eco-cultural tourism can be managed in Kazakhstan in the context of current debates about commodification. He reviews the concept of evolution and the idea that commodification occurs when a culture is frozen at a point in time. He also points out that authenticity is a western concept which tourists expect and recognise but which may have little meaning for host communities, Therefore, its imposition by tourism managers may imply power distance relationships. However, authenticity can also empower local communities by reviving traditional crafts and encouraging the use of storytelling to build a brand and preserve traditions. Tiberghien goes on to argue that authenticity is enhanced when tourism numbers are carefully controlled which personalizes the "host-guest interaction" and allows exchange of feelings as well as commodities such as food or crafts. Following Cohen and Cohen (2012) he describes this process as "hot authentication" as opposed to "cool authentication" in which an official certifies something as authentic. Empowering the local community both improves the level of authenticity and encourages local initiatives to extend the range of tourism events and experiences. But success requires improving the "cultural proficiency" of the local community, mechanisms for authenticating products, sites and services such as guesthouses and building a brand based on uniqueness. Tiberghien et al (2013). The concept of "hot authenticity" is appealing and in Tula similar attempts have been made to improve the "cultural proficiency" of the local community but there has been no attempt has been made to limit visitor numbers. On the contrary both the tourism authorities and local entrepreneurs are trying to expand numbers and reduce the traditional element of seasonality. Some local people seem to be trying to preserve exclusive local spaces to limit host-guest interaction. Therefore, it will be necessary to evaluate the extent to which Tiberghien's observations about authenticity are replicated in Tula (see Chapters 10 and 11).

The opposite of authenticity, commodification is not easy to define either and even the terminology varies in the literature. This thesis will generally use the term *commodification*, but will respect authors such as Cohen (1988:380) when they refer to *commoditization*. Cohen defined it as the process by which things and activities are assessed to transform into goods and services. In the tourism context this means, 'The modification of cultural elements such as: traditional music and dances, religious festivities, regional dresses or local cuisine fusions … for visitors' consumption as an opportunity to shape the

presentation of the asset' (McKercher & Du Cros 2002:107). This can be experienced in diverse social activities or specially created cultural events.

According to McKercher & Du Cros (2002:101): 'A unique asset, culture, or building is not a tourist attraction unless its tourism potential is actualized by enabling its consumption'. The success of a product depends heavily on the ability of the manufacturers or service providers to understand what the consumer desires. 'Any discussion of products, therefore, must always occur from the perspective of the consumer' (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002:103). If the consumer's requirements are not considered, the risk is that a cultural product does not contribute to tourist satisfaction, and is therefore a waste of time, material and financial resources. I looked for, and found, evidence of the process described by McKercher and Du Cros taking place in Tula where, reluctantly, local service providers, especially hoteliers and craft producers have responded to market forces and adapted their standards of service and product design to meet tourist needs.

The literature shows that, as in Tula, commodification is often contested and carries risks. In fact, one of the first studies on the commoditization of culture was written by Greenwood (1977), who believed that commoditization could cause the loss of the meaning of a cultural element. He cited a situation in Fuenterrabia, a town in the Basque region of Spain which promotes itself as a well- preserved town with a relaxing maritime atmosphere and fantastic food. In the 1970s a local ritual, *Alarde,* was traditionally performed once a year on September 8th. The *Alarde* is a military procession held to celebrate the vows made to the virgin of Guadalupe in 1639 in gratitude for breaking the siege imposed on the town by French troops. It became a major attraction leading to local authorities paying locals to perform their traditional ceremony twice a day for tourism purposes but 'The ritual has become a performance for money. The meaning is gone' (Greenwood, 1977:135).

Greenwood is not alone in perceiving commodification as a threat to authentic heritage (Shepherd, 2002). However, the subsequent history of Fuenterrabia shows that lessons have been learned. In recent years the *Alarde* has reverted to an annual event and Fueterrabia has diversified in other types of cultural heritage which can be commodified and promoted all year round without compromising authenticity. The town has seen a boom in its culinary scene as many young chefs have taken their knowledge to Fuenterrabia(https://www.euskoguide.com/places-basque-country/spain/hondarribia-tourism/). However, there are still concerns among scholars and heritage managers

regarding the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism activity. Excessive or inappropriate commodification still occurs elsewhere despite the improvements in Fuenterrabia and biased interpretation and negative effects on the preservation of historic sites caused by excessive numbers of visitors or disrespectful behaviour such as litter, graffiti and failure to observe appropriate dress in religious sites are also documented by Ashworth (2009) who argues that tourism inevitably destroys the culture it visits.

There is also a different perspective from the field of development economics. In developing countries, where host communities struggle for economic survival, it has been argued that commodification provides opportunities for positive development, especially the creation of employment and revalorisation of local traditions and heritage. Having an opportunity to express their heritage and receive a benefit from it is sometimes appreciated by local communities. As Cohen (1988:382) states: 'commoditization often hits a culture not when it is flourishing, but when its already in decline…Under such circumstances, the emergence of a tourist market frequently facilitates the preservation of a cultural tradition which would otherwise perish.'

4.7.2 The English Lake District: A case study of positive commodification for regional development

The Lake District in England, has long been popular for outdoor activities and for its unique landscapes and villages. Then, in July 1991, an innovative strategy to boost and diversify tourism in the region emerged. Called 'The World of Beatrix Potter'. It leveraged the success of the fictional children's character Peter Rabbit, created in the early 1900s by Beatrix Potter. She was inspired by the scenery of the Lake District and her stories are still popular today (Craik, 1997:113). The tourist activities within the Lake District, include guided tours, exhibitions and art galleries where local crafts and paintings are related to the book's theme character, have thus expanded the visitor's experience, that used to be only outdoor activities, to literary tourism. As Craik (1997:116) stated: 'The diversity of the Potter industry has added to, rather than detracted from, the success of this form of tourism.' Craik admits that the success has brought parking problems, traffic, overcrowding and lack of facilities in the town which has affected tourist and caused resentment among locals. As part of my preliminary research for this thesis I paid a visit in 2014 which showed that the Potter experience still is one of the main attractions and traffic and parking issues have still

not been resolved despite the emergence of private parking businesses but I didn't perceive any hostile attitudes from the locals who seem to have adjusted over time.

It is also beneficial for cultural tourist branding if there is more than one site or personality to attract a wider audience. In the case of the Lake District, Beatrix Potter was not the only major literary figure to have lived there. William Wordsworth one of the main English romantic poets, was similarly inspired by the elements of nature while living at Dove Cottage in the Lake District, as shown by one of his most important works, 'Daffodils'. Today Wordsworth themed attractions include museums, exhibitions and places of poetic inspiration such as: Wordsworth House, Wordsworth's Grave, Glencoyne Bay and Dove Cottage, which attract visitors from around the world, create employment and have revalorised the local traditions. (www.visitcumbria.com/wordsworth-attractions-lakedistrict).

4.7.3   Lessons learned

As stated in the introduction I regard every place and every community as unique and worthy of their own case study, but there are striking similarities between Fuenterrabia, the English lake district and Tula. All three are areas of small towns in rural landscapes and all three have grappled with issues of authenticity and commoditization. However, there are two important differences. Firstly, the Lake district has a much longer history of cultural heritage tourism than Tula and secondly both Fuenterrabia and the Lake District are appealing to international tourism whereas the Magical Towns are aimed at a domestic audience who are closer to the local culture than, for example Japanese tourists are to the Beatrix Potter phenomenon. Theoretically, this should mean that visitors to the Magical towns require less mediation.

In the primary research for this thesis I used the existing case studies as reference points for my observations in Tula.   As a result, in this thesis I will argue that cultural representations do not have to lose their authenticity or significance. As will be shown in Chapters 9-11, the situation in Tula tends to support Cohen and Craik's more optimistic view of commodification rather than Greenwood or Ashworth's fears.

Regarding the debate for and against commodification. I propose the model of types of commodification shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed typology of commodification. (Author)

Type	Agents	Power	Examples	Sources
"Regulatory Commodification"	Governments	Compulsory	Public health and sanitation standards, environmental protection/sustainability product labelling intellectual property rights	Tiberghien (2018), Moore Cherry (2015)
"Mediatory Commodification"	Tour operators, local tourism authorities	Negotiable between tour operators, local people and visitors	Tour guides Maps Signs Informal face to face interactions	Timothy and Boyd (2003) Tiberghien (2018)
"Commercial commodification"	Artisans	Negotiable between producers and consumers	Frequency of events, product design (shape, size, colour etc), packaging and marketing, additional services	Greenwood (1977), Craik (1977) https://www.euskoguide.com/places-basque-country/spain/hondarribia-tourism/

Despite evidence of some problems such as litter and graffiti (See Chapter 10), I argue that cultural tourism contributes substantially to the preservation and valorisation of heritage in developing countries, and provides the opportunity to create jobs for the host community that have also improved the lives of people there. Also, the introduction of cultural development initiatives and strategies have made locals aware of significant heritage. Some locals did not appreciate their heritage as being worth preserving, and so with the arrival of foreign visitors they have learned to value their own traditions and identity. In this way, tourism has endorsed the realisation of cultural heritage goals.

However, my research leads me to add two qualifications to the above generalisation. Firstly, I concur with Craik's view (1997:125) that: "Crucial to success is the ability to package and promote the integrated tourism product in a way that is sufficiently attractive to potential visitors, usually not just by promoting a single tourist experience but through a range of potential experiences for different fractions of the market." Secondly, time and the temporal dynamism and malleability of culture have also emerged as an important factor. My interviews in Tula supports the studies of Getz (1994) on Speyside, Scotland show that it takes a number of years for communities to resolve the conflicts around authenticity and evolve an acceptable level of commodification and that consensus does not emerge until ownership of cultural heritage and the place brand is widely shared and trust built up. This is also in accordance with the findings of Schofield (2010) in his studies of local attitudes towards propose development in Salford, England and with the findings of Fuentes-Carrera (2015) in a failed Magical Towns in Mexico.

4.8   The relationship between cultural heritage and the growth of government tourism development initiatives

Heritage centres and projects often win government financial backing precisely because they have a twin track appeal; economic growth couched in the language of place-marketing as well as a social and cultural connection with local historical identity and commemoration for future generations (Dicks 2004:142-143).   The growth of state sponsored tourism initiatives is partly due to the demand for cultural activities in a more highly educated global society where people are motivated to travel for cultural self-enlightenment (Coathup, 1999). This partly explains the rise in place branding within countries as well as global

destination branding of entire countries. Butcher (2001:11) states that because the growth of tourism around cultural themes has the potential to bring benefits to economically peripheral regions it is likely that a site considered to have potential for cultural heritage development will be supported and protected by the government and private organisations. One example of an effective initiative for cultural regeneration, in this case by a transnational organisation, is the 'Cultural Capital of Europe'. Obvious cities with well-known cultural history such as Athens, Berlin, Florence and Paris have received this title. More significantly, in 1990, Glasgow, a declining industrial city in Scotland, was designated by the European Commission which marked Glasgow's transformation into a destination for cultural heritage tourism, in which the benefits included: renovated historical buildings, new cultural facilities and a renewed civic pride in local people, (Zeppel and Hall 1992:53). The investment in art, culture, museums and festivals expanded the local tourist industry and attracted large numbers of tourists. The example of Glasgow shows that for less obvious destinations branding can be challenging. But despite this disadvantage many post-industrial cities have reinvented themselves through various processes of tourism driven urban renewal and Glasgow proves that the benefits can be enduring. In 2014 Glasgow was the venue for the Commonwealth Games which funded further infrastructure investment. Some commentators claim that the marketing effort also raised awareness and provided considerable media coverage of the place and its environs. (Hankinson 2010:28). However, an opposing view is that the 2014 Commonwealth Games failed to integrate the local community or deliver a lasting legacy (www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLdAFKtNLkA).   The example of Glasgow and the controversies arising suggested points to look out for in my fieldwork because Tula, albeit on a much smaller scale, joined the Magical Towns programme because it was also in need of revival following the decline of its traditional industries (see Chapter 9).

4.9   The role of mediation and interpretation of cultural heritage

Regeneration programmes and Place branding strategies may bring visitors but how they understand and interpret what they see is crucial. Visitors do not view cultural heritage in a vacuum, they bring their own prior knowledge and preconceptions, and their interpretation of what they see can be mediated by tourist authorities and local communities interacting with visitors either face to face or online.

Interpretation is defined by the Association of Heritage interpretation (AHI) as 'the art of helping people explore and appreciate the world' (Association of Heritage Interpretation, 2018). The role and purpose of interpretation has also attracted some academic attention. In the opinion of Herbert (1989a:191) the role of interpretation is 'to make people more aware of the places they visit, to provide knowledge which increases their understanding and to promote interest which leads to greater enjoyment and perhaps responsibility'. In the case of cultural heritage sites which are no longer inhabited that interpretation needs to be academic and is nearly always required because the meanings of places and their significance are difficult to grasp without the assistance of interpreters. A good case study of the way tourism authorities can make sense of such a site and provide informal educational experiences for visitors is Hadrian's Wall in Northern England (Timothy and Boyd, 2003:198, 231-232). This study informed my visits to the similarly uninhabited Pyramid in Tula, my interviews with a local historian and conservations and my recommendations about how that site can be better mediated for visitors (see Chapter 10 and 11).

However, where sites involve living heritage host communities should be encouraged to participate in the interpretations of their heritage because they are uniquely placed to explain its significance to them which may not be apparent to outsiders. However local inhabitants cannot provide everything which visitors need to interpret a site. Heritage attractions also require an appropriate infrastructure particularly heritage centres which are part of the representation of culture and can mediate between visitors and local people. Macdonald (1997:155) states that a heritage centre should be: 'A purpose-built representation of what is considered an appropriate depiction of the past and the locality'. However, according to Craik (1997) interpretative centres can in some cases fall short of this ideal because they lack appeal and diverse resources, suitable facilities and enthusiastic staff.

Even if heritage centres are well resourced and staffed, bias is a big issue in the interpretation of heritage. One form of that is overemphasis on the iconic and the exceptional at the expense of everyday cultures. The UNESCO World Heritage programme has attracted criticism.

> *'The branding of cultural heritage with national and international trademarks such as UNESCO World Heritage or National Historic Landmark status has contributed appreciably to lopsided measures of heritage tourism and its over-emphasising iconic and exceptional places. The very process of accentuating the extraordinary past as the tourism industry and branding agencies have done has simultaneously disinherited the legacies of ordinary people and places to the point where much of it has disappeared.' Timothy (2018:179).*

Fortunately, there has been some improvement in recent years and Timothy goes on state that:

> *"UNESCO has recently recognized the need to draw attention to the salience of other heritages beyond the most iconic, tangible and ancient patrimony to include more colloquial elements of the human past, such as music, dance, traditions, folklore, games and cuisine." Timothy (2018:179).*

As explained above, this thesis supports Timothy's position and has purposively avoided the exceptional and the iconic.

A form of bias is the deliberate distortion of history and culture either directly by the state in government funded or licensed tourism projects, or indirectly by local people who have been fed a distorted interpretation via state education systems. This often results in the marginalisation or exclusion of the cultural heritage of ethnic or religious minorities or indigenous peoples and telling the story of a culture only from the point of view of the dominant strand, or a war only from the point of view of the victors. Palestine is a classic example where, according to Glock (1994/95:48), the key issues are what is selected for archaeological excavation and tourist development and why. He argues that: "The past like memory, is selected to support the present" and there has been a cultural bias among archaeologists that could distort the understanding of the past in which their "objectivity" in the field ignores some achievements of the local culture, because the majority of the excavations were directed by archaeologists from England, Europe and the United States, which could interfere with the Palestinians' cultural connection with their past. Another example is a subtle form of discrimination against indigenous peoples which has recently emerged in Latin American tourism. According to Ohmichen-Bazan and Maza-Cabrera (2019)

state policies increasingly make use of elements of indigenous culture such as ceremonies, dances and music in the promotion of tourism whilst denying the authors of those traditions civil rights especially over land and place. Both examples, in Palestine and in Latin America, exclude at least one of Shepherd's triumvirate of conditions for authenticity, culture, people and place. Both, therefore raise red flags which informed my assessment of authenticity, bias and commodification in Tula.

4.10 Conclusions

There are many countries around the world that see tourism as an opportunity for development. There is also growing global awareness of cultural heritage as an asset and the significance of its conservation. Academics, local authorities and international organisations are all well- aware of the possibilities of kick starting local economic development and improved standards of living. To that end government policies aimed at preserving and maintaining local traditions and cultural heritage have become more prominent.

Case studies show that using cultural heritage sensitively as an asset to promote cultural tourism and attract tourists has contributed to the social, cultural and economic development of many regions. This not only enhances the tourism experience but it also benefits the locals that are using their cultural resources to satisfy the visitor's needs and bring about a positive economic impact on their regions.

However, there are still a number of concern among scholars and heritage managers regarding the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism activity; particularly questions concerning authenticity and commodification. Excessive or inappropriate commodification leading to loss of authenticity, inadequate or biased interpretation and negative effects on the preservation of historic sites caused by excessive numbers of visitors or disrespectful behaviour are all understandable worries, supported by case studies in the literature. Some places have learned to manage these issues by respecting culture, people and place which ensure authenticity, by actively involving the people in a consensual evolution of culture which avoids excessive commodification whilst still meeting consumer needs and providing income and employment for local people. the lessons and by providing

effective and impartial mediation. Where these lessons have been learned a mutually enriching process of cultural involution has occurred where tourists have taught local people to value aspects of their cultural heritage which they once took for granted.

Some places still have not learned the lessons and case studies if failed cultural heritage tourism initiatives can still be found in the literature. Nevertheless, the literature does provide a lot of guidance about best practice and successful examples of place branding for cultural heritage tourism which guided my assessment of the impact of the Magical Towns initiative in Tula. I will go on to argue that cultural tourism now contributes substantially to the preservation and valorisation of heritage in Tula, and provides the opportunity to create jobs for the host community that have also improved the lives of people there as well as making locals more aware of their significant heritage. However, this only occurred after a difficult transition period and only after local people seized the initiative and took collective ownership of their heritage.

Chapter 5- Community development through tourism

The ways in which cultural heritage has been used to promote tourism primarily for the benefit of the tourists and for economic regeneration were presented in Chapter 4, that also considered which artefacts and experiences have been adapted for tourist consumption in the process of commodification and the potential conflicts with the authenticity and preservation of local culture. Literature demonstrates that problems can arise if the process of commodification is imposed by external actors without the participation and consent of the local community. However, it is generally agreed that successful local community development arising from place branded tourism is based on the participation of the hosts, who can identify local natural and cultural resources available in the community that can be used for effective development. For example, Serrano et al. (2011) point out that tourism is considered an instrument, or fundamental resource for local development and for the integration and participation of the host community.

There are also positive examples which suggest that the active participation of the local community is a vital factor in the effectiveness of place branding as a tool for regeneration. My interest in carrying out primary research in Tula is to establish exactly how community participation can best enhance the effectiveness of the Magical Towns brand and how it can lead to the best outcomes for the local community. Hence research question 2 (See page 25):

> *To what extent, and under what circumstances, can the implementation of the Magical Towns place brand in Tula, Tamaulipas, Mexico be made more effective with participation by the host communities?*

However, the key terms, "community", "participation" and "empowerment" are constructs capable of a variety of interpretations and are often used loosely in the context of tourism development. The chapter will unpack the precise meaning of these terms and show how these concepts can assist in successful outcomes.

There is also little consensus about what exactly participation means and what form should it take. According to Murphy (1988:97) "The tourism industry needs to become a facilitator of community aspirations as well as a business." This is an opportunity for the tourism industry, as tourists search for authentic experiences. The local resources and conservation of their unique regional elements will enhance the genuine uniqueness of a destination that tourists are seeking. This thesis will argue that community aspirations, at least in Tula will not be satisfied just by economic regeneration but also the increase of social capital. This term will also be unpacked and defined before the chapter goes on to consider some of the barriers which may have to be overcome.

5.1   The meaning of "community" in a tourism development context

For a town, such as Tula, to be successfully branded as a theme town it must have a sense of common identity and common purpose based on an identifiable geographical location to give the brand coherence. That common identity and common purpose is one meaning of the term "community" as used by Ander-Egg (2003) in his definition of a community as a group of people that share a geographical space, traditions, and customs. They are characterised by providing mutual support and playing an important role in the development of a place. Murphy (1988:96) adds an important element; bonding. In his view community: "represents a bonding of people and place, which creates its own distinctive character and force for survival in an increasingly impersonal and big business world". Later chapters of this thesis will explore how that bonding occurs in Tula, particularly the role of common interests, cultural involution and social media.

In the tourism context, the inclusion of the host communities, as defined by Ander Egg and Murphy is frequently used as a strategy for local development. According to Lenao and Saarinen (2015:203) initiatives to "facilitate participation and integration of communities in tourism planning and operations," aim to improve the quality of life of the host community. However, as we shall see in Chapter 10 and 11 who defines "improvement", its degree of inclusiveness and in which spheres of life it occurs, is controversial in Tula and beyond.

5.2 The scale and nature of "participation" in a tourism development context

The ways in which the community participate in a tourism development project may be partly dependent on the scale of the project. Murphy (1988:97) argues that, "To ensure that the industry and community survive and prosper over the long haul it will be necessary to develop at a scale and pace appropriated to local conditions. In this way tourism can become a true community enterprise, one which possesses mutually beneficial possibilities-synergism." As Murphy points out in this passage, scale is crucial because it changes the nature of participation. With a small- scale development such as Tula which has a population of just over 10,000, every individual stakeholder can be directly involved in decision making. But when a project gets bigger that is no longer possible because meetings become unwieldy. The creation of committees is an alternative to promote social cooperation and community development in which local groups have the ability to find potential members of the community that can act as leaders or representatives to speak for the residents and find the best way to integrate the host community into future projects and planning for tourism to create effective opportunities, and also solutions, for the host communities' needs. However, issues can then arise about how representatives are chosen and power-distance relationships between them and their constituents. large scale projects require legal, political and economic accountability and the Magical Towns programme, when viewed as a nationwide undertaking is a large-scale project. This tends to lead to formal committee structures. But when committees become formalised, membership often requires conformity to a dress code, availability of free time and specialist knowledge of procedure and etiquette. This tends to confine membership to the professional, middle classes and exclude the uneducated and those from rural areas. On the other hand, economics often requires large scale developments to spread the cost of infrastructure improvements and marketing. It is not easy for community tourism development projects to balance the conflict between the need for widespread empowerment on the one hand and scale as well as accountability on the other hand. In Tula, where a representative system has been mandated by SECTUR (See Chapter 7).

An example of effective representation achieving a beneficial partnership between the local community and tourist authorities is the case of Victoria, British Columbia in Canada (Murphy, 1988:99-100). In the early 1980's, 53 different groups related to tourism were

identified by a Chamber of Commerce survey, so they created workshops designed to bring the tourism industry and local community together, to pursue better organisation and coordination between them. The workshops were called 'Directions on the future of tourism in Victoria', and representatives of interested groups were invited to participate, comment or add to the presentations. According to Murphy, this method worked, and as a result a more community sensitive proposal was drawn up, encouraging the community to adopt new perspectives and develop short (one year) and long (over one year) term strategies. However, this approach proved not be replicable in Tula and the reasons why became part of my research.

5.2.1 Stages of development and the nature of community participation

However, direct participation, or representation in decision making is not always necessary and may depend on the stage of development of the host community. "Community participation in the tourism development process in many developing countries has been recognised as helping local people to get more economic benefits via employing them as workers or encouraging them to operate small scale business, rather than creating opportunities for local people to have a say in the decision-making process of tourism development" (Tosun, 2000:626).

A supporting example comes from a study by Li (2006) of community involvement in the development of Jiuzhaigou Biosphere reserve (UNESCO World Heritage) in China, an area that benefits from its cultural traditions due to the Tibetans that make up 80% of the population. Li found that this community have minimum participation in decision making and the tourism development process, but the results of the study showed that "Local residents felt they were receiving satisfactory benefits from tourism and believed that the environment in the reserve has improved" Li (2006:140). But the article goes on to state that "This does not mean opposition to community participation in decisions but rather that it is not a necessary condition in all contexts" (Li, 2006:141). Purely economic participation of the kind described by Tosun and Li is theoretically independent of scale and of arguments about the merits of participatory or representative democracy. However, Tosun (2000), and Liu et al (2014), add the important caveat that all forms of participation, even at a purely economic level, have

to be a consensual, voluntary action in which individuals confront the responsibilities and also opportunities for their community. This implies that successful commodification cannot be forced by outside agencies such as tour companies. My research tested the theories of Tosun and Li in Tula and found that they did not apply. The community in Tula wanted more than just economic benefits from place branding and withheld their co-operation until such benefits began to emerge. This evidence leads me to believe that a broad view of community empowerment to embrace social capital as well as economic gains is essential for the success of place branding in Mexico. The conflict between my empirical evidence and the literature also led me to explore the reasons why direct, inclusive participation is essential in the Mexican context (see Chapters 7 and 8).

5.3   The meaning of "empowerment" in a tourism development context

The term "empowerment" can refer to different aspects of life and different social groups. The first aspect is social empowerment through cultural involution as found by Marciszewska in Poland (2006:93): "The community not only preserved their local culture and heritage but also created a feeling of togetherness and an appreciation of local traditions. Improving the town's appearance and creating a 'sense of a place'; a vital part of the community empowerment". The presence of visitors can create awareness of cultural heritage resources among residents. This offers locals an opportunity to explore places in their own town, and have recreational activities for their families in the region.

To insist on the importance of social and political empowerment as this thesis will is not to deny the importance of economic growth as stressed by Tosun (2000) and Li (2006), or that economic growth can be empowering. Smith and Robinson (2006:159) focus on this aspect, particularly the internal development of the community and the appreciation of local resources and promotion. They argue that tourism is becoming an increasingly important means of livelihood and economic innovation for local communities but this will only be empowering in certain circumstances. Communities are likely to expect tangible benefits and continuous incomes from the resources used for tourism. However, according to the authors it is unrealistic and unfair for host communities to wait a long time to see the

recompense for their work. To avoid this an alternative model for community economic empowerment suggested by Scheyvens (2002:240) is to: "ensure that local labour and materials are employed in any construction work, and encourage associated activities such as the manufacture of crafts products which could be sold at other tourism sites until the community venture is established."

There is political empowerment which involves extending democracy beyond periodic elections and enabling community voices to guide decision making about future community projects. It changes the focus from development for communities to development by communities (Sofield, 2003). In the tourism context key decisions are likely to focus on infrastructure to make cultural heritage more accessible or to mediate it more effectively, enhance the place brand by developing new attractions and products, promote sustainability and use the income generated from cultural heritage tourism to improve basic services for local people such as health care and education. In recent years a huge, cross disciplinary literature has emerged on the topic of political empowerment in general (Combaz and McLoughlin, 2014). Much of it is relevant to tourism but has so far been applied mainly to sustainable and eco-tourism rather than cultural heritage branding. The topic can be approached through studying either process or outcomes although the latter has predominated in the literature (Aghazamani and Hunt, 2017). However, this thesis will suggest that the rapid emergence of social media raises new questions regarding process in the tourism context.

5.3.1 The empowerment of women

Empowerment projects are not always designed to benefit all sections of the community equally. In fact, sometimes they are intended to rectify existing imbalances in power distribution. One example which has received a great deal of attention in development studies in general, and tourism development in particular, is the empowerment of women. It is widely believed that tourism development favours men but a recent quantitative study using the Resident Empowerment Through Tourism Scale (RETS) by Bynum Boley et al (2016) in the USA and Japan casts doubt on this belief. They found that tourism development in the USA empowered women more than men and even in a traditionally patriarchal society such as Japan the scores were not significantly different.

Vujko et al (2018:1) come to the same conclusion in another patriarchal society, Serbia and described a mechanism which accounts for the effect. A project to establish associations (self-help groups) aimed to support local women to create forms of self-employment. These relate to local tourism and include production of hand-crafted souvenirs, renting their houses or rooms, traditional production of knitted and crocheted items and making medicinal products from plants. The study suggests that the main motive for women's empowerment in Serbia was economic; to be able to do something financially for their families. But there is a social empowerment aspect as well. The women feel more empowered when belonging to support associations. Cultural aspects, such as traditional commitment to families and childcare, can sometimes be a barrier for empowerment. But the support associations provide opportunities for exchanging ideas, expressing women's creativity and skills, building self- realization and female autonomy and providing local support on rural issues as well as the opportunity to be part of the community development process. "it can be assumed that these groups play a vital role in overcoming the psychological, cultural, and social barriers." Vujko et al (2018:2). Another mechanism by which tourism can empower women was explored by Barry (2012). In rural Kenya, she showed how a women's NGO formed for the purpose, the Isecheno Women's Conservation Group, educate their peers in sustainability and have become role models in their community, educators and "stewards for their culture." In the process they too have created employment in tourist facing industries and raised the local standard of living.

However, not all studies are so positive. In Nigeria a mixed methods study found that women remain severely underrepresented in employment related to cultural tourism where they have been marginalized by a combination of religion, marriage, lack of legal rights and government indifference ((Chinonso, Onyeocha and Anyanwu, 2015). A study in Sikkim State in India found a similar picture of under representation of women in tourist employment (30.41% of employees compared with 47% in Mexico as a whole). However, the Indian figure excludes the self-employed and there is evidence of growing micro entrepreneurship among women and unlike Nigeria the government is proactively trying to break down barriers and empower women through tourism development (Rizal and Asokan, 2013). Both the Nigerian and Indian studies concentrate almost entirely on economic empowerment but, as explained above, this thesis is concerned with social and political empowerment as well. From that perspective the work of Tamandani, Bostani and Miri (2015) in Zahedan city, Iran forms a useful stating point. Using regression analysis, they found positive Pearson coefficients between the participation of women in tourism development and ten different aspects of

women's' wellbeing including literacy, health, lower fertility rates, greater access to management and entrepreneurial roles and social life. However, the authors suggest there is a lot more that could be done.

With all these studies, both positive and negative, in mind my research set out to verify which if any of their conclusions are replicable through the development of the Magical Towns brand in Tula.

5.4   Equitable benefits and community benefits tourism initiatives

Not everyone agrees that tourism projects aimed at empowering sections of the community such as women are desirable. Simpson (2008) argues that equitable sharing of the benefits is important to avoid conflict within the community and coined the phrase Community Benefits Tourism Initiatives (CBTI). He points out that one of the defining principles of CBTI is the transfer of benefits to a community regardless of location, instigation, size, level of wealth, involvement, ownership or control" including benefits to the whole community not to a specific segment. In this respect CBTI differs from other types of tourism, for example, Pro-poor Tourism (PPT) or feminist tourism, that focuses on poverty alleviation or the empowerment of women. (Simpson, 2008:2-3).

However, other researchers have pointed out that achieving the kind of universal impact envisaged by Simpson's CBTI model is not easy. While it may be idealistic to believe that all residents of a host community will benefit equally from tourism development initiatives, Scheyvens (2002:241) believes that attempting and supporting equitable development will encourage wider residents' participation. However, Ander-Egg (2000) emphasised that the consequences of tourism will vary from one destination to another, as host communities are not "homogenous". They may differ in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, social class, income or geographical location. Consequently, the process of rural tourism development could be: "a complex process that involves potential conflicts and negotiations with different actors with different aims." Lenao and Saarinen, 2015:203). Previous research in Mexican Magical Towns has confirmed the occurrence of both conflict and negotiation between different sectors of the community channelled through sectoral representation on the Magical Towns Committees (Clausen and Gyimothy, 2016). With this literature in mind my research set out

to explore the cohesion of the community in Tula and the power dynamics involved in the development of the Magical Towns brand and the distribution of benefits, which will be described in Chapter 9 and the conclusions will be presented in Chapters 10 and 11.

5.5   Building social capital through community participation and development

My prior experience as a tourism professional in Mexico led me believe that the aspirations of the communities in the Magical Towns are not limited to economic growth but include social and political as well as economic participation in order to achieve both empowerment and the enhancement of social capital. The survey findings presented in Chapter 10 confirm this.

Putnam (2000) viewed social capital as a public good and defined the concept in terms of resources which could be accessed via a set of networks and norms of civil engagement by which members of a community learn to trust one another sufficiently for trade, money lending and the civic engagement which underpins democracy to flourish. It is, generally accepted that levels of social capital, according to Putnam's definition, vary between different groups within a society and that low levels of social capital are correlated with various forms of disadvantage, especially unemployment, ill health and social and political exclusion, while high levels of social capital are correlated with prosperity, social status and a sense of wellbeing (Cook, 2014). Consequently, the debate on development, using tourism or other means, often centres around ways of enhancing the social capital of disadvantaged groups such as the poor, women or those living in rural areas.

According to Claridge (2019) there is now a recognised typology of social capital. Firstly, it can be considered from a network perspective. Here the principal distinction is between "bonding" and "bridging" social capital. The former involves close relationships between people in the same social group such as an occupation, often in a closed group which excludes others. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, creates links between people from different social groups such as different occupations, different ethnicities or different geographical locations. Secondly, social capital can be viewed from a social structure perspective. This distinguishes structural, cognitive and relational social capital. Structural

social capital creates frameworks for getting things done; rules, procedures etc. Cognitive social capital as its name suggests is about shared beliefs, ideas, values and norms of behaviour. Finally, relational social capital is about interpersonal matters such as trust and power-distance.

In the context of cultural heritage tourism, building social capital, is vital to accomplish common benefits. According to Liu, et al. (2014:191) "Social capital has the ability to improve cooperation between community residents and the coordination of the development process". Macleod (2009) draws attention to three themed towns in Scotland (Wigtown Book Town, Kirkcudbright Artist's Town and Castle Douglas Food Town) each with communities that try to pursue common goals using development initiatives that have led to economic, social and cultural changes, including a positive impact on social capital. Macleod's study is mainly concerned with local identities. He points out the significance of economic generation, local acceptance and the growing number of local networks to enhance social capital and ensure future survival.

> *"The very act of intentionally developing theme towns, with the creation of interest groups, the organisation of town events, the inclusion of traders in campaigns, means an increase in co-operation among groups of people, and the establishment of recognised networks, formal or informal: this is a form of social capital and recognised as being of great value for a community wishing to develop successfully" (Macleod, 2009:143).*

In the social sphere, an increase in activities for residents and improvements in local public services, if managed correctly can bring revaluation and revitalisation of local culture and tradition, community cohesion, exchange of ideas for improvement, integration and improvements in the general knowledge of the area all of which is beneficial for development. (SECTUR, 2001)

Finally, the enhancement of a form of social capital known as "capacity" increases the resilience of a community to external pressures such as economic downturns and natural disasters (Guo et al, 2018). Similarly, it can be hypothesised that healthy social capital will allow a community to continue a programme on its own after government support is tapered

off or ended. In the light of the recent change of government in Mexico and uncertainty surrounding the continuance of the Magical towns programme, (see Chapters 10 and 11) this aspect of social capital became critical to the resilience of the conclusions of this thesis.

5.6 The role of governments, tourism boards and NGOs in community development

Communities are not likely to start tourism development on their own. "Efficient and effective participatory tourism development approaches require a high level of supporting institutions" Tosun, (2000:624). According to Scheyvens (2002) supporting institutions play a significant role in community development because they have responsibilities to establish what guidelines a place should follow in its tourism development. As will be described in more detail in Chapter 7, this holds true in the case of the Magical towns brand in Mexico. Furthermore, governments and tourism boards are vital for the community development aspect of place branding strategies, as they are concerned with the protection of host communities and also implement regulations for the development of a place and, ideally, support resident's integration in tourism programmes. However, they are not identical. In this thesis "government" means *direct* control. Mexico is a federal republic, so it is also important to distinguish between central government meaning a ministry or department of the federal government based in Mexico City and state or city government which exercises some devolved powers in a locality. On the other hand, Tourist Boards, are decentralised agencies, exercising *indirect control* accountable to a government minister but operating as a separate legal entity. Tourist boards include representatives of the private sector tourism industry and sometimes workers and host communities. However, "Tourism boards have been criticized for often implicitly equating in practice the interests of the community with the interests of tourism business". Prentice (1993:218). Tosun (2000:626) believes that specific strategies at local and national level must tackle such limitations for community participation to become a tool for effective development. This research will explore the relationship between local hoteliers and restauranteurs and the tourism authorities in the case of Tula.

Many studies of the impact of cultural heritage tourism necessarily involve assessing the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) both national and international of which UNESCO with its world Heritage sites programme is the largest. NGOs can play an important role in investing in local communities and promoting participation and empowerment, but the Mexican Magical Towns programme is unusual in that it does not involve World Heritage Sites and NGOs play almost no role. This absence limits the applicability of the conclusions of this study to other countries.

Traditionally, studies of the relationships between cultural heritage tourism, place branding, community participation, empowerment and building social capital have used qualitative methods; not surprisingly in view of the complex issues and the need for theory building. However, when recently, models have been developed to quantitatively assess such outcomes. Once such model is the Resident Empowerment Through Tourism Scale (RETS) developed and statistically verified by Boley and McGehee (2014). Consideration was given to using the RETs model in this study. But it was felt to be outside the ethnographic approach adopted even though discrepancies emerged in interviews and surveys between the tourism authorities' perceptions of what had been achieved in Tula and those of residents. RETs could, however, form the basis of further research in Tula in the future.

5.7 Barriers to community participation in tourism development and possible solutions

Several barriers have been identified which may stand in the way of effective or inclusive community participation and empowerment through tourism development but these barriers are not insuperable.

5.7.1 Knowledge as a limiting factor in community participation

Lack of education and knowledge is widely accepted as being a barrier to empowerment through a range of channels including culture heritage tourism. This often take the form of failure to appreciate the development potential of cultural heritage. As Tosun (2000:620) states: "In most developing countries tourism data is insufficient… Most residents are not well-informed regarding tourism development". This could lead to missing significant opportunities for development due to cultural or personal barriers, as shown by the case of

an indigenous Mayan community in Ek'Balam village, Yucatan, Mexico. In fact, that project among the Mayan people in Yucatan was found to have worsened existing tensions between western educated elites and uneducated locals who did not understand the triple bottom line of ecological health, financial sustainability and the enhancement of local social capital imposed by external funding agencies (Taylor, 2016).

One effective strategy may be education and training among the host community prior to the implementation of relevant development projects that generate local economic growth and boost incomes. Ideally the government or an NGO would pay for prior education. The curriculum needs to be appropriately focused and Boyle, et al (2018:138-139) suggest: "increasing residents' perceptions of community distinctiveness including facilitating familiarization tours of the community from a 'tourist' perspective so that residents are more aware of the unique natural and cultural resources of the community". They argue that this strategy is likely to increase community goodwill towards tourists and community participation. In the light of these findings this research investigated the education and training provided by the tourism and municipal authorities to local residents in Tula. This turned out have been fairly extensive but too narrowly vocational and with insufficient focus on understanding their own cultural heritage and general awareness of the potential of the Magical towns brand to benefit the town. It was also noticeable that self-education and peer education by bottom up leaders within the community in accord with the suggestions of Boyle et al (2018) has had more impact. This is also consistent with the findings of Barry (2012) regarding women's participation in Kenya and is explored in more detail in Chapters 10 and 11.

5.7.2 Finance as a limiting factor in community participation

In Mexico, there are cases where governments or tourism boards have set up entrepreneurial training programmes to help local micro-businesses access the start-up eco systems. For example, the programme *Hecho en Tamaulipas*, (Made in Tamaulipas) benefited locals that mainly use local resources for their products, for example Cactu Nieves used to make organic shampoo and soap in Tula. However, this research has uncovered significant deficiencies in the financial support provided for the Magical Towns programme in Tula which have delayed the success of the place branding exercise (see Chapters 10 and 11).

5.7.3 Local community attitudes towards tourism as a limiting factor in community participation

The community's perception of and acceptance of, or resistance to tourism is considered one of the key elements for accomplishing local development of tourism and achieving tourist potential (Garcia, et al, 2015). This must be considered in tourism projects focused on the participation of the local population (Getz,1994; Royo and Ruiz, 2009); while looking for the solution and prevention of certain problems, in addition to traditional economic benefits generated by this activity. Knowing local perceptions can help to detect issues, needs and possible solutions to achieve local development with the participation of the community in tourist projects. As Snaith and Haley (1999) suggest, the local community attitudes towards tourists and tourism are significant, as a content host is more likely to welcome visitors and have positive effects. Government and Tourism Boards can organise workshops and conferences aimed to motivating residents to get involved and participate in the tourism development activities, as part of the tourist positive experience.

Some communities react positively. For example, Boissevain (1996:7) found that in Europe: "By being looked at, examined and questioned by strangers, locals become aware of how they differ from the visitors. It is a source of pride that affluent strangers choose to come to their community to admire." Locals begin to appreciate the aspects of their town that they were continuously taking for granted. The interest of visitors creates awareness in the revival of their culture. Schofield (2011:225) identified further positive local impacts that might lead to host community support for tourism development, namely improvement of public toilet provision, sign posting, parking facilities, visitors' information, footpaths and walks, conservation of heritage, play areas, greater investment, facilities, catering provision, enhanced image of the destination, opportunities for young residents and community development. However, his research was conducted in cities and it is possible that rural communities are more resistant to tourism based, in part, on lower levels of education and awareness of outside cultures.

According to SECTUR, (2001) tendencies in tourism suggest that visitors are currently searching for a deeper contact with the host culture and local natural resources, hence, the richness of these aspects is to the tourists' advantage. Theories of cultural involution also suggest that host communities react positively to visitors' appreciation of their cultural

heritage provided that they are encouraged to participate and can perceive gains in a fairly short space of time. In other words, both communities will react positively to heightened perceptions of their differences. However, literature looking at culture shock suggests that the process is more complicated. Acceptance and enjoyment of differences can take a long time and may need active mediation. Most of the literature deals with this process from the point of view of new arrivals, usually businessmen or international students rather than tourists or host communities. However, Furnham (1984) shows that it applies to host communities as well and that the stages of adaptation which are well documented in the culture shock literature do take place in host communities. If host communities initially resent visitors arriving with different expectations, codes of behaviour and so on, then community development and empowerment Is not going to work in the short term but Getz (1994) in his longitudinal study of the Spey Valley in Scotland, adaptation is possible as communities work through the stages of acceptance. Recent research by Garcia et al (2015) shows that for adaptation to occur and participation and cooperation to begin it is imperative to analyse and identify the host communities needs and wishes prior to any community tourism development as it represents an opportunity to deeply understand the dynamic of the host community to prevent future conflicts that the tourism activity could lead to. The opinions of residents regarding the tourism impacts, are indispensable elements for tourism analysis and decision making related to planning and public tourism policies in order to fulfil resident's interests. The extent to which that prior consultation did or did not take place in Tula will be discussed in Chapters 10 and 11. At this stage suffice it to say that very substantial changes in community attitudes were observed during my three summers of fieldwork in Tula, 2016-2018.

5.8   Conclusion

I have reviewed the literature on community development through cultural heritage tourism and I concur with the view of experts in the field that community participation in tourism development is desirable and is the best way to achieve regenerative outcomes. However, it is clear from the literature that community participation takes different forms, economic, social and political. There is disagreement in the literature about the extent to which the last two are necessary or even aspired to by the host communities. The Mexican Magical Towns programme was primarily driven by the need for economic regeneration and does include elements of representative participation in economic decision making in a manner which will be described in detail in Chapter 7. But the formal structures of the Magical Towns programme have less to say about social and political participation.

Participation can, in my view, empower the local community and build social capital but the extent to which such benefits should be diffused equitably across the community is contentious with some researchers arguing for special attention to groups such as women and others favouring a broad-brush approach. Case studies also show that the extent to which benefits have been shared equitably in practice also varies widely. The Magical towns programme did not set out to achieve the empowerment of any group and case studies of different specific towns have produced widely varying findings ranging from enthusiastic participation and tangible benefits to outright resistance.

The history of empowerment projects leveraging cultural heritage tourism show that neither willing participation nor effective, inclusive empowerment are easy to achieve and a number of barriers in terms of traditional cultures, ignorance, lack of finance and culture shock may need to be overcome. However, case studies suggest some possible solutions. This pioneering qualitative, ethnographic study of Tula will seek to capture some of the nuances of participation and empowerment in practice in Tula and test the extent to which proposed solutions have proven to be applicable. But before the findings are presented it is necessary to look at the theory and practice of place branding which provides the context in which efforts to achieve community participation and empowerment are taking place in Tula.

Chapter 6-The uses of place branding for tourism development

This chapter addresses the use of place branding as a specific strategy for local and regional revitalisation and development through tourism and distinguishes it from destination branding. The global trend towards both destination and place branding reflects the envisioned need of countries and towns to create points of differentiation from their competitors in order to enhance their sociocultural and economic progress and attract tourists. The popularity of both destination branding and place branding has raised the awareness of national governments, local authorities, tourism industries and scholars who are all concerned with their potential to help or hinder the development of a locality. However, there is a tendency in the literature to conflate the two terms. The first part of this chapter is concerned with distinguishing them.

In Tula, the strategy employed is place branding. Therefore, the rest of the chapter will present a general analysis of how place branding has been used around the world and how it relates to community participation followed by a case study of Wigtown, Scotland. The insights gained have been used to identify pointers for the formulation of my research questions and methodology in Tula.

6.1 "Place branding" and "Destination branding"

> *Place branding has proven to be a popular practice and has become a central part of the contemporary place management agenda. Increasing funds are invested in place branding activities by local, regional and national authorities and, mirroring this, place branding is an increasingly appealing topic for academic research. (Ashworth et al, 2015:1).*

There are two terms in common use; 'place branding' and 'destination branding'. Govers and Go (2009:14) noted that 'place branding' provides a broader perspective such as the interaction of a place with its environment. Hankinson (2010:306) was more specific about the definition of place. "Places are represented as destinations to visit; these can be countries, regions, cities and towns". Briciu (2013:9) prefers to focus on economic activities

rather than the more general definition of interaction with the environment. and states that: "The term 'place', includes or signifies all economic activities and feelings that are related to it…and it is not strictly related to tourism activities."

On the other hand, the term 'destination branding', suggests more of a tourism perspective, such as choosing and discarding aspects to offer to promote a destination (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002:206). For Cai (2002:722) destination branding is defined as the selection of reliable elements to differentiate a destination through constructive image. Similarly, Park and Petrick (2006:263) believed that the main reason for using destination branding is to build a desirable image to attract visitors, differentiate one's destination from competitors and attract higher spending tourists.

Another important distinction which is not always made explicit in the literature concerns the target audience. Writers such as Hankinson (2010) use the term place branding to refer equally to the branding of countries and cities. However, Tiberghien (2018) use "destination branding" to mean efforts by governments to promote an entire country, usually one with little or no previous history of tourism whereas other researchers such as Macleod (2009) use "place branding" to describe efforts by local government to promote unique features of a particular town without reference to the country as a whole. The differences and similarities between the terms "destination branding" and "place branding" as understood in this thesis are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Differentiation of "Destination branding" and "Place branding" (Author)

Aspect	Destination branding	Place branding
Target market	International tourists	Domestic tourists
Promoters	National governments and tourism organisations	Local governments and tourism organisations
Perspective	Tourism, Tourist facing activities selective promotion, differentiation, image	Whole community All activities not solely tourism Selective promotion Differentiation Image

In the case of Tula, the term "place branding" as defined in Table 2 is appropriate and will be used henceforward. That is because the fieldwork findings presented in Chapter 10 show that the branding of Tula as a Magical Town is aimed at a domestic tourism market and, although the Magical towns is a national programme the implementation and promotion of the programme is delegated to the local level. Furthermore, the aspirations of the local community regarding the benefits of the Magical towns programme concern activities within a place in the wider sense used by Briciu (2013) and not solely tourist facing activities. This definition of place branding is also believed to be compatible with the objectives of this research concerned as it is with the use of cultural heritage for revitalisation of the place, the integration of the host community into the branding process and cultural initiatives for regional development, and not only tourism activities.

6.2   Understandings of place branding

There are many definitions and many case studies of place branding but they do not always fully unpack the concept.

6.2.1   Differentiation

One of the similarities between place branding and destination branding is the importance of differentiation. In fact, Morgan and Pritchard (1999) see place branding as a response to

the need for destinations to create a unique identity and distinguish themselves from their competitors. Hankinson, (2010:30). argues that in most cases, the objective of such branding is to reposition a place in the mind of the place consumer and to establish a point of differentiation with respect to other places attempting to dominate the same market space. This is problematic in the case of Mexican Magical Towns which share a common brand which limits competition between towns for what is predominantly the same market but, at the same, time, each town seeks to develop and promote its unique features. Hankinson's definition also ignores the role of the local community in internalising the new position and promoting the brand. Hospers (2004:273) implicitly recognises this. He believes that place branding is an embedded strategy that creates a positive image, which it is hoped, will contribute to making places known and to improving their reputation.

Ashworth (2009a) identifies three main instruments used throughout the world to achieve differentiated place brands:

> *Personality association.*
>
> Places associate themselves with a named individual, from history, literature, arts or entertainment, in the hope that the unique qualities of the individual are transferred by association to the place. A notable example is the architect Gaudi in Barcelona, whose work is distinctive and closely linked to the place.
>
> *Signature buildings and design.*
>
> Visual qualities of buildings are an instrument of place branding, this includes flagship buildings and the appearance of the local physical environment, such as the Coliseum in Rome, noticeable architecture to be seen and talked about.
>
> *Event hallmarking.*
>
> Places organise events, usually cultural or sporting in order to obtain a wider recognition and to establish specific brand association. For example, the Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain in 1992, triggered a reinvention of a whole city.

6.2.2 Individual place branding and "umbrella" place branding

In business marketing there is a generally accepted distinction between product branding and corporate branding. For example, Proctor and Gamble may promote an individual brand

such as Head and Shoulders shampoo or their entire product range under the P & G brand. This distinction is paralleled in the field of place branding for tourism purposes which can mean either branding a single town or "umbrella branding" where multiple towns are promoted based on common attributes such as standard of facilities or authenticity of tourism experiences. Theoretically, umbrella branding should offer greater marketing reach and synergies with neighbouring towns, but this may come at the expense of greater central regulation and less community participation and less room for local initiative and differentiation.

There are many umbrella destination branding projects where tourism objectives have been conflated with national economic objectives, principally attracting foreign direct investment. The case of Denmark has been researched by Therkelsen and Halkier (2008) but such studies do not shed much light on the Magical towns programme in Mexico. It is one of just four large scale umbrella branding projects known to the author designed exclusively for tourism, the others being the European Cities of Culture, the French *Villes d' Art et Historie and* the Pueblos Mágicos in Spain. A comparative study of Liverpool and Genoa by Nobili (2005) has shown that the umbrella place brand, European Cities of Culture, does indeed act as an additional catalyst for member cities in addition to their individual place branding efforts and gives the cities extra resilience after the end of the programme. However, the Mexican Magical Towns programme is unique in being aimed almost entirely at domestic tourists. The Secretary of Tourism, Enrique de la Madrid, recently stated that: The Magical Towns programme has been succesful because 85% of the boost in tourism is accounted for by domestic tourism. Sectur (2018b). Although there are a few exceptions where Magical towns are sited close to World heritage Sites and so attract spin off visits from international tourists, this point has not been sufficiently recognised in the Spanish language literature on the Magical Towns, and previous studies have not identified to what extent umbrella place branding is beneficial in that context.

6.2.3 Place branding as a plan of action

All these definitions are largely theoretical but another strand in the literature defines place branding in terms of a tool kit for practical action. Morgan and Pritchard (2002, p.11) advocated the use of branding as the most powerful marketing weapon available to contemporary tourism marketing professionals. Place branding aims to sell a positive image

of a destination and it is an essential tool for potential tourist development, it is a strategy that encourages and promotes certain features by highlighting attractive elements and sometimes transforming them into unique aspects that can be based on iconic elements of culture, heritage, or tradition. Branding thus emphasises local culture such as, arts and crafts, cuisine, dances, lifestyle, music and religious festivities.

Anholt (2010:7) also offers a definition which stresses not just the features of place branding but the need for action, "When most people talk about place branding…they are talking about doing something to enhance the brand image of the place: place branding is believed to be a way of making places famous." He regards the use of place branding as a tool that creates approaches which enhance sociocultural and economic development.

There are several aspects of place branding which need further research. The distinctive aspects of place branding, as opposed to destination branding have not yet been fully defined; the emphasis on domestic rather than international tourism is under researched. Theoretically the tool kit view of place branding can be applied to both single town and umbrella branding. However, the tools in the kit may not be the same. Similarly, the focus on community aspirations beyond tourist facing economic activities and the role of government may also be distinct in umbrella branded initiatives such as Magical Towns; in which comparisons with single venue studies of place branding need to be made with caution. The ethnographic approach used in this thesis has been deliberately chosen because it is well suited to areas of research which have not yet been fully conceptualised and where theory building is still in the early stages. The aim is to capture the dynamics of place branding and community participation in action in an umbrella place branded location and so make a start on filling in those gaps in the literature.

6.2.4 The global trend: Thematic branding

As the literature review above has demonstrated, for tourism purposes place branding identifies and differentiates a destination, and consequently presents and communicates the assets that form part of the desired image of the brand. The 'theme' trend for towns has helped initiatives to create ideas and tactics to develop place branding in new destinations, providing a distinguishing name that describes attributes and characteristics

of the destination and making it easier for visitors to remember a destination. According to Moore-Cherry, (2015:361) themes can be different according to the qualities or characteristics of a place, and they can focus on one aspect or many depending on local needs. They have been designed to improve the quality of places by modifying certain features, such as making them healthier, safer, or more sustainable.

The use of themes for the development of cities, towns and rural areas for tourism purposes began in Europe. In Scotland towns have been branded with different themes that highlight their most marketable features, for example Wigtown as 'Book Town', Kirkcudbright as 'Artists' Town and Castle Douglas as 'Food Town'. These descriptive themes aim to boost the appearance and lifestyle of the place, sharing the idea of improving and benefiting the host communities' economy. According to Macleod (2003),

> *These three towns exhibit different qualities in relation to their recently acquired branded identities. Wigtown won a competition in 1997 and was awarded the 'Book Town' title by outside planners looking to create such a town in Scotland. Kirkcudbright has developed into a haven for artists over the past 100 years, initially it attracted summer visitors escaping from the city: the town has now become a magnet for artists and related persons from outside, launching itself as Kirkcudbright Artists' Town in 2000. In contrast Castle Douglas has been a trading centre throughout its existence, 200 years ago or so, and has been renowned regionally for its butcher meat, its fish and dairy products.* (Macleod, 2003:2).

In the European context, the place branding strategy uses existing local features as an inspiration to revaluate local identity, for example if the destination is well known for having extensive culinary products (Food Town in Scotland) they try to reinforce that aspect for branding purposes. The significance of asset priorities is that by focusing on one or two of the most noteworthy aspects of a destination, the brand is able to present the best quality product to the target market. This approach helps to preserve authenticity.

Theme towns have now become a global development but, according to Acharya and Rahman (2016:309), there are not many studies that focus on place branding in North American, Asian and African countries. They also stated that: "While it is generally accepted that

culture is important to development of place branding, there was no study that empirically tested the role of cultural products in place branding development." However, some new trends have emerged. Dicks (2004:102) states that: "There is a tendency around the world in the development of theme parks, not child oriented but more culturally oriented with an educational message." For example, the tour operator, Splendid China provides a trip round the country's famous topography and culture. The villages have living representatives of each ethnic group that act as re-interpreters of their own cultures. Alongside it's Folk Culture Villages and Splendid China, Shenzhen has a park called 'Window of the World' which displays reconstructions of various famous landmarks such as Stonehenge, Buckingham Palace and Dutch windmills (Dicks 2004:104-105). However, such developments raise serious questions about authenticity and excessive commodification while providing no real benefits to the local community because the authorities keep the admission fees.

In Mexico, the place brand 'Pueblos Mágicos' (Magical Towns) was launched in 2000. It has branded 121 towns based on cultural heritage. According to McKercher & Du Cros (2002:155) assets of this type are frequently used in branding strategies, as they represent the community's unique characteristics that provoke emotional ties between the visitor and the destination. SECTUR claims that Magical Towns is the biggest national branding campaign so far. They further claim that the Magical towns brand has led to the effective development of rural regions that were in decline (SECTUR, 2018).

The first part of SECTUR's claim is not entirely supported by a literature search which shows that similar projects elsewhere are catching up fast in scale. In France for example there are approximately 125 towns that have been officially classified as Town of Art and History (*Villes d' Art et Historie)*. But numbers of towns included is not the only definition of what is the "biggest" place branding initiative in the world. Other definitions include the largest marketing budget, the most economically effective or the greatest level of acceptance by the host community (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013:72).

6.2.5   *Place branding in cities, small towns and rural areas*

A recent doctoral thesis by Fordham (2012) has raised important questions regarding the applicability of much of the place branding theory outlined above to small towns situated in rural areas as opposed to large cities. This is of great relevance for the Mexican Magical

Towns which, like the towns Fordham studied in Scotland are rural market towns. Fordham's research was informed by Pierre Bourdieu's conception of "place" as a "field" in which brands can be formed and their identities contested. He argues that in this context place branding takes place differently in large cities and rural areas in four key respects. Firstly, Fordham argues the application of "urban entrepreneurial governance" is diluted in rural areas. This occurs because there is more co-operation and less competition between places and by the absence of large businesses in rural areas which leads to a greater role of SMEs, motivated individuals and community groups (Fordham, 2012: 281). The role of the public sector also differs. In rural areas it provides less of a leadership role and more of an enabling role as a provider of marketing finance. As Fordham states "Without the financial contribution of the public sector, the commitment and enthusiasm of dedicated and motivated volunteers (community) and investment in the place by the private sector, the brands would not have been able to develop" (Fordham, 2012: 282). However, Fordham bases these conclusions on empirical evidence from three towns in Scotland and does not ground his argument in theories of community participation or bottom up leadership.

A second aspect of place branding which, according to Fordham, varies between large cities and rural areas is the methods used. Citing Hubbard and Hall (1998) Fordham argues that large cities use place promotion, physical redevelopment and flagship project strategies. However, rural areas tend to promote a particular image and organise smaller scale festivals and events (Fordham, 2012: 284). However, Fordham does not mention the work of Ashworth (2009) on this point. He agrees that large cities use flagship projects that Ashworth terms "event hallmarking" but adds two other strategies, "personality association" and "signature buildings and design" although the latter may be related to physical redevelopment in some cases. This thesis will investigate further which of the above strategies have been utilized in the place branding of small towns in Mexico and how successful those strategies have been.

Traditional place branding as applied to large cities stresses a single, cohesive vision and identity for the place. However, Fordham argues that this is problematic for small towns. Instead, he presents empirical evidence from Scotland that the meaning of the place brand is contested by multiple elements in the community who each seek dominance and continuously evolves (Fordham, 2012: 286-7). In practice "place brands, therefore, do not represent a single "legitimate culture", but that the brands are fragmented and multiple" (Fordham, 2012: 290). Whether such evolving "contestations" occur amidst the very

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different culture and power dynamics of Mexican Magical Towns will be investigated in subsequent chapters.

Finally, Fordham argues that rural place branding is aimed at a different audience. Whereas large cities tend to target "affluent, active devotees" of a particular hobby such as books or gourmet dining, small towns and rural areas have to appeal to a more diverse audience including families (Fordham, 2012: 291-293). However, Fordham assumes that the marketers promoting place brands, both urban and rural, have sufficient data to accurately target niche audiences. It is apparent from Section 1.2 of this thesis that demographic data on domestic tourists in Mexico is patchy at best, so the replicability of this assumption is questionable. However, it is possible that experience will have led to the same conclusion and findings regarding the diversity of the tourist audience in Tula will be presented in Chapters 8 and 9.

The next section will shed further light on these matters by presenting a case study of book towns in England, including one of those studied by Fordham, Wigtown, with Tula.

6.2.6 A comparative case study: UK book towns: Hay on Wye and Wigtown compared with Tula

The concept of themed Book Towns was started in Hay-on-Wye (1,500 inhabitants), Wales in 1961 by Richard Booth. The original business model consisted of buying non-operational properties in declining rural towns and turning them into book shops creating unique places. According to Seaton (1996:379) by 1995, Hay-on-Wye was generating 1 million tourist visits a year, many of them international. That success prompted replicas in over 40 towns in diverse countries such as France, Netherlands, US, Norway, Scotland, Portugal, and the latest two in 2017, Spain and India. (Seaton 1996). Hay on Wye's initial book association with books created a 'brand extension' with the development of the annual Hay Literary Festival, that became important and attracted thousands of tourists. (Seaton 1996:379) This proves that using a place brand as strategy for tourism development has been effective for regions that envisioned local progress but the question most relevant to this research in Tula is how that success came about. According to Seaton (1996), in 35 years there has not been any tourism assessment, very little promotion from the Wales Tourism board, and little

infrastructure capability such as signposting or motorway links put in place. Success in Hay on Wye has been achieved:

> *By what admen call 'developing a Unique Selling Proposition' this means that the destinations are more likely to prosper when they promote a single clear image (Stratford and Shakespeare, romantic Paris, Salzburg and Mozart, Florida and Disney, Las Vegas and gambling, etc). This is not to say that a destination cannot provide more than one attraction for the visitor (Hay offers riding, fishing, walking and other historic attractions which help to keep people in the area once they are there). But it will only be known for one thing, and that one, if attractive and unique, will be the critical feature of its tourism identity. Tourism planners tend to think that success lies in promoting a variety of products at their destination (a local heritage museum here, a craft centre there, everywhere a nature trail… the usual pot-pourri of me-too products which litter regional tourism strategies). The assumption is that a multiplication of second hand attractions will magically equal first-rate destination. The truth is that a multiplication of very little leaves very little. Focus is the key. Seaton (1996:381)*

Comparing Hay on Wye and Wigtown with Tula highlights some important variables in the way place branding can be understood and managed which will be explored further in this research.   A variable is scale and the role of government. Tula is part of one of the world's largest umbrella place branding projects. As such it receives funding directly from central government, or indirectly from tourism boards and derives the benefit of leveraging a highly supported national brand. The downside is bureaucracy and regulatory commodification. Wigtown, by contrast, is an individual place brand that does not receive significant funding or support. Therefore, concerns arise to whether external funding comes at the price of community participation as well as the burden of regulation and commodification and also if the absence of external intervention promote community participation or lead to apathy.

Whether place branding should focus on one theme or a range of attractions designed to appeal to different segments of the tourism market. The book towns opted for a specific focus and the Magical towns are similar in that they focus on cultural heritage. Within that broad niche Tula traditionally focused on its most unique, the local dress style, *La Cuera*.

But more recently, the tourism authorities, and sections of the local community, have sought to broaden the town's appeal by venturing into gastronomic, religious and *Turismo de romance* (wedding- based tourism). Chapters 10 and 11 will discuss the relative merits of these two approaches and community responses to them.

Another variable in place branding is authenticity and commodification. Neither Hay on Wye nor Wigtown were historically a book town, the concept was introduced by outsiders. Tula is different because the dress style, cuisine, religious festivities, music and dance which are being promoted by the place brand are all indigenous and date back centuries. However, there has been almost no assessment or regulation of the book trade in Hay on Wye or Wigtown (Seaton, 1996). Arguably, this has allowed the culture to develop its own authenticity over several decades. On the contrary, the Magical Towns brand is part of a huge bureaucracy which lays down detailed regulations and requires an annual evaluation of performance (See Chapter 7). This may be introducing regulatory commodification (see Chapter 4, Table 1). On the other hand, Wigtown gave itself the title of book town which no one can take that away in the way that a Magical Town can be stripped of its status. This may lead to lack of motivation to progress and attract tourism in the face of social changes such as the growth of online shopping.

6.3 The use of slogans to communicate a place brand

In some places, slogans have helped promote the aim of revitalising and improving the way of life of the local community. Examples include 'Austin-The music capital of the USA', or 'Toronto - A city which works' and 'Sardinia-Proud to be Different'. According to Hospers (2004:273-4) people have said that if there had not been such slogan based, promotional campaigns, they would not have considered these locations, for business, residence or leisure.

However, some regions do not make much effort to differentiate themselves from their competitors and their slogans are consequently meaningless. According to Briciu (2013:12) in Europe, places are dazzled by Silicon high-tech dreams and hope to copy the assumed success of Silicon Valley in California. Regions are presenting themselves using the terms 'Silicon' or 'Valley' without expressing exactly what differentiates them from each other.

For example, "Silicon Glen" in Scotland or "Silicon Saxony" in Germany do not make it clear what specific advantage they have to offer. As demonstrated in Chapters 10 and 11 the local community in Tula are aware of the importance of the right slogan to the success of place branding and some do not believe that the slogan, Tula, Magical Town is specific enough to convey what is on offer. It is, therefore, an open question to what extent the demonstrable increase in tourism numbers in Tula can be causally connected to the slogan and how much difference place branding makes.

6.4   The meaning of identity in place branding

As we have seen place branding is all about differentiation. Therefore, this study will start with the general theories of Massey (1994:168) who stated that: "identity is what distinguishes one place from another, what is specific about a place". Identity in this sense is a vital element of culture but for the purposes of this study, it is important to recognise that the sources of that distinctive identity which is the core of a place brand can be both individual and collective in the context of place branding.

6.4.1   The importance of the individual.

Macleod (1997) recognised that individuals can have a strong impact because they are able to exercise leadership and act as agents in the formation of place identity. A more precise definition of individual identity was proposed by Ray (1997:354):

> *Identity can be defined in terms of difference from others, and it can also refer to the set of characteristics shared within a category. These characteristics could be: behaviour, beliefs, values, norms, and performances, all of them demand valorisation and   preservation to fortify the sense of belonging.*

Those who seek to create new identities for branding and tourism, from inside or outside the community, must have the ability to engage with the individual residents who will be the carriers of the brand. But when they do so engage, the practice of place branding can invigorate a sense of pride and strengthen identity among residents (Gilmore, 2002). The role of leadership is implied here but whether that should be transformational leadership

from charismatic individuals at the top, transactional leadership by tourism managers or bottom up leadership from individuals in the community is an under researched topic.

6.4.2   Collective identity: The role of the community.

"The identity and image of the places we inhabit are really a seamless extension of the identity and image of ourselves; it is a natural human tendency for people to identify themselves with their city, region or country. Our sense of self isn't bounded by our own bodies: it extends out into family, neighbourhood, district, region, nation, continent, ultimately to the human race." Anholt (2010:157).

Both place and destination branding build on this sense of collective identity at different levels. Even in an age of globalization and increasingly homogenous culture the fact that collective identities remain distinct is crucial for successful place branding. According to Macleod (2004: 218):

"Despite the proliferation of media and commodities, individual communities often retain their distinct qualities. People maintain their links with social groups through shared history whether folk or formal, and with family and friends, all which profoundly influence their social identity and, hence, their uniqueness."

According to Cai (2002) place identity is very much related to culture and core values which are shared characteristics among a community. Others have built on this insight and assert that a distinctive destination needs to fully comprehend the nature of the place and identify the shared values that define its character. For this reason, "It is fundamental to recognise the cultural characteristics of the place, understand the people who live in that place, and to appreciate how a shared sense of a place is constituted and experienced." (Campelo et al, 2014:155).

As the concept of identity grows in significance in the tourism, culture and heritage industry, a new range of initiatives and programmes strategically involve community participation and local resources in order to enhance the appreciation of local identity. According to

Macleod (2004:214), "People associate part of their identity with the environment in which they live and work and also through the roles they perform in relation to that environment." Misiura (2006:17) believes that the mechanism for association stems from nostalgic remembering, connecting with roots, origins and emotional assets of the community, some of the representations of identity stem from folk dances and music, cuisine, religious festivities, costumes, language and behaviour all of which have been exploited and commodified in Tula (see Chapter 9).

Elements of the community may have especially important roles in the recognition and communication of identity. Briciu (2013:4) elaborates on the nature of participation. Forming strategic networks between public and private sectors, consulting residents and local groups and establishing a unitary development vision can be beneficial to capture the interest of the region. Local businessmen who have extensive experience in marketing are valuable partners for authorities who want to create a successful brand. For Govers and Go, place identities are constructed through local knowledge which includes; political, religious, cultural and historical discourses. However, on the contemporary practice of place branding they state that: "many towns, cities and regions think they can change their identity by simply changing colour; a new logo, a new marketing campaign and perhaps new management. Unfortunately, is not that simple.' (Govers and Go, 2009:17)

6.4.3 Identity: imposition, image and acceptance

Projecting a cohesive and consistent message based on collective identity is also central to the understanding of identity in the work of Hospers (2004) who sees identity as reality (what an area really is), image (what outsiders think about it) and brand (how the location wants to be known in the outside world). To achieve brand recognition, it is necessary to communicate and promote the area's attraction and distinctive advantages. Briciu (2013:13) agrees with Hopper's division of identity and concludes that:

> *From the place perspective, the location must find a balance between identity, image and reputation desired, the brand. If these items are found, the brand of a specific region may be the common denominator between the various elements (economy, infrastructure, education and culture) and participants (residents, entrepreneurs, governments) that sum up the region.*

Warnings have also been sounded of the consequences of disregarding residents' individual and collective sense of identity to create an image or a brand: "Residents are the identity holders of a place. Residents have views about who (or what) we are as a place...ideally the identities held by residents need to be considered within place branding strategies. A place brand strategy that is far removed from its place identity (what we are) will not likely be accepted as true by residents" (Kerr and Oliver, 2015:66). Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013:75) concur stating that "The assumption that place identity is something that can be forced upon people, insiders and outsiders alike, is evident in current place branding". It seems unlikely that an identity imposed without consultation and consent can remain authentic. Indeed, Hospers (2004:273) fears that government led place branding strategies are just a process of manipulation of the host community and the selling of areas in the market could lead to "commodification of places". By considering places as products, local authorities risk neglecting the human values of the areas.

These concerns were considered during my field work in Tula. Evidence did emerge of local collective identity, but it also became apparent that the theories underestimate the effects of time, the processes of adaptation to culture shock and the role of leadership in reasserting community control of collective identity and preserving authenticity. Many of the theories regard identity as fixed in both time and space whereas identities are continually evolving.

6.6   Conclusion

I argue, that Mexico in common with many developing countries, has acknowledged that place branding is an opportunity for economic development and the creation of much needed jobs in rural and peripheral areas such as Tula which can help alleviate poverty. If depressed local communities do not believe that they have something unique to offer, cultural involution can help them create something unique with their natural and cultural resources. But there are other possible strategies which can be used to make a destination competitive, so why use Place branding and which form is most effective; individual town or umbrella branding, government sponsored or initiatives and how can place branding be reconciled with authenticity?

The literature reviewed above shows that the use of place branding for tourism purposes can bring significant benefits provided that there is a strategic, long-term theme, not just an empty slogan. I argue that the practice of place branding has impacted Magical towns such as Tula in positive ways. Firstly, in the social context, place branding can facilitate the integration of the host community in their development process and empower them to achieve participatory development outcomes. Secondly, on a cultural level, the use of cultural heritage as an asset for place branding development has enhanced the uniqueness of some places, including Tula and the revaluation of cultural heritage serves as a vital catalyst for the preservation and appreciation of local elements. Thirdly, in the economic context, place branding directly affects sales leading to GDP growth, job opportunities and higher incomes in previously peripheral areas. Place branding skills are a challenge for every destination as in practice place branding implies dealing with different interests, conflicts and perceptions of the participants, so the challenge is the long-term implications such as maintaining consistency and reliability, maintaining image and reputation despite the need for some commodification and continually delivering and obtaining positive results. That requires the ability to make tourists and host communities engage with the project. It also means building capacity and resilience as government led place branding strategies susceptible to changes of government, national or local, and consideration needs to be given to how to transcend such changes. Chapter 7 presents a detailed case study of the governance systems in place in the Magical Towns programme, and Tula in particular, before the subsequent chapters explore the extent to which these governance systems meet the challenges.

Chapter 7- The Magical Town initiative in Mexico

As described in Chapter 6, the practice of branding towns and cities for cultural and tourism purposes has been influenced by a variety of initiatives around the world. The Magical Towns initiative launched in 2001 in Mexico is one of the largest umbrella branding initiatives seen so far. It aims to benefit local communities and its continuity over 18 years so far, exemplifies the significance of cultural heritage and local communities in Mexico. This chapter will describe and evaluate the history and governance of the programme preparatory to an assessment of its impact in Tula.

7.1. The origins of Magical Towns in Mexico

For many years the tourism offer in Mexico was highly focused on the development and promotion of sun and beach destinations, such as Acapulco or Cancun. This strategy has proved its effectiveness, has attracted significant public and private investments, and continues to draw large and increasing numbers of international tourists, bringing in foreign exchange and making a major contribution to development and wellbeing in many parts of the country (See 1.2 above and Barroso, 2016:21). However, 88% of Mexican tourism is domestic (OECD, 2017). The government now considers that there are different parts of Mexico with tourism potential and wants to give an opportunity to cultural tourism and not only "sun and beach" tourism (Velazquez, 2013:102). The Magical Towns initiative is the most important manifestation of this vision.

According to Barroso (2016) the idea of Magical Towns started by copying the idea of road trips in countries like Spain, France and Italy, in which the travellers found, along their way, different destinations in small unique communities, that started to commercially commodify their local products, crafts and cuisine due to the arrival of tourists. The question was asked, why, in Mexico, people travelling by road did not stop anywhere until their destination. The evident answer was because Mexico did not have attractive small towns along the way, because they had concentrated their tourism strategies in the beach destinations, international tourism and aerial connectivity. Barroso (2016:23).

It was realised that the vast potential of cultural and historical heritage in the country had not been developed in a proper way. New approaches were suggested to take advantage of these aspects and the tendency towards the diversification of the tourism offer and development of new products related to authentic tourism experiences in the 21st century. (De la Madrid, 2016:13).

In this context the Magical Towns initiative represents an innovative approach to diversification and regionalization of a Mexican tourism product that allow towns and communities to develop through their unique attributes whilst also enjoying the promotional umbrella of a common brand. Through the Ministry of Tourism in Mexico (SECTUR) and the support of the former president Vicente Fox, in 2001 the Magical Towns initiative was launched to acknowledge and give recognition to the localities that have preserved their cultural and historical richness through time (Chavez and Rosales, 2015:32).

As mentioned in the introduction the term "Magical Towns", does not refer to a place with magic, magicians, or enchantment, its meaning denotes a 'special' place, that even through time and modernism still maintains and values its historical, cultural and natural heritage, manifested in different expressions such as local folk music, tradition and historic buildings. According to Chavez and Rosales (2015:24): "the Magical Towns initiative fundamentally rests on its principal approaches, such as the active participation of civil society, tourist entrepreneurs, and local, state and national authorities."

The initiative, Magical Towns, mainly focuses on the improvement of different rural towns within all the 31 states of Mexico outside the capital region. At the time of writing, September 2019, 121 towns have been awarded the denomination (Desconocido, 2019). In their current iteration, Magical Towns have been defined by SECTUR (2016) as: "Localities with symbolic attributes, legends, history, transcendent facts, lifestyle magic that emanates in each one of their sociocultural manifestations, that brings a great opportunity for tourist development."

Magical Towns distinguish themselves from others by preserving and enhancing their key elements of tradition such as; dances, music, traditional dress, crafts, local cuisine and religious festivities in order to develop a potential destination for tourism purposes. The

cultural symbols presented are linked to the host community's unique character, leading to a local and regional transformation. For example, Tula emphasises its distinctive dress style *La Cuera* and a local delicacy, *Enchiladas Tultecas*, Towns in Veracruz State stress the ritual of Papantla in the Voladores and Chichen Itza promote their Mayan Pyramids.

The potential destinations are strategically chosen as having potential for community and tourism development which aims to improve both the local community lifestyle and the tourist experience.

Figure 7: Magical Towns of Northern Mexico (Desconocido, 2019)

Figure 8: Magical Towns of Central Mexico (Desconocido, 2019)

Figure 9: Magical Towns of Southern Mexico (Desconocido, 2018)

The Magical Town brand has identified the tourism opportunities and it has made heritage marketable to improve the towns. Therefore, most of the modifications to towns are based on the recommendations of the development strategy. The Magical Towns brand contributes to significant changes and transformations. It is not a trophy, but an acquired responsibility to Mexico and the world which, according to the Ministry of Tourism, in 2018, has become a synonym for tourist innovation and collaboration. It is a well-positioned brand which

represents a fundamental pillar of the tourism offer of Mexico it has become a motor for growth that has positively impacted local development and has brought recognition and visibility to the towns that obtain the denomination. In consequence, the host communities have slowly adjusted to the process in search of an opportunity for a better life (SECTUR, 2018).

7.2. The role of the Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR) and the Magical Towns

Magical Towns is a central government initiative created through the Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR) in order to achieve the general objectives currently enshrined in the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* (National Development Plan 2013-2018), and the *Plan Sectorial de Turismo* (Sectorial Plan of Tourism 2013-2018).   According to the Gobierno de la Republica (2014:40-48) there are six main objectives:

- Transform the tourism sector and fortify collaboration schemes to take advantage of the tourism potential
- Strengthen the competitive advantages of the tourism offer.
- Facilitate financing and investment of public and private projects
- Enhance tourism promotion to contribute to the diversification, development and growth of the sector
- Encourage sustainable development and public-private investment in projects
- Stimulate sustainable social and economic benefits for the host communities.

To achieve its objectives, the Magical Towns initiative employs participatory development approaches, Hence, SECTUR grant annual funds to the states to help improve and diversify the quality of these tourism destinations, their local products and services and their local image. SECTUR also help to stimulate public and private investment for socio economic development and the creation of employment for the host community.

7.2.1 Magical Towns as an umbrella place brand

As identified in Chapter 6, the unique feature of the Magical Towns initiative is that it is an umbrella place brand aimed mainly at domestic tourists. This was a deliberate strategy from the outset and to identify and unify the Magical Towns as a brand a common logo was created. Initially this was very simple (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Original Magical Towns logo (SECTUR, 2014)

However, the logo has become more elaborate as the process of identifying the marketable aspects of cultural heritage has advanced and commercial commodification has taken place (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Commodified Magical Towns logo (Al aire libre)

The commodified version of the logo has become popular and recognisable in the country. SECTUR does not provide any information on the meaning of the designs and colours of the windmill. However, Cana (2019) in his promotional website *Pueblos de Mexico* states that the multicoloured windmill is a symbol of the cultural diversity of the Magical Towns in Mexico. The tourist operator web page www.Al Aire Libre.co.mx (2019) says that the colours in the windmill represent the cultural elements of the branded towns such as: gastronomy in orange, crafts in pink, culture in purple, host community in blue and nature in green.

According to SECTUR, this logo (Figure 4) is now well recognised around the country, and it has been strongly promoted in national and international tourism marketing. This is in accordance with the theory put forward by Kolb (2006:219) who stated that: 'Only if a brand is easily recognized and immediately associated with the city will the benefits be communicated to the targeted group of potential visitors. To reinforce the brand in the minds of consumers, it should be integrated into all communications, including brochures, advertisements and billboards.'

The logo plays a significant role as the graphic identity of the programme as a whole but has been adapted by individual communities. In the case of Tula, Tamaulipas, locals have adopted the brand and included the established logo in their local products for consumption and for their promotional local businesses and local products (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Local adaptation of the umbrella Magical towns logo
(Tula Tours)

7.3 Choosing Magical Towns

Magical Towns are chosen through an annual competition. According to SECTUR (2001b) candidate towns must satisfy the entry requirements as follows:

1. Creation of a formal committee, with named participants and a proposed five- year plan with operating rules.

2. A council agreement for the incorporation of the town into the Magical Towns programme.

3. An annual budget for the locality, from the state government.

4. A financial contribution for tourism development based on projects and actions from the municipality and the state programme.

5. A Tourism development strategy for the next three years and schedules to promote Magical Towns among the local population.

6. Tourist approach guidelines for municipal tourism and rural development including regulations for the use of public commerce and street vended food; social security and civil protection.

7. Research with photographs to provide evidence of (a) symbolic attractive resources in the town, (b) sociocultural unique aspects, (c) irreplaceable and authentic local tradition.

8. Evidence of health and safety services for tourists in case of an emergency and an inventory of hospitals, pharmacies and general practice doctors.

9.- Public and private investment in services and facilities for tourism and also evidence of tourism training for locals who will be in contact with visitors.

10.- Any other element that the committee of '*Pueblos Mágicos*' considers relevant before the denomination.

7.3.1 Localities designated as Magical Towns

To date, there are 121 Magical Towns and all 31 states are represented in the programme but some factors leading to success can be identified and others can be ruled out. The support of the local municipal and tourism authorities is essential but there are no minimum population requirements and the literature suggests that population size is not a causative factor in either selection for the programme or successful regeneration once accepted.

Proximity to major international destinations is related to successful regeneration and remoteness is sometimes a disadvantage, for example there are cases of success such as Stonehenge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, having close proximity to London, the biggest city in the United Kingdom, and the site has considerably benefited from national and international tourism. On the contrary the archaeological site of Callanish Standing Stones on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland lacks connectivity and proximity to main cities such as Glasgow and Edinburgh.

7.4   *Political and administrative history*

In Mexico it is unusual that any development initiative lasts longer that the life of a single administration (six years in Mexico), but after seventeen years, the Magical Towns initiative

is still going strong and making a difference in 121 communities. This is evidence of the significance of the programme in the country and makes its administrative and political history worth exploring.

The first policies established by SECTUR for the Magical Towns programme in 2001 decreed that denomination of a 'Magical Town' would only be for those places with certain characteristics:

- The host community had to be represented by a Magical Town Committee
- The state and municipal authority had to collaborate and establish an economic investment plan for at least 3 years.

There were also a series of development plans for the effective function of the Magical Towns, including:

- *Plan de Desarrollo Estatal y Municipal* (Development Plan of the State and Municipality, focusing on the preservation of culture)
- *Programa de desarrollo Turístico municipal* (Municipality tourism development programme establishing that the town is strategic and relevant for touristic development)
- *Reglamento de la Imagen Urbana, el plan de Manejo en function del programa Pueblos Mágicos* (Guideline of urban image and function of management plan establishing strategies for public and tourism services)
- *Programa de Reordenamiento del comercio semifijo y/o ambulante* (reordering of commerce in public, this will take place in high demand touristic places).

Localities also had to elaborate a document in which their 'magical attributes' were highlighted and explain their potential for different types of tourism such as historic, cultural and natural diversity. (SECTUR, 2001b:6). The Magical Towns initiative remained essentially unchanged through the term of the former president, Felipe Calderon (2006-2012), with only minor administrative changes (Chavez & Rosales, 2015:33-34). In the opinion of the Tourism Board during the Calderon administration, Magical Towns was one of the most successful federal government tourism programmes, because it encouraged the development and growth of communities and rural towns and acknowledged the efforts of residents to maintain their natural and cultural inheritance and local traditions. (www.visitmexico.com/pueblosmagicos).

However, the Magical towns initiative had to face some challenges that required a few changes in the structure and operation of the initiative. In 2014, a new president, Enrique Pena Nieto, modified the purpose and administration of the Magical Towns initiative. According to De la Madrid (2016:14) this time the focus was on:

- Achieving greater competitiveness of potential tourism destinations.
- More social participation focusing on the capacity of organization and self-management
- Better coordination between federal and local governments
- Sustainable utilization of natural and cultural resources
- Inclusion of mechanisms of evaluation and financial accountability in the use of resources

The updated version of *"Lineamientos Generales para la incorporación y permanencia al programa Pueblos Mágicos"* points out that the main objective of the Magical Town programme is to concentrate on establishing the joint work of the three government levels (Federal, State and Municipality) as well as local society and economic actors for the improvement of tourist destinations in the country and their competitiveness. This policy is termed "governance" (SECTUR, 2014:7).

7.5. Current requirements and enforcement

Some of the requirements include:

- A locality with a minimum of 20,000 inhabitants. Tula has a population of just over 10,000 and so does not meet this criterion. In practice, the operational rules of the Magical Town programme have not been completely clear. It seems reasonable to limit what is considered a 'town', to distinguish the programme from rural or eco-tourism. However, in Mexican legislation there is no delimitation regarding the number of inhabitants. There are significant differences in population in magical towns across Mexico, for example *San Cristobal de las Casas* population is 158,027 inhabitants, Madrid (2016:54), whereas *Todos los Santos* has just 5,148 inhabitants. Nevertheless, both belong to the brand.

- The locality shouldn't be further than 200 kilometres (two hours) away from a complimentary tourism destination or a city.
- Requirements apply to health services such as restaurants or medical clinics, public security, road works and access to guarantee the security and use of cars and buses.
- It is also required that the architecture of the potential Magical Town must give identity and character to the town such as historic monuments, vernacular architecture, or emblematic buildings to celebrate local and traditional festivities.
- Talent among the residents regarding the design and production of handcrafts.
- A distinctive local cuisine is a very important requirement.

Before the denomination the host community will receive a dossier about the effective function, operation and objectives of the Magical Town initiative, and once the Magical Towns committee has been created, its members will be invited to participate in workshops to encourage them to become integrated in the development (SECTUR, 2001:1-8).

After the requirements are fulfilled, the Comité Interinstitucional de Evaluación y Selección (CIES) will determine if the locality is feasible as a Magical Town, and will award the title, initially, for no longer than three years. During those three years, the responsible levels of government will improve infrastructure and image as well as implement competitiveness programmes in order to reinforce the development of the town as a tourism destination.

The Magical Town designation will be reviewed and evaluated every year, under four indicators:

1. Institutions and governance

2. Heritage and sustainability

3. Socio-economic

4. Tourism

To secure their permanent place in the Magical Towns initiative, at least 90% of the requirements must be accomplished. If the locality is judged to have failed, they will lose the denomination and will have a year to solve their issues and reapply. This opportunity will be allowed only once (SECTUR, 2001,11). These are real threats and In 2009 the Secretary of SECTUR, Rodolfo Elizondo Torres announced that after evaluation, three towns had lost their designation as Magical Towns; Tepoztlán, Morelos; Mexcaltitán, Nayarit and

Papantla; Veracruz, due to not fulfilling the requirements and standards of the programme, and being incapable of achieving the observations and recommendations of the Magical Towns Committee. Studies of these cases reveal some of the motives and priorities of the Magical Towns programme. In 2002 *Tepoztlán* in the state of Morelos was branded a Magical Town, and in 2009 it was withdrawn from the programme, due to the excessive 'Made in China' products on sale, street vendors, the abundance of promotional advertising and the proliferation of off license alcohol shops. In other words, the programme managers were insisting on a level of authenticity. This situation encouraged the local authorities to exert more control. They prohibited alcohol on the streets and relocated the areas for artisans to sell their products. In 2010, Tepoztlán became part of the initiative again. (Alvarado-Rosas ,2015:31; Unhook, 2014). After losing the Magical Town denomination, Mexcaltitán Nayarit was not able to fulfil the requirements of the programme regarding the adequate quality of health matters such as the sewer system and garbage collection. According to the Secretary of Tourism of Nayarit, Rodrigo Perez Hernandez 'The town looked dirty, and did not respect the guideline of the Magical Towns'. The town remains excluded (Diario Informativo Gente y Poder, 2012). These experiences made it necessary to discuss the implications if Tula ever lost its designation as a Magical town during my fieldwork interviews (see Chapters 10 and 11).

7.7. Magical Town governance

There is a global interest in governance especially in the field of development economics. According to Mayntz (2001:1) contemporary governance is cooperative, different from the old hierarchical model in which authorities exercised sovereign power over civil society groups. For Luna and Chavez, (2014:191) governance is about establishing a more inclusive and cooperative solution for communal problems and seeks to establish new relationship between the state and societies with greater participation in public matters. In line with the generally accepted theories, the understanding of governance in Mexican federal programmes has shifted in recent years towards social coordination and collaboration. In the case of the Magical Towns initiative, consideration is being given to the structure of governance spaces, especially the monitoring and following up of the programme through the mandatory Magical Towns committees. In this context, the Magical Town programme contemplates the integration and operation of governance structures at a local level (Chavez and Rosales, 2015:42).

7.7.1 *Magical Town Committees*: *Powers and relationships with stakeholders*

The creation of Magical Town Committees is a compulsory element of the governance model in the initiative. 1,400 members of these committees, within the 121 Magical Towns of Mexico, are responsible for creating constant awareness about the importance of local cultural heritage and tradition, while following the rules of the programme.

The Magical Town committees' goal is to have homogeneous participation from the governments and local stakeholders, promoting exchange of ideas between the participants to strength the actions of the programme through events, workshops and conferences run by the Tourism Board. It is a deliberative body at a local level, and it represents the voice of the local community within the authorities. It also develops activities to advise the community and analyse future tourism projects in the locality, which is considered vital for the development of the Magical Towns (SECTUR, 2001b).

According to the Magical Town guidelines issued when the programme started in 2001, the committees must be autonomous and politically impartial. They are intended to transcend the changes that different political parties could otherwise cause in the Magical Town programme. The committees are not allowed to encourage to proselytise for any party or faction. Membership comprised a maximum of ten representatives including, an authority from the state, authority from the municipality, a representative from the Institute of Anthropology and History (INHA), social representatives such as restaurateurs, hoteliers, travel agencies, chambers of commerce, architects, artisans, and a representative of SECTUR. Theoretically, this should guarantee local people a majority of 6 to 4 over representatives of the state. A president of the committee must be elected every year by the members and can be re-elected. At least three meetings per year were required to evaluate the development of the Magical Town initiative (SECTUR, 2001b).

However, Chavez and Rosales (2015:44), noted some minor modifications in an updated version of the Magical Town guidelines. There is no longer an upper limit regarding the number of members of the committee; the frequency of meetings has been increased to at least four per year; the member of the Institute of Anthropology and History has been removed and replaced by a representative of the indigenous community; and additional residents can be invited (maximum 5) to express their views, however they do not have

votes in decision-making. The committee will be the interlocutor between the different levels of government and the host community.

The financial powers of the committees are very limited and question marks have been raised regarding the level of transparency and accountability. The committees have no direct access to any of the economic resources of the initiative nor do they have powers to approve the budget or audit the annual accounts. The economic fund from the federal government for the Magical Towns programme is allocated to the State and they decide how much each town receives for development; sometimes even the municipality do not know the exact amount. The community only knows what's invested in local projects such as constructions and refurbishment and are not aware how much of the central budget reaches them (Interview 3a, 2018).

The committees' function is then, mainly advice and oversight, monitoring and following up the development of the Magical Towns in the locality. The committees do have powers to revise the annual set of new proposals for the development of Magical Towns to improve the quality of tourism services while preserving their local traditions, focusing all efforts on community integration and fulfilling the requirements of the initiative. They also have a duty of oversight, to make sure that the state and municipality are doing the right job for the local community. In the process the committees are supposed to provide opportunities for residents to have a voice through open meetings. However, in the case of Tula, the meetings are private. They only invite a member of the municipality and very rarely a business man from Tula. Journalists are not admitted, and they don't issue press releases to the local newspaper and, in the case of Tula, there is no website for complaints or suggestions (Interview 3a,2018). This lack of openness to media scrutiny can be considered a significant weakness in the governance of the programme.

7.8. The Magical Towns Annual Fair

To coordinate the work of the 121 Magical Towns, and as part of the promotional tourism strategies, in 2014, the Ministry of Tourism launched the first *Feria Nacional Pueblos Mágicos* (National Fair of Magical Towns). Held in Guadalajara, the event lasted three days, exhibition stands were provided free, and all the Magical Towns were encouraged to

participate but it was not obligatory. The fair has become an annual event which focuses on the participation of tourism officers, artisans, hoteliers and restaurateurs of the Magical Towns. The Fairs have always been open to the general public and at the 5th Fair in Morelia in 2018, admission was free. Visitor numbers have quadrupled from 2004 (25,000) to 2018 (127,000) which evidences the popularity of the brand Magical Towns in the country and the event itself. Consequently, the fairs serve to consolidate the umbrella place brand and the publicity material emphasises the shared logo (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Publicity materials for Magical towns Annual Fairs
(Author)

The Magical Towns Annual fair allows the participants to be informed, updated and trained about the current guidelines of the programme and commercialization of touristic products, sharing experiences, ideas and best practices with other artisans. The fairs also provide as an opportunity for the Magical Towns to present and sell their local crafts and gastronomy (Barroso- Alarcon, 2016:38). According to Interview 1a, most of the towns, including Tula, now attend. The stands are payed for by the host city and the travel and expenses of the tourism officials is part of the annual budget of the programme.

Figure 14: Tula's promotional stand at the Magical Towns Annual Fair
(Tourism Board of Tamaulipas)

Each year the Magical Towns Fair has a theme which relates to the annual slogan of the OMT *Organización Mundial del Turismo* (UNWTO World Tourism Organization) (Table 3). This serves to keep the Magical Towns programme aligned with trends in world tourism even though it remains predominantly aimed at the domestic tourism market. These benefits come from being part of an umbrella place branding programme and are not available to individually branded towns such as the Scottish book town, Wigtown.

Year	Theme	Host city	Visitors
2014	Tourism and Community Development "Turismo y Desarrollo comunitario" (OMT, 2014)	Guadalajara, Jalisco	25,000
2015	1 Billion Tourist,1 Billion opportunities "Mil Millones de Turistas, Mil Millones de Oportunidades" (OMT,"2015)	Puebla, Puebla	30,000
2016	Tourism for All: Promoting Universal Accessibility "Turismo para todos: Promover la Accesibilidad Universal" (OMT,2016	Querétaro, Querétaro	90,000
2017	Sustainable Tourism: A Tool for Development "Ano Internacional de Turismo Sostenible" (OMT,2017)	Monterrey, Nuevo León	114,000
2018	Tourism and Digital Transformation "Ano Internacional de la transformación digital" (OMT, 2018)	Morelia, Michoacán	127,000

Table 3: Magical Towns Annual Fairs 2014-2019 (Adapted by author from SECTUR, 2018a; UNTWO, 2018)

It is important to point out that in the 2018 Annual Fair the theme refers to Tourism and Digital transformation. The event included the participation of VISA Card and CLIP to encourage national artisans to use electronic means of payment that will allow them to improve their economy at a local, regional and national level (SECTUR, 2018a).

7.9 The effects of Magical Towns governance

The Magical Towns programme has transcended through the years and represents an alternative to the traditional sun and sand tourism that contributes to strengthening tourism destinations throughout the country, using the singularity of localities such as historical and cultural assets to create tourism products highly attractive for tourist (Hernandez & Allende, 2015:108.)

However, sections of the Mexican media have recently been highly critical of the governance of the Magical towns programme (Valadez and Lopez, 2018). Academic critics have also expressed dissatisfaction with the level of governance in the Magical Towns raising concerns regarding conflicts of interest and the level of participation that the Magical Towns programme has achieved (Hernandez, 2015:15).

The main criticisms levelled against the governance of Magical Towns are related to; a) the preservation or distortion of the local cultural heritage, b) the enhancement of local facilities without creating "tourist traps" ,fake souvenirs, over-priced cafes and bars, c) the growth of local artisanal supply chain, d) fostering the creation of local skills by introducing appropriate courses, f) enhancing synergies among related local business, f) the redesign of local transport for visitors to travel between attractions, g) the lack of an effective chain of accountability for decisions and the allocation of resources, h) the shortage of key performance indicators (KPIs) and data to quantify success and support the claims made by tourism professionals.

There is a growing academic literature on the Magical Towns development programme which offers different perspectives on the implementation and function of the initiative in Mexico. Researchers have addressed the query of cultural preservation or distortion. Some are highly critical case studies, such as that by Lopez (2015), who examined Huamantla Tlaxcala, a town recognised throughout history as historical and heroic. However, in 2007, it became a Magical Town. Lopez argues that with the award of this slogan the place allegedly stopped focusing on heroic achievements in the country to become oriented towards the commercial aspects of tourism. The Magical town logo has replaced the heroic values, work and progress that were associated with the town before. The Magical Towns programme has modified spaces and re-interpreted local resources to satisfy the tourist market at the expense of authenticity.

This study post-dates the experience of Tepoztlán described above. That suggests that only the most extreme forms of over commercialisation and loss of authenticity have been addressed and underlying problems remain.   In particular, the accusations of excessive sale of cheap products imported from China suggests a failure to develop a local supply chain or skills base (Alvarado- Rosas (2015).   However, less than 11% of domestic tourism expenditure goes on consumption products and there may be additional potential for development of

artisanal products (Chaper 1.2 above; SECTUR, 2019, p.6). Tula did not have any well-known historical association with heroic events prior to becoming a magical town but did have a well- established group of local craftsmen. This study will seek to establish whether Alvarado-Rosas's criticisms still apply in that context or whether they were specific to Tepoztlán.

Academics have analysed two main aspects of the economic effects of the governance regime in Magical Towns, the extent to which benefits are distributed fairly and the extent to which the needs of tourists take precedence over the needs of the local community. The findings differ in detail but overall are not reassuring.

Alvarado Rosas (2015) believes that the programme tends to focus on encouraging conventional aspects such as cultural heritage and neglecting some aspects that impact the host community. It is argued that the initiative should put more attention on the locals needs to be economically beneficial. Hernandez (2015) agrees that the actual economic impact to the host communities is far from the purposes and promises of the Magical Town brand. Reyes (2015) argues that there are economic benefits with Magical Towns but questions the implementation of the programme because the impact has been focused on the main square of the branded town. In effect the committees are giving priority to the visitors needs over the residents because the investment and economic resources go directly to the tourist infrastructure. Jacob-Herrera (2015) studied Cuetzalan, Puebla, a Magical Town since 2002 with a wide tourism offer, from waterfalls, hotel infrastructure, gastronomy and the 'nahualt' culture that is still strong in the region. He also noticed that the benefits of the programme are mainly in the main square and accrue to the inhabitants that manage to satisfy tourist necessities rather than the community. Similarly, in a study of the Mexican community, 'El Oro', Perez-Ramirez and Antolin-Espinoza (2016) stated that the Magical Towns initiative gave the satisfaction of the tourist's needs priority over the host community.

Two more specific issues emerge from some studies. Firstly, success in attracting more tourists has led to inflation, particularly of shop rentals and local artisans have been priced out of the market. According to Fuentes- Carrera (2015:193) this is what has happened in Huamantla which now has only "ephemeral magic". The local authorities publicised an archaeological site, Cacaxtla which did attract visitors. But to improve the visual image of

the town street vendors and artisan sellers were relocated. Locals complain that they do not sell as much as they used to in the main street and rented premises are now expensive for them, $20,000 pesos (almost £1,000 pounds). Locals claim to feel excluded and say that the denomination of Magical Towns has not brought any benefits. Locals perceived the Magical Towns place brand as another excuse from politicians to continue to divert public resources. They also claimed not to be worried if they lose the designation as a Magical Town.

A second emerging issue is the effect of tourism on natural resources such as water supply but the community in Cuetzalan, Puebla, after 17 years in the programme, have learned to be an organised community that detect problems and participate to try to find a solution or at least make this issue evident to the government (Jacobo-Herrera, 2015). The idea that at least some elements in local communities are willing to make the best of the Magical Towns programme also features in the work of Gutierrez-Nieto (2017). He examined the "magic" on the host community of Tequisquiapan Magical Town and found that some people seem willing to rescue their cultural heritage with the initiative. However, his research highlights a further issue; the results of cultural involution have been ambiguous and badly employed and that some respondents still did not really understand what makes a magical aspect of their town. This implies the need for more education of the local community.

All these studies point out that local necessities such as education, health and public services have been left unattended despite the stated aim of the brand being to improve the quality of life of the host community.

On the other hand, the umbrella place branding element of Magical Towns programme does appear to have proved beneficial. It has integrated the towns and improved the satisfaction level of tourists. For example, transport between related destinations has been addressed by a parallel programme, Rutas de Mexico (Routes of Mexico), that aims to suggest strategic routes that combine with tourist areas as part of the experience. There are 10 routes in place so far and most of the towns suggested as stopping points are Magical Towns (Velazquez, 2013:103). Given time, Rutas de Mexico, combined with the Magical Towns Fair (see 7.8) should improve integration, avoid duplication of resources and spread best practice. Lopez-Ramos (2017) evaluated Capulalpan Magical Town in the state of Oaxaca and found that, overall, tourists in this town expressed satisfaction but highlighted aspects

that could be improved, such as quality certifications of tourism products and the inclusion of human capital in tourism.

The inclusion of human capital is a perspective which has been explored by Luyando et al. (2016). Based on a case study of Tapijulapa, they believe that community integration and participation is a key to the development progress of a Magical Town, as it generates advantages among its inhabitants. Balsev & Gyimothy (2016) also analysed community participation, in Álamos Magical Town, and investigated how local development and cultural sustainability were put into practice. They produced the curious finding that North American migrants living in the town were active in the tourism sector but this small group somehow contributed to strengthening the image of the town and its Mexican traditions, and also supported artisans from the region to sell their crafts, motivating them to create tourist products and keep the economic benefits for themselves in a local supply chain. If outsiders can achieve this, then concerns about why the Mexican authorities have apparently failed to do so in other towns, despite the claim that "The Magic of a Magical Town is its people" (Benavides-Cortes and Levi-Levi, 2017).

These case studies raise concerns about the extent to which Magical Town committees can influence budget priorities or policy choices. The persistence of such complaints, 18 years after the programme started, also casts doubt on the effectiveness of the chain of accountability. Part of the problem may be the choice of KPIs used in the governance of Magical Towns. Scholars have claimed that Magical Towns relies excessively on measures of effectiveness and results through quantitative official indicators and gives little attention to the qualitative perceptions of the host community (Castaneda et al, 2016). However, the journalists Valadez and Lopez (2018) deny that there has been any effective collation of data from individual towns and claim:

> " After 17 years of the creation of the Magical Towns in Mexico, with 121 localities, there is no official data, numbers or indicators that certified their success or failure...there is no indication of improvement, profits, or tourist influx...although there are some efforts to create statistics from the towns, in general there is a lack of data"

This view has some academic support because, according to Hernandez & Allende (2015:109), data driven governance of the Magical Town initiative faces some obstacles due to the content of the programme continuing to be reformulated leading to ambiguity, confusion on guidelines and unclear criteria.

If the aim of the Magical towns programme is primarily to benefit the tourists as Castaneda et al (2016) claims, then studies of visitor satisfaction should show improvements. Valadez and Lopez (2018) say there is no proof but Academic studies of individual towns are less negative. Lopez-Ramos (2017) evaluated Capulalpan Magical Town in the state of Oaxaca and found that, overall, tourists in this town expressed satisfaction but highlighted aspects that could be improved, such as quality certifications of tourism products and the inclusion of human capital in tourism. Tourist expectations are evolving constantly so total satisfaction is probably impossible. But if this study were to find a pattern of similar problems in another town, Tula, that would indicate weaknesses in the Magical Towns brand and is therefore worth investigating. In any case another set of empirical data on tourist numbers and satisfaction levels would also better inform decision making about the future of the Magical towns programme.

7.9.1   Government responses to criticisms of Magical Towns governance

SECTUR points out that there has been significant investment among the denominated towns in Mexico that has preserved their history, architecture, gastronomy and cultural elements. During the three years 2013-2016 the Magical Towns programme invested over 2,500 million pesos (£109 million) into the 121 current Magical Towns (SECTUR, 2016), a considerable increase on the approximately £20 million invested in 2011. More detailed information on the investment in each state of Mexico is available on a public access site from the national government. This gives information about the extent to which SECTUR is supporting the Magical towns and the 5.5 million inhabitants that presently live in them. The programme invested in the construction of 2,984 sustainable hotels near 35 protected areas and 21 archaeological sites, to provide visitors with quality services *(Datos Abiertos* http://datos.gob.mx, 2018). These claims are supported by Vazquez (2015:131) who argues that in economic terms the programme has being successful. By 2014, it was estimated that four million people had travelled to Magical Towns generating more than 6,500 million pesos in revenues.

Magical Towns is still the main cultural initiative in Mexico, nearly two decades after it launched. SECTUR continues to strengthen the brand and has achieved a high level of brand recognition among domestic tourists (Hernandez, 2015). Furthermore, Magical Towns is recognised internationally as a solid initiative that represents Mexico in international Tourism fairs such as FITUR in Spain where the brand has been represented for many years.

Meanwhile, SECTUR has announced an action plan for governance improvement. They have recognised some challenges regarding the ease with which some towns received the denomination. There is still concern with the number of members of the initiative (too many) and their ability to fulfil the required standards of the Magical Towns guidelines. This has led to a decision to postpone adding any more towns to the list. (De La Madrid, 2016:64) in order to strength the quality of existing services, improve the offer of touristic products, and work with the local community to improve the visitors experience (SECTUR, 2016a).

7.9.2 *The new administration and the future of the Magical Towns initiative*

In October 2018, with a general election looming and a change of government widely predicted, another 10 destinations were added to the Magical Towns list. It is unknown if that decision was due to a personal interest, or just to show off that during their term in office that political party achieved that certain number of Magical Towns denominations.

The change of government duly took place and the accession to power of President Lopez Obrador in December 2018, represents significant changes in the country, due to the different ideologies of the left-wing political Party *MORENA Movimiento de Regeneracion Nacional* (National Movement of Regeneration). This has caused some concern in tourism circles, as the budget for new government projects for 2019 excludes the Magical Towns program (Delgado, 2018; https://www.gob.mx/sectur/prensa/estrategia-nacional-de-turismo-2019-2024-tendra-un-sentido-democratico-miguel-torruco). According to SECTUR officials in conversation with the author in 2019, the Magical Towns will continue. However, the Ministry of Tourism added that it is now focusing on three big new projects called *Mayan Train, Disfruta Mexico and Smile Mexico.* All these new programmes are targeting domestic

tourism and it is claimed that they will give nationals further opportunities to travel in their country. As a result of these developments I adapted my research plan at a late stage to include an assessment of the resilience of the community of Tula and their ability to retain the benefits the Magical Towns brand has brought with less or no government support.

7.9.3 Magical Towns inspiring Latin American countries to duplicate their model

Even if the Magical Towns programme comes to an end in Mexico itself, it has inspired other Latin American countries such as El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Chile, to ask advice and consider using the model for regional development, due to its success (De la Rosa, 2012). Through an agreement, (SECTUR) and the Ministry of Ecuador (Mitur) collaborated to make the implementation and development of Magical Towns in Ecuador feasible, endorsing the exchange of knowledge, procedures, experiences, methodolgies and practices (SECTUR, 2018b). As Magical Towns has become an emblem to promote emergent destinations and the diversification of tourist products at a national level, other countries have expressed an interest in replicating the method (Vargas and Rodríguez, 2014).

7.10 Conclusion

The Magical Towns initiative arose from a desire by the federal government of Mexico to diversify tourism development away from its historical concentration on beach tourism to benefit the interior of the country while preserving its cultural heritage. Unusually for Mexico the programme has proved durable and has evolved from a handful of towns in 2001 to the present 121. The administrative machinery has evolved in parallel and since 2014 there has been an increased emphasis on community participation and development. Nevertheless, concerns remain about the governance of the Magical Towns process among academic studies that it has had an economic impact but that it principally benefits tourists and neglects the development of local services such as health and education. The field studies in Tula, presented in the following chapters, will examine these issues.

Chapter 8- Introduction to the Tamaulipas region and Tula

This chapter will look at a region in Mexico and a specific town, in which cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, is a vital element that influences the development of tourism. That region is Tamaulipas and that town is Tula.

8.1   Geography

Mexico is the largest state in Central America and the world's 13th largest country by land area with a total of 2 million square kilometres" (World Atlas, 2017). The country is divided into 31 States and one Federal Capital (Mexico City). The country has borders measuring 3,155 kilometres with the United States to the north, 985 kilometres with Guatemala and 276 kilometres with Belize to the south. The climate of the Tamaulipas state varies but most of the region is classed as BSh (hot semi-arid) using the Koppen-Geiger classification (Climate Data, 2019). The focus of this study, Tula is typical (See Figure 15)

temp

rainfall
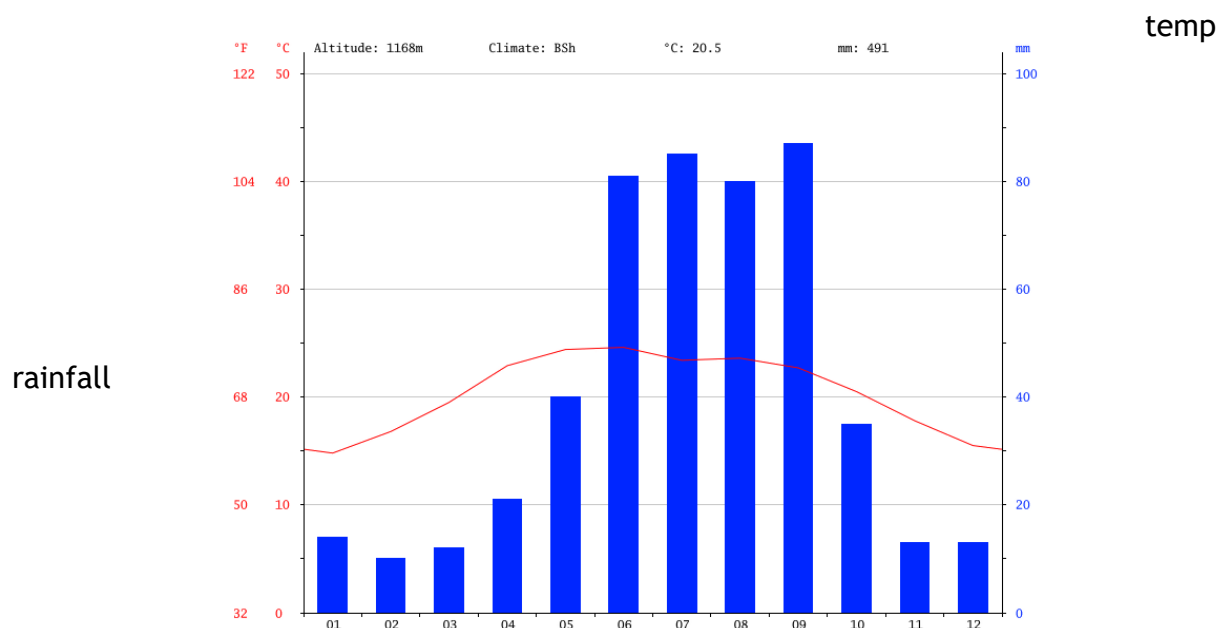
Figure 15: The climate of Tula (Climate Data, 2019)

It is generally agreed in the literature that climate is related to tourists' destination choices, satisfactions levels and safety (Becken, 2010). BSh climates don't act as a driver for destination choice the way guaranteed sunshine does for beach holidays. In fact, they typically pose challenges for tourism development; not least provision of sufficient water for tourism infrastructure such as hotels and golf courses without depriving local people of a scarce resource. However, low rainfall all year round does minimise the likelihood of weather-related disruption to the kind of outdoor cultural activities which are being commodified in Tula (see Chapter 9).

8.2   Population

The country's population in 2019 is just over 131 million making it the 10th most populated country on earth. But it is not only raw population numbers that affect the potential impact of tourist initiatives such as Magical Towns. Other factors such as the demographic pyramid and population distribution also come into play. In Mexico, the annual population growth rate of 1.2% is relatively high meaning that the demographic profile is skewed towards the young with a median age of 28.3 years (See Table 4) (World Population Review, 2019).

Age Group	Percentage of the Total Population
0-14	27.8%
15-24	18.2%
25-54	40.5%
55-64	6.7%
65 +	6.7%

Table 4: Age distribution of Mexico's population (World Population Review, 2019)

If the data from the State of Jalisco presented in 1.2 above is typical, then domestic tourists are on average older than the population as a whole although the growing numbers of people travelling with their families may reduce this disparity gradually.

One result of the young overall demographic profile is that economy needs to keep producing large numbers of new jobs to absorb new entrants to the workforce. Tourism plays a

significant role in doing so although as explained in Chapter 1.2 the exact numbers employed are uncertain. However, that proportion is projected to rise to 8.5%, 5.051,000 jobs by 2028 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018:1).

Average life expectancy of 75.4 years is only 66th in the world but has been rising rapidly and is expected to grow by a further 2.5 years per decade (World Population Review, 2019). This means that Mexico, in common with other emerging market countries will face serious challenges in supporting a growing elderly population especially as they are concentrated in rural areas. Tourism could, theoretically play a significant part by supporting traditional arts and crafts and providing part time income for people in the same age range or older than their visitors (see Chapter 9).

The average population density of Mexico is 57 persons per square kilometre but that is very unevenly distributed. The Federal district of Mexico City has a population of 21.2 million at a density and the national urbanisation rate is 78.84% meaning that large, rural areas, including much of Tamaulipas, are quite thinly populated (Figure 16).
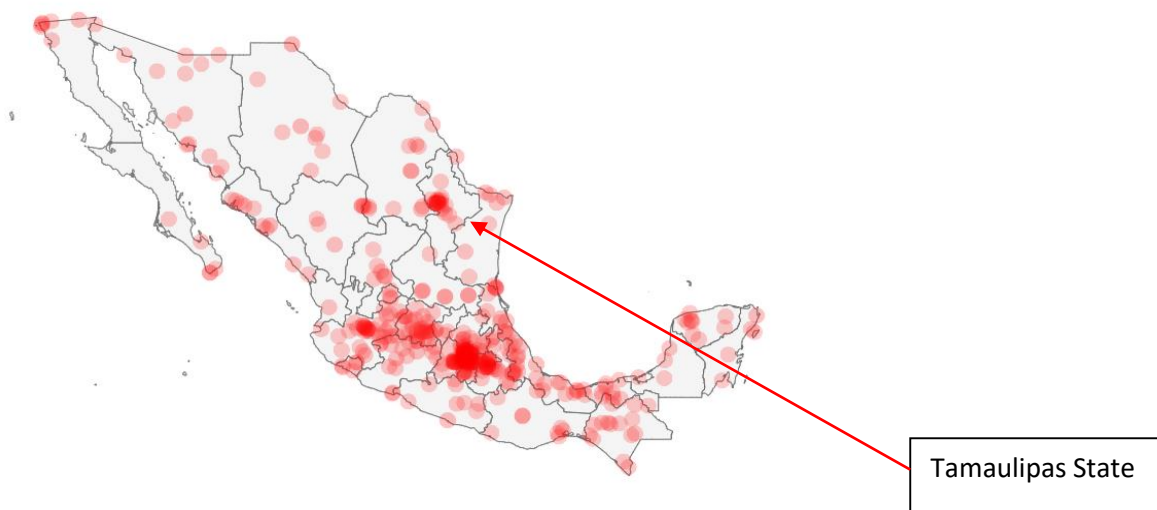
Figure 16: Population density in Mexico (World Population Review, 2019)

8.3   Culture, language and belief systems

The official language of Mexico including Tamaulipas is Spanish and the majority of the population use it. However, there are at least 67 indigenous languages in the regions and, according to INEGI (2015), at least 6 million people speak an indigenous language. This complicates communication and mediation of sites and intangible cultural heritage for both national and international tourists.

Roman Catholicism is the most popular religion in Mexico followed, at least officially, by 82.7 % of the population. Currently, Mexico is the second most populous Catholic Country in the world. the enduring strength of the Catholic faith is strongly reflected in the cultural events open to tourists (See Chapter 9). Pentecostal, Evangelical and other Protestant groups account for 6.6%. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim 1.4% and other beliefs 4.6%. The remaining 4.7% say they are atheist of agnostic. (World Atlas, 2017)

8.4   The State of Tamaulipas

Located in the North of Mexico, the state of Tamaulipas borders the US State of Texas, and its coast-line stretches 432 kilometres along the Gulf of Mexico (Figure 17). The state of Tamaulipas had a population of 3,442,000 in the 2015 census (INEGI, 2015). The largest city, Reynosa, accounted for 649,800 of those and another 12 towns had populations of over 20,000. The rest of the population live in small towns and rural areas such as Tula which make up much of the state (city Population, 2019). Experience in Europe suggests that tourism can help to spread economic benefits from the cities to largely rural areas such as Tamaulipas by assisting with service retention and reducing population drift into the cities (Rang, 2014). But this study has found that this statement only holds true when young people are fully engaged with tourism initiatives such as the Magical towns initiative (see Chapter 9).

Figure 27: Map of Mexico and the State of Tamaulipas (Travel by Mexico, 2017)

Tamaulipas is divided into 43 Municipalities and the state capital is Ciudad Victoria with 346,029 inhabitants. (INEGI, 2015).

8.5   Topography and accessibility

Unlike most of Mexico, which is at altitude, the majority of the state of Tamaulipas is low lying (see topographical map, Figure 18). This means that the natural escarpment between the mountains and the plain presents a barrier restricting the accessibility of the region from the rest of Mexico. Historically this meant that the isolation of Tula ended around 1830 when a it became a stopping point on the emerging trade route from the port of Tampico, on the Gulf of Mexico, to the north of the country and on to Texas. Transport links still tend to be better developed with the United States, through a border crossing and bridges at Nuevo Laredo, then with the interior of Mexico. From a tourist point of view this can be an advantage because, firstly, it has helped to preserve the distinctive local culture of Tamaulipas and secondly, it provides a convenient route for artisan products spawned by the tourism industry to reach the Texas market. However, this means that Tamaulipas has never enjoyed the benefits of large-scale international tourism and has been largely neglected in the tourism data about Mexico presented in 1.2 above. It also means that the

Tourism board has to work extra hard to persuade domestic tourists from other parts of Mexico that the attractions of Tamaulipas is worth the effort of getting there.
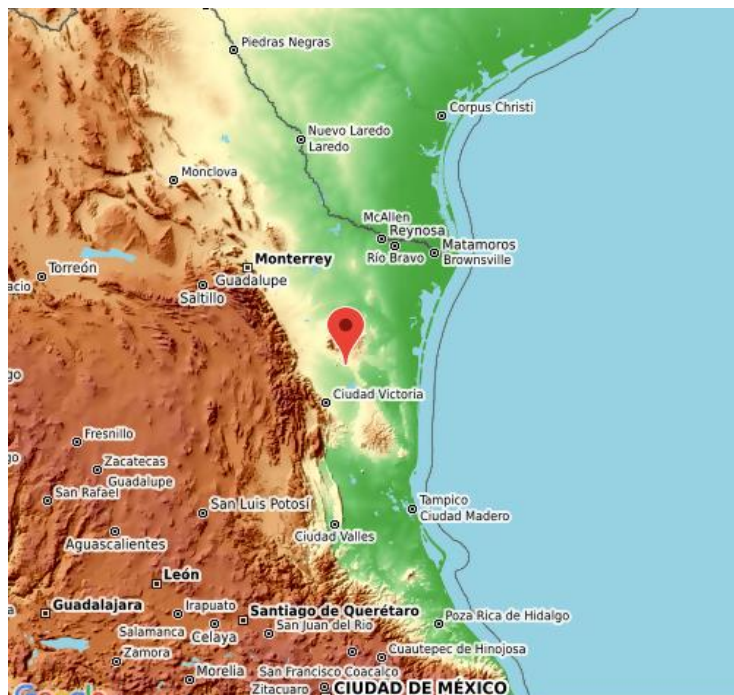
Figure 38: Topographic map of Tamaulipas and surrounding regions (Worldwide Elevation finder, 2019)

8.6   Tula

Under the protection of Sierra Madre Oriental, where the wind and fog make their nest, surrounded by seditious cacti, the city of Tula has its roots in time (Isaura Calderon, quoted by Guerra, 2010).

In more prosaic language, the municipality of Tula is located in the west of the state of Tamaulipas in the foothills of the mountains of a mountain range called *Sierra Madre Oriental*, 1,173 meters above sea level (Figure 19) *(ITCA, 2013)* (Figure 13). At the last census the population was 29,560 who refer to themselves as *'Tultecos'*. The Magical Town of Tula belongs to this municipality and it has 10,043 inhabitants (INEGI) 2015. It may be small but Tula, nevertheless, qualified for the Magical Towns initiative in 2012 because it has a fascinating story to tell visitors.
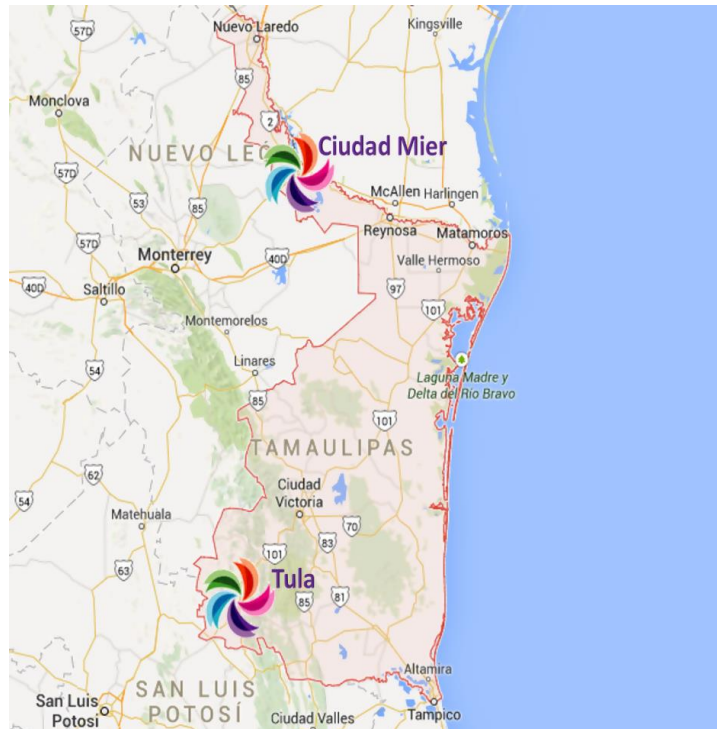
Figure 49: Map of Tamaulipas and Tula Magical Town (Tourism Board of Tamaulipas, 2017)

8.6.1   Pre-Hispanic roots

The earliest archaeological remnants found in the region belonged to a culture called '*Huastecos*' that inhabited this territory around the year 600. What it is believed of this culture is that they were short, they liked to deform their skull and mutilate their teeth. Their most important surviving monument is the recently excavated pyramid of Cuitzillo, which has been dated to around the years 600 to 900 A.D (Herrera, 2010). Some ceramic figurines were also found in the area, representing, the worship of fertility, the sun, fire, rain and wind. The *Huastecos* do not appear to have had a written language and there is no documentary evidence to explain the disappearance of this civilization.

Figure 20: Figurines of the Huastecos civilisation (Author)

Whoever they were, they were replaced by the much more elaborate Toltec civilization (mid-10th-mid-12th centuries CE). They dominated much of modern-day Tamaulipas from their capital and holy site at Tammapul (foggy place). Tula was probably part of the agricultural hinterland which all city states of the time relied on although no evidence of settlement has been found in Tula so far. However, the Toltec civilization was also long gone before the Spaniards arrived in this part of the Mexican territory in the early XVI century (ITCA 2013).

Some other groups and tribes occupied this region in Tamaulipas until the 16th century; they were called *Chichimecas*. It is believed that their lifestyle was nomadic, collecting fruits and plants and hunting deer, snakes, and rabbits. They were very skilled in the use of bow and arrow, their garments were very simple, and they used to have long hair. According to (ITCA, 2013) It is believed that they used to eat human and animal raw meat and drink blood, which in turn made them look like savages in the Spanish conquerors' eyes. However, these traditional stories could well have been fabricated by the Spanish in order to create legends of the bravery, commitment and dangers that lay before them or just as propaganda, as they established themselves in this new land.

8.6.2 Post conquest history

With the Spanish conquest in the 16th century, evangelization projects were established by Franciscans missionaries in the region. Friar Juan Bautista de Mollinedo, arrived in the region in 1607 and started the evangelization of what it is known today as 'Tula'. Other members of the Franciscan order of New Spain joined him, supporting the colonization of the area and the conversion of the Indians to Catholicism for over 10 years. With the permission of King Felipe III of Spain in 1617, and in the presence of Indians of the region as well as Spaniards, Bautista de Mollinedo prepared ceremonies to found 'Tula' as a town naming it after a local aquatic plant (Tamaulipas State government, 2019).

Figure 21: The church of St Anthony of Padua (Tourism Board of Tamaulipas, 2012)

Right from the beginning, the identity of Tula was grounded in the local landscape and the Catholic faith and its people have always had a strong collective identity built on these roots. These points are significant in the success of Tula as a place brand.

The construction, started shortly afterwards, of the Church of Tula, dedicated to San Antonio de Padua and several chapels in the area; reaffirming Mollinedo's conviction and the local people's beliefs entrenched its Catholic culture (ITCA, 2013). The church continues to dominate the centre of the town (Figure 21). However, the Catholic identity of Tula was not established without a fight. Some of the Indian tribes settled into the

sedentary lifestyle brought by the Spaniards, while other fought for their territory. The Indians in the *Sierra Madre Oriental,* who did not want to be part of this evangelization and settled agricultural lifestyle, constantly harassed the town which ended up with the violent death of many of the tribes.

Another conflict arose when the Franciscans and the Indians wanted to keep their land, causing fights for the possession of territory with ranchers both Spanish and Indians. The outcome was inconclusive, and Tula remains a *mestiza* community, with a lot of Mexican castes in that small town, a *novo-hispana* society (Herrera, 2010). This may have contributed to the fact that Tula was the first population in Tamaulipas that supported an insurgent movement against Spanish colonial rule in 1810 (Comisión de Bicentenario de la Independencia, 2010). A streak of revolutionary nationalism recurs in the town's history and still permeates its cultural heritage today (See Chapter 9).

After Mexico gained independence in 1821, the country opened its ports to global trade instead of trading exclusively with Spain as it had in the imperial period. Great Britain as the preeminent industrial and maritime power of the period began to monopolise maritime this trade. After about 1830, Tula started to have commercial activity due to its location on the trade route from the port of Tampico in the Gulf of Mexico, with the north of the country and Texas. In 1835, Tula was awarded the title of city. At this stage, there were about 8,000 inhabitants and with an opportunity for development in the region, families from all over the country moved to Tula.

But peace and prosperity were short lived. After the USA annexed the previously independent state of Texas in 1845 American troops attacked the north of Mexico. Fearing an attack on the state capital Ciudad Victoria, the governor of the state of Tamaulipas transferred the state power to Tula, and the town became the capital of the state, but only for a few months from December 1846 to February 1847. (Herrera, 2010).

Through the 19th century, Great Britain was the largest trading partner with Mexico, but in 1880 was replaced by the United States due to distance and the rapid industrialization of the USA. This economic phenomenon led to the opening of more maritime ports including Tampico (In the Gulf of Mexico in the State of Tamaulipas), which in collaboration with San

Luis Potosi (Tamaulipas neighbouring state) became a foreign trade distribution centre of products from Great Britain, France and other countries in Europe and the United States. The products imported through Tampico, had to pass along the only road through Tula, and then to San Luis Potosi where they were distributed to the rest of Mexico. This strategic location led to a boom in Tula. At the dawn of the 20th century it was considered as the main city of the State of Tamaulipas. The population peaked at around 16,000 and the city experienced economic, cultural and social development (Herrera, 2010).

The local economy was essentially agricultural, but the local community benefited from the location of Tula on a trade route selling local products to passing travellers. One group of such products included saddlery. This is the origin of the artisan level manufacturing of all types of leather products which has become one of the pillars of Tula's cultural heritage offering as a Magical Town (see Chapter 9). A second pillar of the local economy was the production of *Ixtle* (a plant fibre abundant in the Tamaulipas region). Tula artisans were able to exploit this natural resource to produce cordage, mooring ropes, nets, carpets, chairs and a range of other woven products in the *Haciendas*. While it was a locally run enterprise the work in the Haciendas was a horizontal society in which the owners generally treated the *peons*, (labourers) well.

Bu once again the period of prosperity did not last as two main changes disrupted the business model in Tula. Firstly, new Spanish immigrants, escaping from the crisis in Spain caused by defeat in the 1898 war with the United States, saw in Tula an opportunity for commerce and started to open a few businesses in the town. These Spaniards bought a few haciendas in Tula to continue with the production of ixtle. Global demand was high, and landlords tried to ramp up production. Workers resented the way they were treated, working extra hours with the same salary, and they felt exploited. (Herrera, 2010). At the same time, the topography of Tula began to work against the town as the neighbouring state of San Luis Potosi built railways which could not traverse the mountains west of Tula. Tula and the whole state of Tamaulipas started to decline (ITCA, 2013).

When the 1910 revolution started many peons were angry with the hacienda's owners, most of them Spaniards. General Alberto Carrera Torres, who was educated in Tula, started an uprising in the region. The haciendas were burnt, and his forces captured Tula on 21 May 1911. They remained in power locally until, during the chaos that followed the overthrow

of General Huerta in 1914, Torres was killed in 1917. These cannot have been happy years in Tula with continual fighting leading to further disruption of trade as well as loss of life (Martinez and Angel, 2010). Finally, reconstruction, brought a new leader to control the community, creating military colonies and armed peasants, a situation that only finished with the beginning of the presidency of Mexico Lazaro Cardenas in 1934. The *ejidos* (rural lands) were established and new agricultural law benefitted the community by providing land to those who worked on it. The State of Tamaulipas took control of the rural lands and carried out paternalist actions such as buying the production of Ixtle and giving the peasants and local community a share. A new school was opened but with very little success. The reason was that the families preferred to send their children to work in the fields and earn money instead of studying. (ITCA,2013).

That attitude proved to be short sighted as the introduction of Nylon in the 1930s and 1940s meant that the sources of employment from *Ixtle* disappeared and the fields were partly abandoned. In the 1960's the region declined further, as the topography meant there was still no adequate road connecting Tula to the main cities of the country, leading to an unwanted isolation. This period is sometimes referred to as 'The Siberia of Tamaulipas' when the region became the poorest in Mexico and nobody seemed to care about Tula, not even the Government as they did not see opportunities in the town.

In the late 1980's demographic change occurred as a result of a lack of opportunities and employment. Large numbers of younger inhabitants migrated to bigger cities or even to the United States in search of a better life. For many years these migrants (living in Miami, Atlanta and Texas) sent considerable sums in remittances to their families in Tula but the consequence was generational segregation as it was mainly the older generations who remained in Tula preserving its culture and holding onto their old traditions (Herrera, 2010).

8.7   Tamaulipas and Tula today: The Economy

Renewed hope came when a business man from the region, saw an opportunity in the production of olive and vegetables, then Tula started to become economically active again. (ITCA ,2013). In terms of gross GDP Tamaulipas now ranks 11th among the 31 Mexican states

with £20,490 million. Per Capita GDP was approximately £5900 (INEGI, 2015). Partly as a result of emigration which has reduced the town's population by 60% since its late XIX century peak, unemployment has fallen to 4.7% but that is still above the national average of 4.3% (Secretaria del Trabajo Y Prevision Social, 2019). There is a still a long way to go before the town can return to its late 19th century prosperity.

8.8 Tamaulipas and Tula today: HDI and Education

The Human Development Index (HDI) of Tamaulipas was 0.758 in 2012 which puts the province in the "high" category but still some way behind Mexico City's figure of 0.830. There was a marginal improvement of 0.009 between 2008 and 2012 and Tamaulipas stands 9th in the rankings of Mexico's 31 states (United Nations Development Programme, 2015). This suggests considerable progress since the "Siberia of Tamaulipas" in the 1960s-1980s but there is still plenty of room for improvement. A key factor in measuring HDI is educational opportunity and according to the Tourism Board officer in Tamaulipas this is limited in Tula. The level of education available in the town is primary and secondary school and some vocational training, mainly related to agriculture, business administration and commerce, because these are the most practical studies to use in the town. However, it is very common for the upper middle class in Tula to work and save money for their children's education. They send them to study in the University of Tamaulipas in Ciudad Victoria (capital of the state) which is only one hour from Tula and has a much wider range of educational offerings.

8.9   Tula today: Municipal organisation

According to ITCA (2013) present day Tula, is divided into 13 '*barrios* (neighbourhoods). The names are quirky but convey a sense of even more local identity. All thirteen are incorporated into some cultural events in order to maintain inclusivity and fuse those very local identities into the Magical Town brand (see Chapter 9, 3.1).

1. *Los Charcos* (the puddles): After the rain little puddles that remain there and are part of the fun of this barrio.

2. *El Jicote* (stinging insect): Named after a species of insects that annoyed the inhabitants of the barrio.

3. *Divisadero* (lookout): The barrio where Juan de Mollinedo looked at the area.

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4. *Las Trojas* (Granary): A grain store.

5. *Alta Vista* (High look): The highest area in Tula.

6. *Zona Centro* (Downtown): Actual central part of Tula Magical Town

7. *Independencia* (Independence): In memory of a fight for independence of the area.

8. *La Pila* (Water hole): There was a water hole in this barrio and they called it after that.

9. *Cerro de Aire* (Hill of air): The strongest wind hits the hill in this barrio every afternoon.

10. *Cantarranas* (Singing Frogs): There were a lot of ponds with noisy frogs.

11. *La mora* (Blackberries): There are many blackberry trees in the barrio.

12. *Las Piedras* (The Stones): An area full of grinding stones.

13. *La Tijera* (The Scissor): Due to the scissor form of some of the streets in this barrio.

8.9.1 Tula today: The emblem 'Escudo de Tula'

The history, natural environment and cultural elements of Tula and its region are expressed in the design of the emblem of the municipality of Tula (Figure 22). It is divided into three parts. In the top left corner appears the figure of the Spanish friar, Juan Bautista Mollinedo, founder of Tula and his Catholic church San Antonio de Padua. In the top right corner, we find an indigenous woman of Tula and the Pyramid *Cuitzillo* that was used for worship in pre- Hispanic times. At the bottom of the emblem is one of Tula's hills called *'Mocho'*, *which is* regarded as a guardian of the area, and an endemic plant of the region called *Lechuguilla.* In the centre we see the iconic traditional dress of the state of Tamaulipas '*La Cuera Tamaulipeca'* an emblematic symbol of Tula and the talent of its artisans. At the top of the frame, laurel and holm oak leaves represent freedom and independence, and the arrows signify the weapons used by both conquerors and the indigenous population. The base records the year when Tula was founded, 1617 (ITCA, 2013).

Figure 22: Escudo de Tula (Tourism Board of Tamaulipas, 2017)

The logo represents the uniqueness of Tula but it is rarely seen on local promotional material or tourism products. Instead it has been subsumed by the umbrella Magical Towns logo. The feelings of local people regarding this and its effects on their identity are discussed in Chapters 10 and 11.

8.10 Conclusion

Reversing the long-term erosion of human and social capital arising from the 20th century history of Tula as well as creating fresh employment and entrepreneurial opportunities are among the most important aims of the Magical Towns initiative. Rising the interest of visitors in cultural sites and activities, can have positive impacts as it increases the chances for a destination to get investment from the government and private organizations. The following chapter will show how the themes extracted from the towns geography and history and identified in the *Escudo de Tula* have been used to do this.

Chapter 9- Producing Tula: the presentation of cultural heritage for tourism

This chapter will present a case study of the production of culture in Tula as part of the Magical Towns initiative described in Chapter 7. It will focus on the application of theories of the importance of the absorption of cultural heritage into tourism products and services having regard to the issues of authenticity and commodification as discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter will describe how the Tula's community has been involved in the development in the light of the various models of economic, social and political participation discussed in Chapter 5 and the role of umbrella place branding discussed in Chapter 6.

The appreciation of culture and heritage has become a fundamental part of the economic and social development of most of the regions of Mexico. The country has a strong appreciation of heritage, the importance of its meaning and what it entails. Due to its geographical, cultural, natural and social richness, the country has made heritage a commercial resource for progress intended to provide visitors with a different view of the country. Mexico is determined to reinforce traditions by introducing authentic cultural heritage as an asset, seeking to establish, preserve and promote the diversity of every one of its states. This philosophy underpins the creation of the umbrella place brand Magical Towns but the execution of it has been delegated to state level institutes of culture and arts.

According to official webpage of the government of Tamaulipas, the function of the Institute of Culture and Arts of the State of Tamaulipas (ITCA), is the welfare, appreciation and preservation of the cultural and historic heritage of the region, including; buildings, objects and performances that are linked to the local identity. ITCA also promotes the analysis, research and dissemination of cultural and historic knowledge along with the revaluation of culture, local pride, folklore and the sense of belonging of the most iconic symbols of the state. Along with the local authorities and the government of the state, ITCA also supports the restoration of public spaces such as old and abandoned haciendas and buildings to transform them into local museums, or Houses of Art and Culture, depending on the necessities of the region (Culturas Tamaulipas, 2019).

In Tula the ITCA has the opportunity to build on a strong local tradition in which the people of Tula have preserved their traditions through the years which provide a strong identity to the community. Using local, traditional cultural elements for tourism, is intended to create products and services that will help the effective development of the town and transform it into a prosperous and lively tourism destination. In the case of Tula, the cultural heritage elements being commodified are spontaneous parts of everyday lifestyles, and are considered authentic values, such as the role of the family, language, religion, traditional dress, music, arts and crafts, cuisine, history and festivities.

9.1 Creating cultural products for consumption

The first major step after the denomination of Tula as a Magical Town in 2011 was to change the town's slogan, a decision taken by the Tourism Board and the government of Tamaulipas. Previously it specifically said that Tula, was the place where the traditional dress of the state was born, '*Tula, la cuna de la Cuera Tamaulipeca*'. This was included in a new slogan which proclaimed the town to be part of the Magical Towns in Mexico '*Tula, Pueblo Mágico*'. A new image and logo of the Magical Town brand was established all over the town, to create a brand identity that involved all cultural heritage elements of the region in a 'Magical' product (Chapter 7, see Figures 10-12). In accordance with the theories of Casasola (2011) proponents of the new brand identity of Tula argue that it includes the knowledge, skills and habits of the people as well as specific cultural artefacts. The emblem of Tula (Figure 16) incorporates all those elements, however it was not considered.

As Briciu (2013) pointed out there is a risk of tourism marketers being dazzled by a trendy slogan which is insufficiently specific to indicate what the town has to offer, and which changes very little on the ground. In this case it seems rather unimaginative to have simply discarded the reference to the local style of dress. Not everyone was happy at the time and the issue is still sensitive in Tula (see Chapter 10). Nevertheless, I explored this issue during my fieldwork and discovered that there was no attempt to combine the two slogans because this situation had previously arisen in other towns and the Ministry of Tourism decided that *Pueblo Mágico must take* preference because the programme promotes the umbrella brand (Interview 1a).   However, the loss of the local slogan surely made it harder for the host community to adapt from a local mark to a national umbrella brand, and delayed them taking ownership of this new, stronger tourism initiative. This conflict of identities is a

problem that single destination place brands such as Wigtown do not face. That may enable benefits to become apparent to the local community more quickly. This matters in the light of the findings by Smith and Robinson (2006) that tangible economic benefits have to be seen rapidly and communities do not feel empowered by slogans or long-term promises.

9.2   The creation of the traditional dress '*La Cuera'* as a symbol of the State of Tamaulipas

The issues with the logo meant that the production of Tula did not get off to a great start, but the traditional dress of the state of Tamaulipas *'La Cuera'* is the most emblematic symbol of the region (Ramos, 2011) and has proved strong enough to survive and to anchor the town's distinctive identity within the Magical Towns umbrella brand. Figure 23 shows this leather dress which is made by hand from local deer skin, (abundant in the region). It was probably first created in the 16th century but was elaborated by General Alberto Carrera Torres during the revolutionary wars, 1913-15, for protection against vegetation and spines in the field. It can be worn by men and women, and it has unique decorations such as fringes and *'Grecas';* illustrations of wild flowers of the region (Traje Regional, 2017). According to the Tourism Board of Tamaulipas (2015) the general asked a local craftsman of Tula to fabricate this dress. It drew on longstanding traditions dating from trade with the cowboys of Texas and other Mexican states from the 1830s onwards but added additional fringes and ornamentation that require a lot of skills. The same family remain custodians of the tradition and still make *La Cuera* in Tula at prices ranging from £300 to £1,000.

Figure 23: La Cuera. Traditional Dress of the State of Tamaulipas
   (Tourism Board of Tamaulipas, 2017)

La Cuera is a living example of the preservation of heritage and culture of an important aspect in the history of Tamaulipas, that differentiates its people from any other state in Mexico but at the same time connects them to the national history of the Zapata era. As a result of this connection examples have also been worn by Mexican Presidents and dignitaries for special occasions and tourism events, as a symbol of identity and even by Pope John Paul II on his recent visit to Monterrey. This explains the importance of *La Cuera* in place branding Tula to a wider tourist audience.

9.2.1 The commodification of the traditional dress, *La Cuera*

The Reyna family regard themselves as the creators of *La Cuera*. They still live in Tula and still have their workshop there that attracts the visitor's curiosity. *La Cuera* is an example of self-sustaining development and modernization over four generations. The younger generation of the family have a strong attachment to '*La Cuera*' and consider it a valuable element of culture. However, there has been a considerable degree of commodification in the form of brand extension strategies to adapt the original design motifs into a range of new products adapting to contemporary trends and requirements of consumers such as handbags, wallets, passport holders, dolls and more while maintaining distinctiveness in their creation (Figure 24).

Figure 24: La Cuera factory shop in Tula (Author)

This expression of commercial commodification is regarded as positive creativity rather than a threat to authenticity by others in the community (Interview 3a, 2017). The entrepreneurial efforts of the younger have also been supported by the State of Tamaulipas who have subsidised travel to National and international Artisan's and Tourism Fairs and provided space in the Artisan's shop in SECTUR, Mexico City. The family have even sought to strengthen links between La Cuera and the international Catholic community by presenting garments to the Pope on a visit to Rome in the entourage of the Governor of Tamaulipas (Figure 25).

Figure 25: Tultecos present La Cuera to the Pope, 2018 (Tourism Board of Tamaulipas)

In recent years *La Cuera* has fused with local dance styles and folk music to make an art form which expresses pride in being northern and also provides substantial tourism related employment for semi-professional singers and dancers as well as costume makers (Traje Regional, 2017). With the coming of the Magical Town initiative, new artisans are being trained by the House of Culture, in collaboration with the Tourism board and the ITCA, teaching young local artisans to manufacture '*La Cuera*' with the aim to preserve the heritage.

The example of *La Cuera* in Tula supports the contention of Marciszewska (2006, p.89) that: 'Cultural commodification has stimulated preservation, community consciousness and an appreciation of local traditions.' Comparison between "La Cuera" in Tula and the case of Harris Tweed in Scotland illustrates some of the key features required for this process to be successful and benefit tourist branding. The popular Harris Tweed was created by islanders in the Outer Hebrides. Like the inhabitants of Tula, they utilised the by-products of local

animals, in this case the wool of local mountain sheep to make clothing suitable for the local terrain. In Scotland it was not thorns but the winter cold that they need to protect themselves against. The unique fabric which resulted appealed to a certain type of tourist. Created in 1840, the Harris Tweed industry has been passed down the generations and, as with "*La Cuera*", endorsed by the rich and famous. This Scottish design set a fashion and inspired people around the world, even British Royalty. 'The Tweed achieved the Royal Seal of approval, when Prince Albert himself designed the Balmoral tartan in 1853' Hunter (2001:23). When Harris Tweed began to decline, a process of modernization offered the best hope of recovery for the Tweed. 'In 1998, they (the islanders) changed, adapted, evolved to satisfy the present-day market place and, still be part of the world-wide textile market' Hunter (2001:338). Like *La Cuera*, Harris Tweed mills have used brand extension strategies and this Scottish icon is now available in the form of bags, purses, wallets, jackets, scarves, cushions and more, proving that changing the original model has helped them, like the artisans of Tula, to remain competitive in the industry. Commodification of this kind usually raises issues about intellectual property rights (IPR). In this case, the older generation of the Reyna Ortega family do not retain the IPR, because they didn't want to pay for patent and trademark protection and believed that people knew they are the originals. On the contrary, the younger generation have protected their brand and licensed products (Appendix C, Interview 6). The Harris Tweed manufacturers of Scotland have done likewise and both cases suggest that commodification may force artisan businesses to become more sophisticated and incur additional costs in return for brand extension and access to new markets.

9.2.2 Attitudes towards the Magical Towns brand among creators of La Cuera

In an example of the protest of contestation of place brands in small towns identified by Fordham (2012), the tourist authorities of Tamaulipas and Tula faced a challenge, partly of their own making, to induce the locals to accept and engage with the Magical Town brand, so they can regard it as part of their local identity. According to the Tourism board of Tamaulipas, for over 30 years Tula was known and related to the creation of *La Cuera*. However, with the change to a Magical Town, they assured the author, in interviews, that the community are content as they will benefit from the initiative. But, in my fieldwork, it emerged that the family who created the traditional dress are not happy. A spokesperson said: "We are not afraid of the new name, there are many Magical Towns, but none of them have created *La Cuera*. They choose Tula as Magical Town, and there is nothing we can do,

we did not decide, our family will keep working on the traditional dress and teaching our children to manufacture and continue with our creation and nobody else should be doing it, we are the originals, the authentic ones, *La Cuera* is ours". (Interview 6, 2017). When these complaints were put to the tourism authorities in a follow up interview, they claimed to be unaware of the family's feelings (Interview 1a). However, others in the community stated that local authorities know about those complaints but have not respond to them (Interview 3, 2017). However, it must be said that the dissatisfaction expressed by the Reyna family is uncommon in the community of Tula, as in my findings the community were generally positive about the prosperity in their town, and this case must be due to the profound connexion that this family has to the traditional dress that for decades has made them feel proud. This is a classic case of contested identity and parallels can be found in Scotland where some clan traditionalists disagree with the commodification of their tartans (Donnelly, 2018). The literature does not suggest any standard model for resolving such conflicts of identity in place branding and in Tula it seems to have been left to time to resolve the issue.

9.3   The significance of events and festivals

Events and Festivals play an important role in tourism development. Although they might be brief in duration, they are unquestionably one of the main attractions of a destination. According to McKercher & Du Cros (2002:114) events and festivals "serve to concentrate a wide array of activities into a condensed time frame, creating a critical mass of products for most tourist consumption, they are great opportunities for the host community to reflect their traditions and also reaffirm local identity". This kind of tourist activity can attract visitors to destinations for exhibitions, conferences and other cultural activities where the host community and their local products can be known and consumed which leads to the support of locals. Gelder and Robinson (2011:128) believe that: "Governments now support and promote events as part of their strategies for economic development, nation building and destination marketing. Festivals and events are viewed as a new form of tourism that attracts thousands of visitors (and thus tourist income) and encourages economic prosperity, development and regeneration." This theoretical insight is not lost on the Tourist Board of Tula which has recognised the substantial contribution of events and festivals to the lives of the host community. The local authorities are aware of their significance in encouraging community participation, reinforcing community bonds and developing civic pride.

*Figure 56: Host community members taking part in a cultural event
(Tourism Board of Tula)*

Cultural festivities and events are often expected to stimulate consumption of tourist products and influence socioeconomic development, creating temporary and permanent employment. All these recreational activities and cultural representations bring 'liveability' to the town and highlight the historical and cultural values of Tula, (Figure 26) through promoting local identity and encouraging community empowerment. This notion is backed up by Robinson, Heitmann and Dieke (2011:103) who state that: "Festivals and events have also responded to the desires to enhance authenticity and local identity within the experience of the event."

9.3.1 The Popularity of Fiestas *and religious festivities in Tula*

A significant number of events in Tula, as elsewhere in Catholic countries, are linked to the celebration of spiritual and religious beliefs which can be festivals, ceremonies or parades to venerate saints or virgins. According to Davies (2015:533-561:) "In some Christian countries individual towns and cities in a region celebrated their own saint's day, resulting in a succession of festivals on different days in any region. Religions differ in the degree to which festivals are used as important reinforcement mechanisms for faith."

In Mexico, the Catholic religion which has a very strong tradition of festivals and parades, is strongly related to the country, having the '*Virgen de Guadalupe*' as an iconic symbol of respect and admiration, playing an important role in the cultural heritage of the country. Old traditions are part of the local essence of the inhabitants of different regions in the country, where religion is part of the local identity. In Tula mass is celebrated every Sunday. They support the church by making a donation called *'diezmo'* which is 10% of their monthly salary towards church maintenance. Locals seem proud of their religion and the older generation have faith in God and the saints. Most of the community still attend to church on Sundays, families pray to God before their meal and make the sign of the cross before bed and when passing by a church. Baptism, first communion and marriage are important. However, according to (Interview 4, 2017) "Things are changing in the town, although the community of Tula is always willing to participate in religious festivities, I have perceived a fall in attendance, mainly the younger generation who show no interest to attend mass with their families anymore". However, religious celebrations involve the participation of the host community. They create a lively atmosphere, making outsiders feel welcome to be part of the events that involve regional dances, music, parades, artwork and local cuisine, manifestations that help regions to reinforce local identity and attract the attention of outsiders.

According to Wiltshier (2011:249) "tourism management can be used by religious sites to benefit the site and the community as well as the visitor… Some sites take advantage of localized resources that deliver a successful tourism product to the visitor and to their own community and the financial rewards are then clearly identifiable to all these stakeholders." Wiltshier cites the example of Salisbury Church in UK that attracts 300,000 visitors per year who pay an admission charge for the church to cover the cost of managing and maintaining a world -class visitor attraction, which also serves as a focal point for a regional strategy for development but in the eyes of some can compromise the authenticity of the religious experience. In the case of Tula, the diocese has not turned to tourism to provide revenues for the upkeep of the churches and clerical stipends in the way English churches have and the authenticity of the faith has not been damaged, but the church does contribute to religious tourism but only at the discretion of the priest who is not subordinate to the tourism authorities.

9.3.2   Celebration of 'San Antonio de Padua'

The community of Tula is devoted to San Antonio de Padua. Locals respect and feel connected with this Saint who has a church in his honour: a baroque style construction which dates back to the 17th century and is believed to be the oldest church in Tamaulipas (Figure 27).   The most important celebration of the year occurs on the 13th of June when the community starts the festivities to commemorate St Antonio de Padua by walking for miles carrying a wax figurine of the saint around the town along with fresh flowers. In this festivity each of the 13 *barrios* of Tula organises an '*entrada de cera*' which means wax entry, referring to the beginning of the peregrination from that *barrio* lighting wax candles, walking, dancing their traditional '*Danza de pie'* and '*Danza de Caballo'* and singing religious songs. The procession ends up by attending a mass in the church (Garmundi, 2013). These annual pilgrimages in honour of San Antonio de Padua are very similar to the ones in Cangas, Spain to celebrate the battle of Covadonga, or Padua, Italy, which also celebrate San Antonio de Padua, and many other towns in Europe. This, presumably reduces the need for mediatory commodification given that the tourists are mainly Mexican and Catholic thus enhancing the authenticity of the experience. There are also many other beliefs connected with the number 13 such as reciting the Lord's Prayer 13 times, going to church 13 times and giving 13 cents to poor people all related to the date of the celebration on the 13 of June.

Figure 67: Commemorations of Saint Antonio de Padua in Tula (Author)

Saint Antonio de Padua is very well known in the Mexican culture despite the fact that he was originally Portuguese and churches dedicated to him are more commonly found in countries of the Portuguese empire such as Madeira, Brazil and Goa (India). However, he spent much of his adult life in Italy as a Franciscan friar and his popularity in Mexico is related to the fact that it was Franciscan friars who first brought Christianity to Mexico in 1523-24. They generally had a more empathetic approach to the native Maya and Indo American peoples than the secular conquistadores and some Franciscans stood up for the rights of indigenous people against the violence and cultural destruction. For example, they fought the Spanish secular authorities to be allowed to educate Mayan children as well as learning and translating the local languages. In Tula the Franciscan connection is more than usually important since it was a Franciscan friar, Juan Bautista de Mollinedo, who founded the town in 1617. (Interview 5, 2017) This background should potentially connect the local traditions of Tula with wider international tourism. The forthcoming 500th anniversary of the introduction of Christianity to Mexico in 2023-24 offers a huge potential opportunity to build on this and market Tula throughout the Catholic world.

Meanwhile in Tula, St Antonio de Padua is associated with a more local ritual. He is believed to help women to find a boyfriend or husband (Figure 28). Little figurines and stamps are for sale in most of the Mexican markets. In the traditional belief, single woman should place the little figurine of the saint upside-down, and say a prayer and they will eventually find a partner. If it does not happen, the women drown the figurine in a glass of water to put pressure on the saint to fulfil the request.

Figure 78: Statue of Saint Antonio de Padua in Tula (Author)

Some people also take away the baby in the figurine until they have a boyfriend or spank the figurine although these practices are not approved by the church (Figure 29) (Infobae.com 2019

Figure 89: A Mexican woman inverts a figurine of Saint Antonio (Infobae, 2019)

The association between Saint Antonio de Padua and mating seems to be unique to Tula and Mexico as St Anthony of Padua is usually regarded as the patron saint of lost things and lost causes. The origins of it are lost in time which makes mediatory commodification for tourism purposes challenging. But it is the strangeness of the rite that could be the attraction for foreigners.

According to the local authorities in the summer of 2017, the pilgrimage to St Antonio de Padua brought almost 10,000 visitors to the town; the highest number of tourists on any day of the year. The Town rejoices with one of their biggest cultural events, now called *Trecenario* which means that the religious celebration lasts for 13 days and includes cultural events, performances from local musicians, dancers and fireworks. However, temporal extension and numbers on this scale bring risks. Greenwood (1977) showed that in Fuentarrabia once a religious festival lost its association with one particular day and became a regular occurrence it lost its authenticity and the support of the local community. Sheer numbers can also lead to the creation of a "landscape of consumption which consumes its own context" (Sack, 1992, p.158-159). Consumption there certainly is, because the *Trecenario* attracts visitors from all over the region and, by having daily events, they are encouraged to stay overnight bringing business to local hotels and restaurants. However, there Is no specific data from the Tourism Board or local authorities on the number of hotel bookings, or restaurant takings for any of the local events. Seeing the town and hotels full

is a sign of success and effectiveness for the authorities. But the lack of data supports the criticism of Valadez and Lopez (2018) that claims for the success of the Magical towns brand lack empirical foundation and are made by those with a vested interest in reporting success.

When it comes to authenticity, the local authority representatives told the author that: "the participation and collaboration of locals was exceptional" and my observations support this. The locals still seem happy to participate and socialise. The continuing sense of pride and ownership is clearly evident in people dressing up, local officials parading symbols of civil dignity such as official uniforms and insignia but most of all wearing *La Cuera* (Figure 30).

Figure 30: Former governor of Tamaulipas and dignitaries wearing La Cuera
(Tourism Board of Tamaulipas)

This means that Greenwood's and Sack's warnings are unfounded in Tula and it is living, evolving traditions such as the *Trecenario* that give identity to the town.

9.3.3 *Celebration of the* Virgen del Contadero

In Tula, the celebration of the Virgen del *Contadero* is another important part of the local religious tradition celebrated on Good Friday and the 12th of December. People gather to rejoice in a small *gruta* (grotto) where the sculpture of the virgin is located (Figure 31). Pilgrims and visitors venerate the virgin by singing litanies and bringing colourful flowers and candles, while some others dress up and play traditional music and dances. For this celebration, Tula receives numerous visitors mainly from the State of Tamaulipas and the

neighbouring state of San Luis Potosi but again there are no official records of precise numbers.

Figure 31: Shrine of the Virgen del Contadero (Tourism board of Tamaulipas)

There are myths and legends regarding the Virgin of *El Contadero,* "Back in 1850, at the top of a hill, bandits used to count their earnings, and after an argument between them, they decided to hang one of their partners in crime from a tree, when suddenly they heard the voice of a woman in a small cave who told them to stop and let that man go free. The bandits got scared and let the man go and now people venerate her." (Interview 5,2017). Another myth is "that if someone is doing the pilgrimage to the top, even if they complain about the bad state of the road up the hill, they cannot desist, or they will be turned into stones". When one of claims made in support of cultural heritage tourism is that it can empower women, it is pertinent to ask whether festivals of Catholic virgins of this kind arouse any kind of opposition from modern feminists. My ethnographic observation is that they do not. The younger female members of the Tula community who may have been influenced by such modern feminist ideas have usually left the town for bigger cities, where religious festivities exist but are not as significant as in rural communities. Locals do not seem to perceive any apparent contradiction between celebrating the Marian idea of the role of women and the economic and social empowerment of women through tourism which is taking place in Tula (see Chapters 10 and 11).

9.3.4 Cerros de Tula (*The hills of Tula)*

Tula Magical Town is full of traditions, myths, beliefs and heritage that have been passed down through generations (Ramos, 2008). According to my fieldwork, locals are always willing to tell the stories to visitors in a classic example of mediation, they seem happy to explain the origin of a third important religious festival which concerns the 13 hills *'cerros'* around Tula. As shown in Figure 32, all of them have a cross on the top and locals believe that "the purpose of those crosses in the hills are to stop evil or the devil from coming into the town" (Interview 4, 2017).
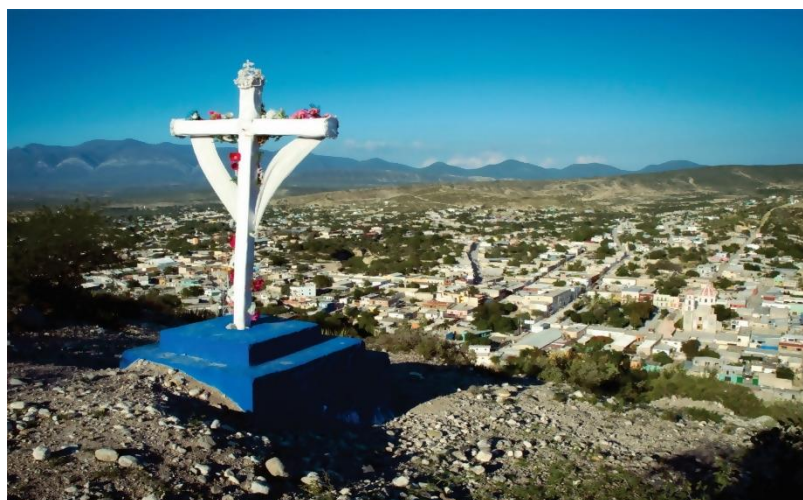
Figure 32: Cerro de la Cruz (Author))

This is hardly the kind of organised, commodified mediation based on heritage centres and printed literature described by Timothy and Boyd (2003) at sites along Hadrian's Wall. Instead it is the kind of spontaneous, informal, face to face mediation which Tiberghien (2018) finds to be the most useful in promoting genuine cultural exchange and in preserving authenticity in Kazakhstan. As he says this can only work when numbers are small but relatively few tourists venture out of the town centre to the rural locations of the Cerros de Cruz.

9.3.5 Tula's anniversary

The celebration of the foundation of Tula is a very important festivity for the inhabitants. On the 22nd of July 2017, the town celebrated the 4th centenary of its foundation. Local authorities and the tourism board of the state worked since 2012 organizing what was a big

event in the town with several cultural events taking place such as local art exhibitions, horse riding, local cuisine, regional music and dancing, live theatre, fireworks, and the traditional *Callejoneada, a* walking serenade during which local musicians dress up in the traditional *Cuera* and walk through the streets of Tula while playing and singing popular folk songs, telling stories and reciting local legends (Figure 33).

Figure 33: The 400th anniversary of the foundation of Tula (eldecidor.com.mx)

The anniversary celebrations were a good example of the importance of combining elements of local cultural heritage to make more attractive occasions. However, they seem to have been a missed opportunity for the kind of diaspora tourism described by (Timothy, 2011, Fumanti, 2016) and Sim and Leith (2016) in which people are drawn to revisit their cultural roots. There will be another opportunity during the five hundredth anniversary of the introduction of Christianity to Mexico in 2023-2024 if the tourism authorities can reach out to descendants of the substantial exodus from Tula throughout the 20th century.

9.3.6 Traditional music and dances

With the aim of preserving some of the artistic dance traditions, Tula people maintain their heritage in the Horse Dance '*Danza del Caballo'* and Standing Dance *'Danza de pie'* which are both part of most of the festivities that take place in the town.

Standing Dance *'Danza de Pie'*

To the accompaniment of violins and guitars playing, male dancers dress in very colourful outfits, a crown of fresh flowers and mirrors. Adding turkey feathers, a white veil and rattles to the costume, a woman dancer represents *'La Malinche',* who played an important role in the Spanish conquest. La Malinche was one of the twenty women slaves given to the Spaniards in 1519. She became Hernan Cortes's interpreter, advisor, intermediary and mistress who gave birth to his first son, who is considered one of the first Mestizos (people of mixed European and indigenous American race). La Malinche's reputation has been altered over the years, according to changing social perspectives. Today it remains symbolically strong for Mexicans: the term *"Malinchista"* is a derogatory expression which refers to a person disloyal to the Mexican country and culture, for example Mexicans that have a preference to buy products from the United States or Europe, or Mexicans that marry foreigners instead of Mexicans. Therefore, the *Danza de Pie* can be regarded as an expression of the nationalist sentiment which local people showed during the war against the United States, 1846-1848, and again during the campaigns against abusive labour practices by outside Hacienda owners before and during the 1910 revolution. The traditional dance is therefore, presumably, more appealing to Mexican than international tourists.

Horse Dance '*Danza del Caballo'*

In the traditional Horse Dance, accompanied by musicians that play guitars, tambours and violins, male dancers participate. Their costumes include a box made of wood and fabric in the form of the body of a horse. The head is carved in wood. There is also the outfit of a bull that also participates in this dance similar to the horses, but it uses real bull horns. The dance simulates a fight between horses that manage to knock the bull down, and finally cover it up with a red cape similar of the ones used in Spanish bull fights. Then the dancers offer candies to the crowd. Similar horse dances are common in Spanish and other Mexican communities which must act as a link with wider tourism as well as encouraging local integration.

Figure 34 shows local children participating in the religious festivities of Tula, using their costumes for their performance. According to a local: "I feel very proud to perform in the religious festivities, and now that people from other places come to see how we celebrate our culture feels really nice." This layman's description of cultural invocation shows how place branding has fostered a stronger sense of identity among the local community and makes them proud about receiving a number of visitors from the region and the neighbouring states.

Figure 34: Local children participating in traditional dances (Tourism Board of Tula)

9.4   Local cuisine influencing tourism development

Generally, food tourism is defined as tourist visiting a destination specifically to sample the food products offered there (Povey, 2011:234). According to Bessiere (1998:29): "Skills and culinary practices may therefore differentiate one area from another. They are an integral part of individual collective and territorial identity construction". China, France, Mexico, Thailand and Italy are among a handful of countries whose cuisines have become fashionable throughout the world and add allure to these places as destinations (Timothy, 2011:76). In a few countries, including Mexico, food tourism is more local and centres around local delicacies. This is part of the reason why towns can still differentiate themselves even while enjoying the benefits of an umbrella brand such as Magical Towns. To understand why it is necessary to know something of the history and nature of Mexican cuisine. According to Misiura (2006:199): "The conquest of Mexico in 1521 gave rise to one of the richest culinary revolutions in history". When he Spanish explorer Cortez and his supporters came to the New World, looking for fortune, they found culinary specialties such as corn, tomatoes, chocolate, avocados, beans, peanuts and squash. The conquerors brought products such as milk, cheese, wine, lamb, pork, beef, garlic, wheat and vinegar which were previously unknown in the Americas. After destroying the Aztec empire, Spanish structures were imposed, but they never succeeded in extinguishing the native culture and traditions of Mexico." That culture and tradition is maintained in culinary activities that are vital as they enhance the experience of tourists while visiting the destination.

Giampiccoli and Kalis (2012:101) argue that: "Food is one example of a local cultural resource that has the potential to facilitate a number of community benefits." Case studies from around the world illuminate what they mean. Food tourism can be used to enhance, differentiate, integrate and commodify a place brand. Firstly, as Macleod (2003) pointed out in his study of Castle Douglas "Food Town" in Scotland, food is an important part of tourists experience on holiday and can strongly influence their overall perception of a destination. The prevalence of comments about restaurants in my fieldwork survey (Chapter 10) shows that this truism applies strongly in Tula.

The role of food in forming indigenous national identity is explored by Wilk (1999) in a case study in Belize where locals had to appreciate their local cuisine and traditional values instead of copying foreign models such as British (influence) or Mexicans (due to location): "Food is a particularly potent symbol of personal and group identity, forming one of the foundations of both individuality and sense of common membership in a larger, bounded group" Wilk (1999:244). Askegaard et.al (2017:108) have shown that cultural invocation can add a layer of evolution to this process. in Greenland food acts a form of distinction and identity maker in which the locals can define their nationhood and citizenship through local foodways, but also due to cultural invocation resulting from pressure from tourists requesting tastes of authentic local food culture as part of the tourist experience. Locals construct culinary place branding "Greenlandic food", but in turn this has become the driver of cultural change with the emergence of a new culinary culture authenticated by both locals and tourist. Bessiere (1998) believes that transmitting heritage skills play a major role in declining areas, such as Tula was in the late 20th century, and 'valorization' of culinary heritage encourages local action and initiatives to promote it. As will be shown below, Mexican cuisine, including that of Tula, has been so valorised and is similarly constantly evolving through a series of initiatives and a process of negotiation between locals and visitors

Food can integrate other aspects of the tourism experience for both locals and visitors. As Macleod (2003:42) argues in his study of Scottish food towns: "food, as a product of specific human culture, does indeed provide a direct link between the natural environment and human society, between nature and culture... food is a fundamental element of a society's identity, its social organisation, and of course, its sustenance."

Food can be used to commodify and develop a tourism industry. According to Green and Dougherty (2008:157), regions feature their food and drink industries as focal points of their tourism development programmes: "Culinary tourism provides a novel approach to promoting economic development, constructing local food systems, and celebrating regional culture. It simultaneously supports the tourism and agricultural sectors and builds bridges between the two industries." Other benefits that cuisine can add to a tourist place are described by Quan and Wang, (2004: 234). "First, gastronomic tourism can be used by destinations to develop rural tourism and boost the agricultural economy. Second, when destinations do have gastronomic resources these can be easily used to develop trails, food festivals and a gastronomic tourism destination image. Third, foods can be included as part of another attraction such as a mega event and become part of the tourism offer in this manner." This last point has been widely appreciated in Tula by both the tourism authorities and the local community in bottom up initiatives.

9.4.1 Local cuisine in Tula

Bessiere and Tibere (2013) emphasise that: "Curiosity for emblematic products and foodstuff from the regions visited is an important driving force in the tourism experience." When cuisine is seen as 'local' the label itself guarantee the genuine origin. Tourists demand for this kind of localised authenticity expresses a need to link food to a particular space, to give it an origin, a story and to associate it with the name of the producer. In Tula that story begins with the source of the food. Although the terms gastronomy and cuisine are both regularly used in tourism, I will use the term local cuisine for this research, as gastronomy generally implies high skills and exotic ingredients. In Tula, there are no Michelin 5 Star restaurants. The market sells farmer's products such as cheese, meat, deserts and spices used for regional dishes made by locals, with local resources and no factory or agri-business input. The local cuisine is made from these hand-produced and often organic foods. This is typical of the food that most "*Tultecos*" will eat and what is offered to tourists in the region.

According to Povey (2011: 243): "In heritage attractions the kitchen is often now featured and visitors are keen to try a taste of history. This is linked to the consumption of place' offered by gastronomic experiences." The significance of local food for the place branding of Tula has a lot to do with authenticity, as the ingredients used are from the region. They

draw heavily on traditional recipes from the indigenous peoples of Tamaulipas using local herbs, which makes them different from others, as do the methods that locals use to prepare and cook them (Chemin Bassler, 2004). This presents an opportunity for Tula to develop a new type of rural tourism that focuses on cuisine and creates a unique place brand.

9.4.2 Local cuisine and a strategy to reduce seasonality

In Tula one local delicacy is '*Enchiladas Tultecas'*, an authentic recipe that has been preserved through generations to the delight of locals and visitors (Figure 35). It is made with a fried red tortilla, the colour being a result of a mix of corn flour and *chile cascabel, (a type of chilli), corn tortilla*, filled with chorizo, onions, carrot, fresh cheese, tomato, avocado and lettuce. There is no specific time to eat this dish as it can be consumed at breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Figure 35: Enchiladas Tultecas, Tula's traditional dish
(Tourism Board of Tamaulipas (2014)

The Tourism Board have created the '*Festival de la Enchilada Tulteca'* which takes place once a year in Tula, attracting visitors from the regions and the State of Tamaulipas. That event's success led to the creation of another popular event '*Festival del Cabrito'* highlighting another regional dish, *Cabrito (*baby goat), which also takes place once a year and, most recently, another spin off, the '*Festival de la Gordita',* featuring a kind of filled pancake of which there are over 30 flavours sold at street stalls.

Tula is recognised for its unusual recipes that have encouraged visitors to try its exotic ice creams '*Cactu nieves'* which are elaborated with fruits, plants and cactus of the semi desert

region such as *Pitaya, biznaga, garambullo, nopal, sabila (aloe vera) and tepolilla'* (Figure 30). Pitaya is a fruit from the cactus plant. It is the main ingredient in most of the desert recipes of ice cream and is claimed to have healing properties. These regional ice creams have attracted the curiosity of visitors to try such authentic flavours.

Figure 106: Pitaya, an exotic ice cream flavour (Tourism Board of Tamaulipas)

In Tula the Festivals of *Enchilada Tulteca, Cabrito* and *Gordita* are examples of the growing food tourism strategy which aims to attract visitors at different seasons of the year. This is intended to overcome one of the traditional disadvantages of a tourism-based economy; the seasonal nature of employment and the human resource management challenges that it imposes. Along the continuum proposed by Joliffe and Farnsworth (2003) Tula has chosen to "challenge" seasonality and use technology to do so by spreading awareness of all year-round attractions via the internet. However, as suggested by Lee et al (2008:15) to remain sustainable such initiatives require the consent and participation of the locals and must not aggravate existing problems. In the case of Tula this means the active participation of local food suppliers and ensuring that food diverted to tourists does not result in price rises or shortages for the local people. Promoting cuisine as a place branding strategy also requires regulator commodification to avoid potential dangers to the reputation of the brand from food hygiene issues. This has been implemented in Tula where restaurants are subject to quality control checks for food hygiene certification when they open and every six months, by an organization from the state called COEPRIS *Comisión Estatal para la protección contra riesgos sanitarios (State Commission of Sanitary Risk Protection)*. They train chefs and waitresses in a workshop about how to manage foodstuffs, how to wash separate and

refrigerate food and the hygienic use of cutting tables. However, restaurant owners must pay for these courses.

9.5 The artisans and crafts in Tula: A way of life

With elaborate techniques that have been inherited from past generations, local artisans use their skills to create a diversity of unique products in Tula, such as decorated pottery flower vases, and the very popular cooking pots and water jars. In the cities these have been replaced or substituted by plastic products but in Tula, they are still part of the community lifestyle. The commercialization of these goods forms an essential part of their income for a lot of families in Tula's community; a sustainable way to subsist from the natural and local resources of the region through generations. These products are marketed as sustainable because they use natural and local resources to create them, and this quality is promoted due to current concerns about the environment. Alongside the training in food hygiene mentioned in 9.4, local artisans teach their skills to local children and adults in workshops promoted by the House of Culture '*Casa de la Cultura*'. This preserves the traditional skills and makes a further contribution to the building of social capital in the town (Figure 37).

Figure 117: Potter at work in Tula (Author)

A fundamental element in the history and tradition of artisans of the region and of Tula itself, is called "*Ixtle*" *or* "*lechuguilla*", a fibre obtained from a local plant called *Agave*. A diverse range of products have been woven and sold since the early 19th century, such as

handbags, decorative products, hats, nets, carpets, shoes, and brushes. The tourism board of Tamaulipas supports the artisans' participation in Mexican regional trade fairs by paying and subsidising booths at events such as the annual Magical Towns Fair and encouraging them to can sell products direct on websites. the grandchildren of the artisans are helping the older generation to use Facebook Market as a platform for their products.   From there they are usually exported to shops in Texas in a revival of the 19th century trade route which brought the first period of prosperity to Tula (Interview 3a, 2018). The large number of Tamaulipas natives who have migrated to Texas in the last 40 years ensures the availability of distribution channels. These products retain the all- important authenticity because they are not solely made for tourists but remain part of the lifestyle of the community in Tula and its diaspora.

There is a parallel cottage industry producing wicker bags, mats and baskets. It relies on the skills of older women, and like pottery, is in danger of dying out because most of the young claim not to have skills or interest to continue the tradition despite the efforts of artisan teachers in the *Casa de Cultura*.   But in the meantime, the Magical Towns initiative has provided a market for these crafts and by doing so has given a measure of economic independence and empowerment to a disadvantaged group. This is s similar to the benefits of cultural tourism reported by Vujko et al (2018) in rural Serbia and is welcomed by existing artisans.   According to one local potter who makes clay jars, 'before the Magical Town initiative nobody came to the town to buy my crafts, now they are popular as they are decorating them with the Magical Town logo and I can sell them as souvenirs"   This is a good example of the kind of commercial commodification described by McKercher and du Cros, 2002:107) because from the consumer's point of view the product is needed as a souvenir not an everyday necessity.

Figure 38: Traditional hand-made pottery commodified with the Tula, Magical Town logo (Tourism Board of Tamaulipas)

9.6   Traditional music

'Music is an integral component of arts and heritage, and it is fundamental for the tourism strategy.' Macleod (2003, p. 96). The tourism board of Tamaulipas believe that this is true not only in Scotland but in Tula as well. Performances by local musicians, in events, festivities, hotels, restaurants and the main square, not only provide employment for the local community but also enhance the tourism experience and image of the region. In Tula the traditional music, "*Huapango*" is fast paced, dance music played with violins and guitars (see Figure 39). It is strongly supported by the authorities and the INHA through supported performances in the state and in the rest of the country, thus enhancing the image of the State of Tamaulipas and the region.

Figure 39: Tula children playing Huapango music
(https://www.youtube.co.watch?=4jPHjGx2hE

9.7   Tourist cultural sites

9.7.1 Museums

Museum facilities have been a contentious issue in Tula for a number of years and the controversy sheds a lot of light on the shifting power dynamics between federal and local government and the local community. In the early stages of Magical Town branding the only museum, was improvised by a local professor, Don Gaston Saldana, who has collected artefacts and relics of Tula including letters from politicians from 1944 (Figure 40), rifles, cookware, clothes, mirrors, photographs and also pre-Hispanic artefacts that were found near the Pyramid Cuitzillos. It is believed that locals who found these objects, around the town and the surrounding areas, gave them to him as they knew he collected them.

Figure40: Old documents and letters from Tula (Author)

A local professor houses his collection on the top floor of his private house and it is open to visitors with a symbolic fee of 50 p. Many visitors miss the opportunity to see this collection, as there is no publicity in the town. Those who hire a tour guide in town will also find out about this exhibition. There is no publicity he fears that his collection could be confiscated by the authorities for its significant value to the cultural heritage of the region and Mexican archaeology. However, there is a high risk of deterioration, especially of the pre-Hispanic objects found in the pyramid, as they are not protected adequately with the correct light or temperature.

Here we see further evidence of one of the major disadvantages of destination place branding. Some elements of the local community, including the local professor and the family who claim to be custodians of *La Cuera* assert local ownership of their cultural heritage and resent it being subsumed by a national umbrella brand identity imposed from outside. This may be a consequence of the historical, geographic isolation of Tamaulipas and doubt of the federal government, resulting from long standing neglect (see Chapter 8). But it supports the views of Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) that if the local community feel that a place brand identity is being forced on them from outside it is unlikely to remain authentic or be successful. Such parochial feelings may be replicated in other decaying areas and may hinder efforts to use place branding for regenerative purposes in areas where trust in government is weak or non-existent. This is evidenced by the mistrust and belief that the costs for the local community would outweigh the benefits identified by Schofield (2011) in the decaying English industrial city of Salford.

Not having an appropriate museum for such significant object of heritage illustrates a weakness in the governance of the Magical Town programme. The authorities claim to be concerned about Cultural Heritage preservation but they were very slow to support those claims with investment in a project that involves the construction of adequate safe places for the significant artefacts in this collection that required special maintenance, environment conditions, precise temperature, light exposure, treatment etc and makes them available to a wider tourist audience. Despite continuous petitions from the Tourism Board and local people as well as frequent complaints from visitors (see Chapter 10) nothing was done for the first 8 years of the Magical towns programme in Tula. I investigated the question of who decides on priorities and discovered that decisions about what aspects should be promoted in Tula for its development are made by a collaboration between ITCA, the Magical Town Committee, and the Tourism Board. However, the lack of local control by the Magical Towns Committee over budget allocation (see 7.7.1) means that its role is very limited and in practice the ITCA and Tourism board wield the power of decision. The ITCA's main responsibility is the rescue and maintenance of the most authentic heritage traditions of the town. The Tourism Board's main responsibility is to promote and spread the word about cultural events and activities in the town. According to an interview with a tourism board official the official view is that: 'it's been demonstrated by the visitors' attendance and community involvement and participation that religious festivals are the most popular type of heritage in the region (Interview 1a, 2017). This is certainly arguable based on my observations, but it does not follow that it will always be the case and once archaeological artefacts have been lost, or allowed to deteriorate they can never be recovered for future generations. Eventually the community achieved a sufficient level of cohesion and organisation to insist on a new museum which opened in July 2019 located in *Casa Grande,* a refurbished hacienda, and will have different expositions through the year, related to the history of Tula (Figure 41).

This reinforces findings from research by Jacobo-Herrera (2015) in Cuetzalan Magical Town and shows that in some Magical Towns the dynamics of power are not immutable and that after a few years in the brand a local community can achieve a cohesive response which can influence policy and achieve benefits both for tourists and for the town.
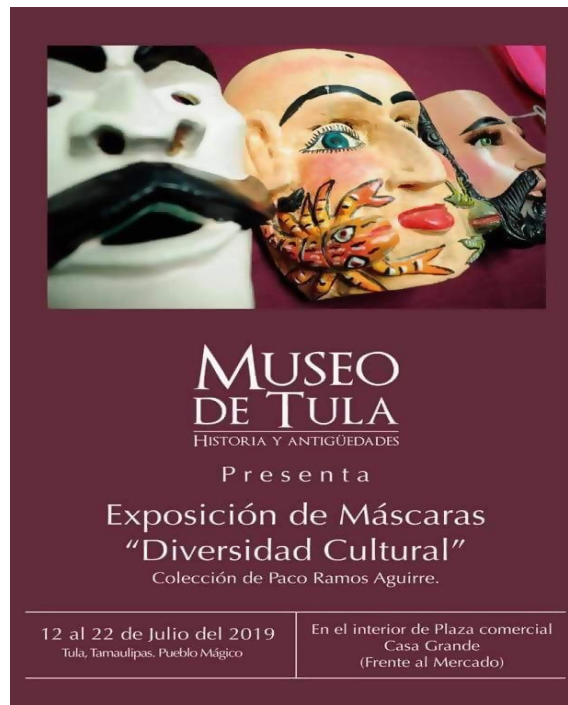
Figure 41: Poster for the new museum of Tula, 2019 (Author)

9.7.2 Casa de Cultura

According to Mexico Desconocido (2014) 'Tula possesses a diversity of sites to visit with abundant traditional heritage'. Some of the old buildings and constructions of Tula have now an appropriate use that enhances the cultural value of their structures. Haciendas, left derelict when Ixtle production collapsed in the mid-20th century, have been converted into hotels or restaurants (Figure 42).

Figure 42: Hacienda conversion, Tula (Tourism Board of Tamaulipas, 2017)

One of the most attractive constructions from the 19th century with a local Gothic style has been transformed into the *Casa de la Cultura (House of Culture),* to maintain the customs and traditions of Tula (Figure 43). This not only preserves a fine example of local architecture but also enhances social capital because it offers a venue for workshops teaching traditional music, dances, pottery and crafts. This action, supported by the Tourism Board of Tamaulipas, encourages local children and the community of Tula to learn valuable skills and promotes their participation in cultural festivals in the state and in the country.

Figure 43: Casa de Culture, Tula (Tourism Board of Tamaulipas, 2014)

9.7.3 Arroyo Loco

This site is part of the new infrastructure that the Magical Town initiative has built for Tula, as a place for recreational activities for locals and visitors, where local restaurants, bars, and souvenir shops offer products created by the host community (Figure 44).

Figure 44: Arroyo Loco, Tula (Author)

The *Arroyo Loco* project has aroused some controversy and needs to be evaluated in light of the recommendations of Scheyvens (2002). Although the architects and contractors were not locals, the materials and labourers used were to maximise benefits for the locals. Perhaps in response to problems reported in Huamantla and elsewhere (Fuentes Cabrero, 2015), shop rents have also been kept low (£24 per month for local people only). However, this has not prevented retail prices from being higher than they used to be in local street markets and restaurants. During my fieldwork a local old man complained saying that food was double the price that it used to be before Magical Towns but he did not want to be interviewed on the record.

Other locals were willing to go public with allegations that the mayor gave priority to his friends when units in Arroyo Loco were first allocated (Interview 3a, 2018). These claims could not be independently verified. But there does also appear to be a perception that Arroyo Loco is an example of a general phenomenon in Magical Towns; infrastructure built for the benefit of tourists not the local community (Alvarado Rosas, 2015). Evidence for this comes from the lack of respect for the site shown by some local people, especially teenagers (see Chapter 10) and further reinforces the conclusion drawn from the museum saga that the views of Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) are correct and place branding only works when there is constant dialogue between internal and external stakeholders and impositions will fail.

But despite the investment in infrastructure for the benefit of tourists, there are no reliable figures for footfall or tourist spending at Arroyo Loco. This is in line with the findings in other Magical Towns and is further evidence of lack of accountability and inclusivity in the governance of the Magical Towns brand.

9.7.4 The pyramid Cuitzillo in Tammapul

The Pyramid 'El Cuitzillo' is the oldest archaeological site promoted by the Magical Town initiative as part of the cultural heritage of the region of Tula (Figure 45). Located 9 kilometres from the town, the pyramid was discovered by labourers in 1980. It is 12 meters tall and 77 meters wide. According to ITCA (2013), it is believed to belong to the *'Huasteca'* civilization and dates from about 640CE
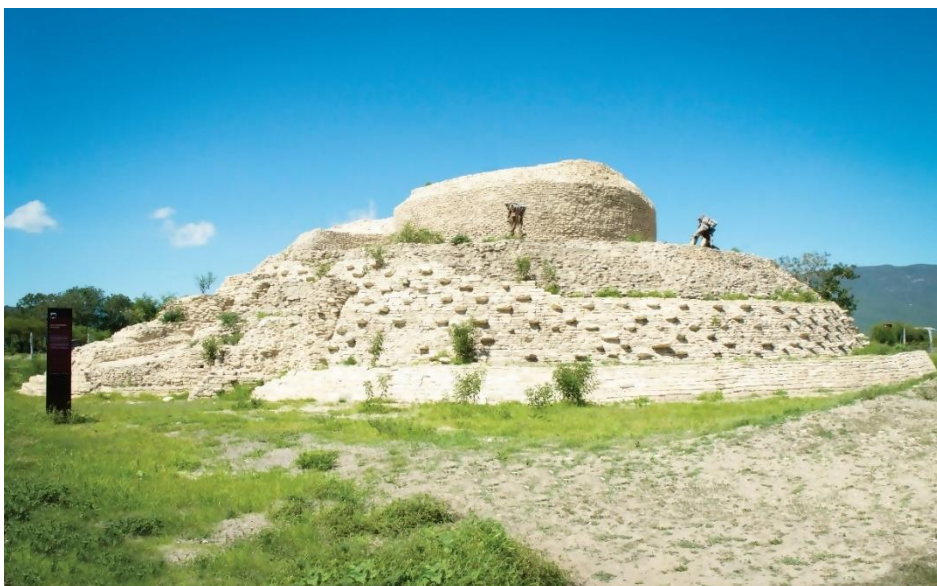
Figure 45: The Pyramid of El Cuitzillo (Author).

When the locals discovered the pyramid, it was full of snakes and wild birds, and they found a big vault with vestiges of objects such as bowls, rattle snake figurines, and more, all made of black, red and yellow ceramics. These artefacts have been housed in the private museum run by Professor Saldana but may in future be moved into the new municipal museum in Tula.   Minor sites like this need the draw of a nearby major site (Millar, 1989: 14). The Pyramid Cuitzillo, probably could not survive as an attraction on its own and would have reverted to the bush except for the presence of the much more significant and better-known site at Tammapul.

The importance of the Pyramid for local tourism and the identity of the local community is contested. On the one hand academics such as Lopez-Mestas (2011) argue that: 'When archaeological work starts to be perceived not only as a tool for scientific knowledge of the past, but as a crucial factor for sustainable development of the community, it will be capable of boosting the local economy'. On the other hand, this has not really happened with the Pyramid. It is seen as a complementary attraction and has been integrated in the promotional materials of the Tourism Board, by guides and bus tours, however this archaeological site does not create demand for hotels rooms or employment for local people as there is only one person who works at the site, where there is no mediatory information regarding the significance of the site. Only if people visit with a tour guide will they receive a brief description of the archaeological site (Interview 3a, 2018). Ownership and maintenance responsibilities are also disputed (see Chapters 10 and 11) which has led to a dearth of investment and there are facilities such as places to rest or eat. However, the Pyramid Cuitzillo, probably could not survive as an attraction on its own and would have reverted to the bush except for the presence of the nearby Magical Town of Tula.

9.7.5 Diversification: 2019 and beyond

Whether place brands need to focus on a single theme or embrace a variety of attractions remains a source of dispute in the academic literature. For the first few years as a Magical town Tula followed the advice of Anholt (2009) who argues that a narrowly focused theme is essential. In the case of Tula that was cultural heritage especially *La Cuera*. But in recent years Tula has diversify its portfolio of attractions substantially in line with the theories of Moore Cherry (2015) who argues that either a broad church or narrow focus can work depending on what a town has to offer. The inaugural Balloon Festival organised by businessman of Tula and the municipality took place the 21 July 2019 (Figure 46).

The town has no previous tradition of ballooning, so this was a diversification to attract a different type of tourist. According to newspaper reports "The Balloon Festival in Tamaulipas was a total success" (Tamaulipas El Decidor, 2019). There was an influx of families from the neighbour states, San Luis Potosi and Nuevo Leon.

Figure 46: Poster for the 1st Tula Balloon Festival, 2019 (Facebook page Tula Pueblo Magico)

In the summer of 2019, a cycling event was also organised for the first time in Tula, participants adapted the traditional *grecas* of *La cuera*, in their cycling costume. Organised by the municipality it encouraged cyclists to start their trail in Tula Magical Town. This was also well supported (Figure 47).

Figure 47: The inaugural cycling trail from Tula, 2019 (Facebook page Tula Pueblo Mágico)

As will be shown in Chapters 10 and 11, in recent years the community in Tula have wrested away sole power from the Tourism Board and taken co-ownership of the Magical Towns

brand. But when that kind of bottom up leadership and co-creation occurs the result can be diffusion of effort and contradictory messages. However, in this case it appears that the local business leaders behind the new events, heeded the advice of Ashworth (2015) that attempts to diversity a place brand must be well thought out and provide synergies. In this case there was a clear strategy to reduce seasonality in the tourism industry and opportunities were provided for locals to prepare their traditional dishes and perform their music and dances for visitors alongside the main attraction.

Another direction for tourism in Tula is the development of romance tourism; this time promoted by the Tourism Board (Interview 2, 2017). Figure 48 shows a possible route for development. The bride in this photograph was not local but her family had emigrated from Tula in an earlier generation and decided to hold her wedding in their ancestral town. This could signal another link with diaspora tourism in which cultural heritage and romance are combined and distinguish the romance element.

Figure 48: A tourist wedding in Tula, 2019 (Author)

9.8   Influence of the internet and social media on visits to Tula

The use of the internet and social media has advantages over old-style methods. "A website is now an essential tool for all tourism offices, it can be more easily and inexpensively updated than a brochure. A website can also be interactive by providing information at the same time as it entertains. (Kolb,2006, p.230). The Tourism Board of Tamaulipas is aware of the huge potential of the internet and the impact of social media on younger and older generations. A considerable number of tourists are visiting Tula due to the Tourism Board official webpage www.turismotamaulipas.com which constantly advertises Tula as a ´Pueblo Mágico´ offering a unique experience combining history, cultural events and festivities in the town. The page interacts and reminds followers about Tula. The official Facebook webpages with over 72,500 followers and the Twitter account @VisitTamaulipas are also being used as the main tools for publicising Tamaulipas and Tula ´Pueblo Mágico´.

Digital media also appears to be changing the way place branding works. Another of the major advantages of digital media is that they allow different aspects of the tourism experience to be juxtaposed and bundled by using, pop ups and menus, hyperlinks and targeted advertising. Bundling within the cultural tourism context, "involves combining a variety of similarly themed products and experiences and promoting their collective consumption to the visitor". McKercher and du Cros, 2002:112). The idea is to create clusters of attractions. According to Pike (2008:24) a destination is 'a geographical space in which a cluster of tourism resources exist'. The same principle can also be applied in cyberspace. For example, tourists can browse the entire range of artisan products the community have to offer on a single online store. This tends to enhance the sales of less well known and less popular products and allows new producers ready access to a large market.   Social media can also be employed to integrate a new event such as the Balloon Festival with more traditional elements of cultural heritage such as a traditional music event, serving traditional food and offering local crafts. Such statements suggest that the place branding theories of Ashworth (2015), in which a well thought out diversity of themes is seen as optimal, are better suited to the age of digital media than they were to traditional methods of communication. That might partially account for the success of the new events held in Tula in 2019 which were marketed on Facebook and the Tourism Board official web page.

However, Digital media require careful management if they are to enhance the brand and avoid reputational risks. Firstly, there must be one person with clear responsibility for updating the website and that person has to have administrative authority to edit the site in order to prevent outdated or false information from remaining available. In the case of Tula, the website is created by a consultant who alone has access to the code and authority to update while the Facebook Page is managed by a local tour guide (Interview 1a, 2018; Interview 3a, 2018). However, there are two potential pitfalls. Firstly, giving anyone authority to determine the content of the website opens the door to biased mediation, perhaps in the form of distorted history or biased selection of events to promote. That issue is compounded by the fact that the community doesn't know who is responsible for updating the website and how to contact them, which means that local tourist businesses, organisers etc. cannot supply news items. The control of the website thus becomes a source of power distance between the authorities and the community.

Another risk is the ease with which negative information can go viral and cause a public relations crisis. That negative information can be either true or false. In the first instance: "Even the best electronic strategy will ultimately fail if it is not matched by a consistent delivery of promises." (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2002:19). Malicious use of the web to manipulate information, and propagate frauds and lies about a destination is another issue. Nowadays there are a range of strategies and tools that businesses can use to protect themselves against malicious posts on the internet. One way is to appoint somebody with responsibility for monitoring what is being said about the brand online using web crawlers or analytic tools to counter negative posts on Facebook or Twitter. However, specialised skills of this kind do not come cheap.

The managers of the Magical towns brand understand one of the disadvantages of an umbrella destination brand is that failures in one town can easily damage the entire brand and digital media makes this process faster and harder to control. Therefore, every Magical Town is required to undergo an annual evaluation (see Chapter 7). This now includes scrutiny of digital communications. In 2015, there was a situation in Tula, when the town was reproached after the annual evaluation, because when people searched for Tula in Google, the results came up with another town called Tula, Hidalgo in Central Mexico, which is not a Magical Town. This forced the Tourism board of Tula, Tamaulipas to raise their game. They now focus more on Facebook, encourage followers to like photos and share, and link their page to the Official page of the State of Tamaulipas and with Trip Advisor in

order to make the correct Tula the first result when someone is searching in the web (Interview 3, 2017).

9.9 Critical assessment of the production of Tula

Tourism is becoming ever more competitive as more and more destinations become accessible both nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, the Magical Towns initiative has made great progress in putting Tula on the map and promoting the tangible and intangible heritage of Tula. It has succeeded in avoiding the trap pointed out by Timothy, (2018) of overemphasising the iconic and exceptional and has largely preserved and revalorized the authenticity of intangible local culture heritage in the form of cuisine, music, dance and handicrafts. The Magical Towns brand has brought a measure of additional economic prosperity to the town which appears to be quite widely shared. Some additional infrastructure has been built and new tourist cultural sites have been developed although the priorities chosen are contentious. The Magical Towns brand has led to diversification of the town's tourism offering and a reduction locally in the seasonality which has long afflicted tourist numbers and income throughout Mexico (Figure 4).

However, much remains to be done. Field work has identified three main challenges. Firstly, building social capital, particularly the education of younger members of the community is of principal importance for the future. The craft workshops at *La Casa de la Cultura* are a start but future workshops and educational programmes for young people, need to be more closely linked to schools. The mindset among both young people, their teachers and their parents, that the only desirable future is through obtaining academic qualifications and migrating to Mexico City or the USA, needs to be challenged. Experience in Ireland and Sweden suggests that this means looking beyond the provision of livelihoods in tourism related industries and also requires improvements to the quality of life for young people in terms of education, health care, affordable homes, social life and marriage prospects in order to break down the perceived dichotomy between urban as modern and rural as traditional and allow a continual flow between the two during the transition to adulthood rather than a once and for all migration decision (Guinnane, 1990; Moller, 2016).

The second, related, challenge is to involve community members of all ages in cultural activities to avoid intergenerational conflicts. As Timothy (2018) argued culture ought to

have a future facing element and include not only the inheritance from the past which is valued by the older generation today but elements which can be passed on to future generations. It might help if the Tourism board was made aware of the theories of Simpson (2008) who argued for the creation of inclusive Community Tourism Benefits Initiatives (CBTI). However, as Lenao and Saarinen (2015) point out there is a potential conflict with the traditionally patriarchal nature of Mexican society and CBTIs would have to be negotiated with all the different stakeholders. One possibility might be to reserve one or two seats on the Magical Town Committee for persons under 25, perhaps elected by their peers on Facebook.

The third challenge is to make the cultural heritage of Tula, especially the myths and legends, comprehensible to outsiders. Cultural tourists want to understand the history of the place and its culture, particularly any unique aspects (Marciszewska 2006:73). However, during my three summers of field work I was unable to ascertain the origin of the practice of drowning a figurine in water if St Anthony has not listened to prayers from a girl to find a boyfriend. Nor was I able to get a clear explanation of the meaning of the *Danza del Caballo*. Better mediation is required before visitors will be able to get the maximum benefit from a visit to Tula (Herbert, 1989a:191). The origins of local legends and cultural practices need to be captured through oral history techniques, recorded and communicated. This will not only enhance visitor experiences but also help connect the younger generation of Tula residents to the town's intangible heritage. Experience in Scotland, reported by Macleod (2009) suggests that social media has a key part to play in building this kind of social capital and the Tourism Board should further explore its potential.

The tourism board of Tamaulipas is actively developing their tangible and intangible cultural assets, by enhancing culture and strengthening their heritage and regional distinctiveness. But the rural towns will have to be innovative to continue attracting visitors in an ever more competitive tourism marketplace. If they succeed, they will benefit the local communities by creating positive opportunities to develop.

Chapter 10: Case study of perceptions of Tula, Magical Town

The aim of this chapter is to provide qualitative data regarding the use of cultural heritage and place branding for tourism purposes and its effects on the host community of Tula, Magical Town. However, it became apparent at an early stage of my field work that demographic data for domestic tourism in Mexico is inadequate generally and non-existent for Tula (see 1.2 above). Therefore, I began by collecting some data from a sample of tourists and local people in Tula.

10.1 Local's perceptions of the Magical Towns initiative

Questionnaires (N = 50) were administered to local people. As explained in 3.7.2 random sampling techniques based on standard sample size calculations were used (Prel et al, 2009). Sampling was undertaken at three specific locations in Tula, artisans' workshops, the *barrios* and the market. A further random element was added by interviewing people encountered whilst walking around the town. The aim was to ascertain their views about the Magical Towns initiative and visitors to Tula and a pre-printed questionnaire was used. Preliminary questions established gender and age. Of the respondents 26 were female and 24 were male. The age distribution is shown in Figure 49.
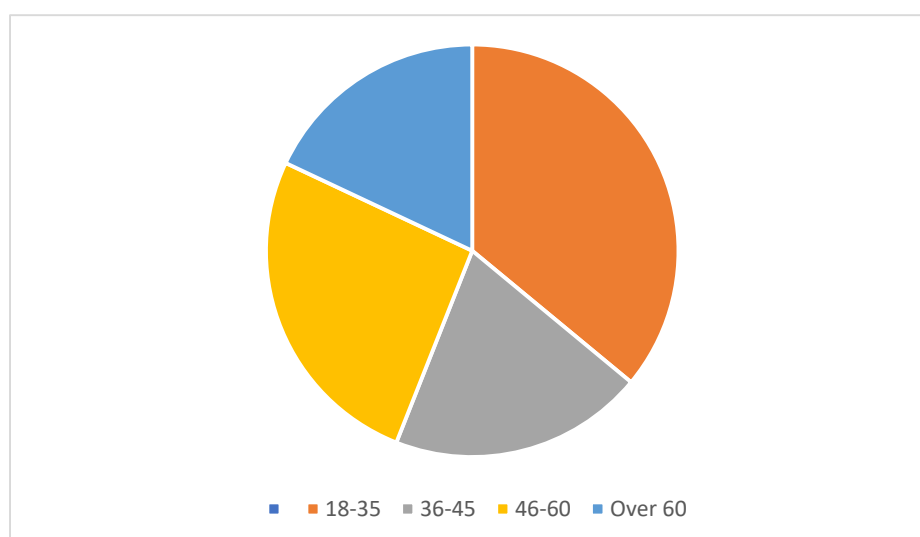
Figure 49: Local resident respondents by age

When asked "Has the magical towns been effective for Tula's development?" 72% (36 respondents) answered unequivocally yes. Those who elaborated most often mentioned

direct economic benefits; artisan sales, craft training or, in five cases, jobs. Three mentioned improved services in the town and six, spread across all age groups, felt the town was livelier. Perhaps, significantly in the light of the emphasis in the tourism literature, only one respondent mentioned benefits to the community and one mentioned the preservation of the town's heritage.

The remaining 28% (14 respondents) gave equivocal or negative answers and three clear themes emerged. The first was that people felt they were being asked to make improvements to facilities in the town but were not being supported economically to do so. As one hotelier put it "They asked us to improve the hotel rooms without their economic support, for the refurbish, so I done only half of the hotel." The second recurring theme was that benefits were not being distributed equally or. One young, female respondent answered "No, some parts of the towns do not see the development." Finally, there were those who felt that the Magical Towns brand was solely for the benefit of tourists not locals. As one middle aged woman put it: "everything Magical Towns do is for tourists not for us."

Question 2 asked "what part of your heritage do you like most?" This was an open- ended question and respondents could list as many answers as they liked. The results, shown in Figure 50, indicate that most respondents value more than one aspect of their heritage suggesting that residents see their cultural heritage as multi-faceted and integrated.
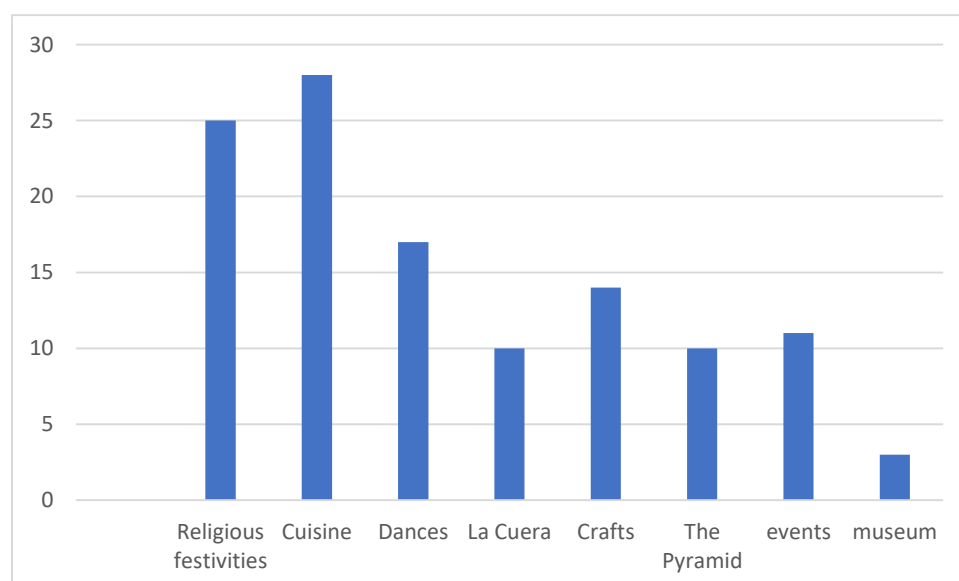
Figure 50: Local people's most valued aspects of Tula's cultural heritage

Contrary to the pessimism of the local clergy (see Chapter 8) religious activities remain valued and popular but, perhaps, only when they are shared and perceived to be fun. Food proved to be of central importance for local people of all ages and both genders. However, contrary to suggestions in the tourist literature, the popularity of the local dress *La Cuera* and the archaeological site of the pyramid of El Cuitzillo among tourists has not caused their esteem to rise among locals and the new museum has yet to register any widespread sense of ownership in the community.

Questions 3 and 5 explored local people's feelings about the Magical Towns program. The answers are internally consistent and show that the Magical Towns organisers have work to do to win over local people. Only 38% of respondents felt fully integrated with the program and a further 14% related to it sometimes, usually while events were in progress. Few respondents gave reasons for their negative answers but the ones which were mentioned were lack of consultation, lack of coordination and lack of economic support.

Question 4 asked: "How do you feel about tourists?" Feelings were overwhelmingly positive. Nobody expressed hostility towards tourists and only 8% of responses were ambivalent. This too was an open-ended question but thematic analysis shows that the main reason for approval of tourists was economic. Almost half of respondents, including 90% of those interviewed in the artisan workshops, felt that tourists were bringing direct benefits by buying their products or services. Around 12% approved of the fact that tourists appreciated their local heritage including one man who said "They enjoy watching our traditional dances and I can do that all day, every day.". Again, this is a surprisingly small figure in view of the literature which claims that local people learn to value their heritage when tourists show interest in it. Only one respondent felt that tourists improved the services in the town which corroborates the feeling expressed in other questions that the benefits of tourism are not reaching all parts of the local community. The main complaint was not about tourists in principal but that they only come at weekends and that numbers of visitors have plateaued. One middle aged female said: "We want more visitors but there is not enough publicity, the influx is decreasing compared to previous years". The impression given is that local people believe the town could cope with more tourists.

10.2   Tourist's perceptions of the Magical Towns programme

Questionnaires (N = 50) were administered to visitors chosen on the same random basis used to sample the local population. Three locations in Tula were chosen, the Main Square, Arroyo Loco and in local restaurants and hotels, to ascertain their views about the Magical Towns initiative and the facilities for tourists in Tula (see data file).

Again, preliminary questions established the age and gender distribution. 28 respondents were female and 22 males. However, this is not intended to suggest that the town is more popular with female visitors. The age distribution is shown in Figure 51.
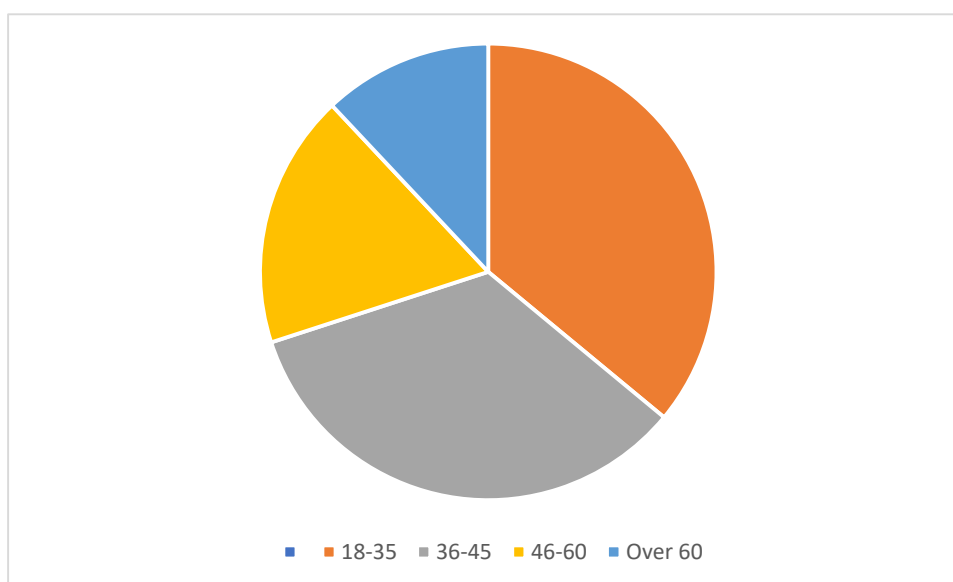
Figure 51: Visitor respondents by age group

The average age of the tourists was noticeably younger than the local respondents and this is believed to be representative and significant (see Chapter 11 for discussion).

Question 1 asked the reason why respondents chose to visit Tula. This was an open-ended question and some respondents gave more than one reason. The results are shown in Figure 52.
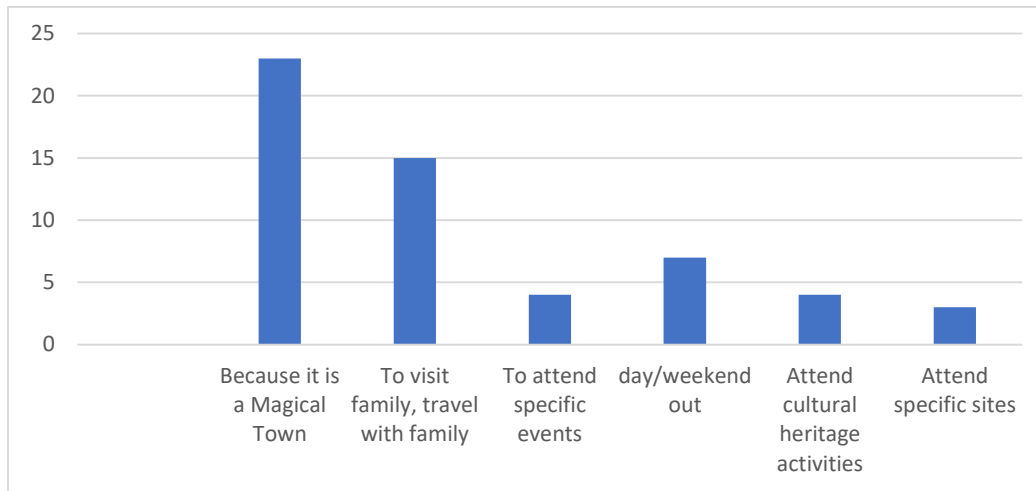
Figure 52: Reasons given for visiting Tula

It is evident that the Magical Town brand exerts a strong pull with almost half of the respondents explicitly mentioning this as a reason for their visit. That corroborates the view of the local people that the Magical Town brand has drawn additional visitors to the town.

Question 2 asked tourists "What cultural aspect (of Tula) did you enjoy the most? Figure 53 shows that the town has a range of attractions in tourist's eyes, but food and religious activities are the most popular. This is in line with local people's perceptions of their own cultural strengths. However, some locations, notably the pyramid and the market attract fewer appreciative visitors. This reflects the complaint of one local trader that "No, they transferred us from the street to the market and not all the visitors go to the market."
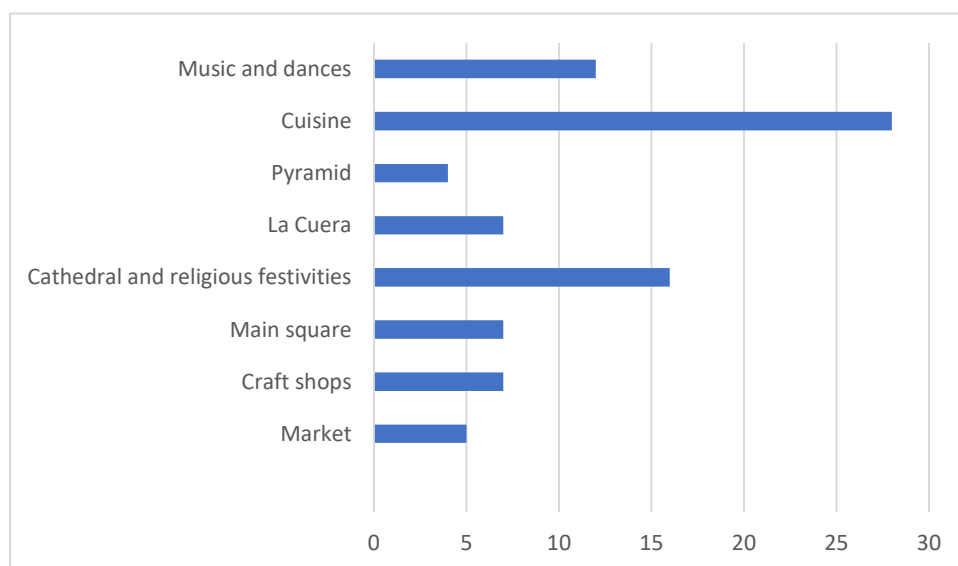
Figure 53: Most appreciated visitor attractions in Tula by number of respondents

The reasons for the paucity of visitors who appreciate some attractions become apparent in the responses to question 3 "What does Tula need to improve?" Two strong themes emerge. Firstly, the town's infrastructure struggles to cope with visitor numbers, especially in the high season. Deficiencies with electricity, water, cleanliness and ATM machines were all cited. Secondly, communication with tourists is poor. 54% of respondents complained about poor signage, lack of maps and the absence of a tourist information office. 22% of respondents wanted more to do but there was no consensus about what the priority should be with a museum (now provided), a swimming pool, more restaurants, cafes and bars and children activities all being mentioned. One consequence of that feeling that there is not enough to do, and the infrastructure is creaking is the length of time visitors stay, explored in question 5. Two thirds of respondents were day trippers and only 3 intended to stay more than 1 night. This, obviously, limits business opportunities for local hotels and restaurants.

10.3 Observations from field work in 2017 and 2018

Observations in anthropology and ethnography are necessarily reflexive. What is noticed is conditioned to some extent by topics which the researcher has previously become aware of from the literature. The objective of the field work observations carried out in the summers of 2016, 2017 and 2018 was to understand the use of cultural heritage for tourism purposes and the implementation of a place branding initiative, not only in improvement terms, but also according to its socio-cultural effects.

From a development perspective, my personal observations are that the Magical Towns initiative is a major opportunity for development, having brought about significant changes and improvement in infrastructure to revitalise the town's image. It was observed that Tula's transformation included restoring the historic centre, painting facades, installing underground cables, the extension of sidewalks and repairs to cobbled streets. The construction of new restaurants, cafes and hotels creates employment for the host community. The economic increment of the sales of local products such as souvenirs, arts and crafts, food in the market, and meals in cafeterias and restaurants has also made the community understand the role that tourist activity generates development in their town. Many local people now have plural employments. For example, the person in charge of the clock in the church is also the butcher in the market, and the person who sells ice cream also makes crafts.

The training of personnel in the tourism field seems to be one of the main strategies of the tourism development in Tula. A workshop called *Creatividad e innovación turística* (Creativity and touristic innovation) was observed in operation. It was begun by the tourism local authorities and the Magical Towns Committee in 2017. This effort was the latest in a series held since Tula was branded a Magical Town organised by SECTUR. The previous workshops included: *Por que somos un Pueblo Mágico* (Why are we a Magical Town) *Desarrollo de Productos Turísticos (*Development of Tourism products*), Cultura Turística* (Touristic Culture), *Gestion de Destinos Turísticos (*Management of tourist destinations*), Formación de Agentes de Cambio (*Training of Change Agents). However, in my observation in 2018, I was told that the workshops had stopped and there are no more planned.

The community, especially the local artisans and traders who sell both supplies and souvenirs (Figures 54,55), supports the view expressed in the questionnaires and interviews that they seem generally content to be a Magical Town, as they are selling more. However, there is no data to quantify the impact of the Magical Towns on Tula's GDP although tourism is likely to account for substantially more than the 8.8% recorded for the whole of Mexico (SECTUR, 2019; 1.2 above). Indeed, the impact of successful place branding is likely to be greater in small towns and rural areas with less diversified economies than big cities which makes it even more important to get the strategies right and maximise potential.

Figure 54: Tula businessman in his delicatessen (Author)

Figure 55: Tula artisan selling crafts (Author)

In 2018, I observed generally more contented, participative and integrated community attending to local cultural events mainly cuisine and religious festivals. The Magical Town windmill logo is then visible everywhere in the town. Locals use it on both promotional and local products interpreted here as evidence of growing engagement with the economic objectives of the Magical Towns program.

Although scholars have written case studies about some Magical Towns in Mexico, the literature on Tula Tamaulipas is only promotional (From the State and Tourism board). No academic research was carried out about the situation before Tula was branded a Magical Town and, prior to this thesis, there are no academic studies of the current situation.

Figure 56: The redecorated entrance sign of Tula featuring Grecas

Authenticity is a key issue in western cultural heritage tourism studies. In Tula fieldwork observations did reveal some commodification. Cultural heritage has evolved, and some assets have been transformed into cultural tourist products. For example, the new signs erected in 2018 at the entrance to the town (Figure 56) have borrowed G*reca*s, the flower decorations of the traditional dress, *La Cuera* at the request of the local people. I also observed that the traditional dances, which used to be only for religious events, are now part of most of the cultural events in Tula and Tamaulipas. Locals seem happy to participate and extend the duration of the performance such that the fears of some scholars, such as Greenwood (1977) and Casasola (2011), that tourism can destroy the authenticity of a place are not borne out by my observations. The original tradition and culture of Tula appears to be strengthening instead of deteriorating in a classic process of cultural involution.

In terms of inclusion, it was noticeable that the social interaction in Tula is mainly between locals, even though most visitors are Mexican, rather than between locals and tourists. Indeed, one local survey respondent commented that: "they never talk to us". The only exception is cuisine events. And in terms of gender, the growing economic independence of women, many of whom trade on their own account, was very apparent (Figure 57).

Figure 57: A female artisan trading in Tula market (Author)

But at weekends people, mainly men, gather in the main square. According to interview 3, 2017) this male bonding is a push back by supporters of traditional culture. It is common in Tula, it has been going for generations, and it is believed that this singularity started while men were waiting in the square in front of the church for their spouse's that attended mass. From my personal observation I noticed that women do not attempt to enter the male social circles. Although the square was always busy and local women were present, they were more likely to be walking around or sitting on benches with their children. However, this patriarchal culture did not appear to bother women tourists who do approach the local men for information or directions.

The community are still divided in some respects by gender despite increasing economic parity and I also observed a generation gap regarding the aspects of cultural heritage which local people relate to. Most of the younger community participate in cultural events, dances, motorbike events and *callejoneadas*. On the other hand, the elder's major attendance is at religious festivities and arts and crafts exhibitions. Cuisine activities unite all age groups in active participation.

There is evidence of economic growth but also many examples of deficiencies in the management and governance of tourism in Tula and the surrounding region. At a local level there is an absence of organisation, guidance and control of the Magical Town project in order to accomplish integral development with participation of the host community. There is also a lack of effective implementation of cultural actions and rural programmes in the perimeter of the town and surrounding rural areas. Development is concentrated within the central area of Tula, where the tourists spend most of their time. That is not the choice of either locals or tourists but stems from lack of information about what is available elsewhere. A visitor, when asked what Tula needed to do to improve responded that there was: "Not enough information, locals don't know where workshops, or the museum are." Similarly, a local resident stated that: "Visitors don't get to artisans' workshops, because they are not in the main square."

This situation is causing questioning about who is really benefiting from Magical Towns that claim to prioritise the community's wellbeing. People were heard asking, instead of restoring decorative buildings, why not restore the homes of the residents that live in poor conditions. When asked whether the Magical Towns brand has been effective for Tula's development, one old man replied sarcastically: "I don't think so. They only paint buildings".

Deficiencies in the tourism infrastructure have also led to missed opportunities. Mediatory commodification in the form of information and interpretation of tourist attractions is deficient. (Interviews 3, 4, 2017). There were no maps available for visitors until the end of 2018 when hoteliers and restauranteurs were forced to club together and pay a private business to design a map of Tula for their clients (Figure 58).
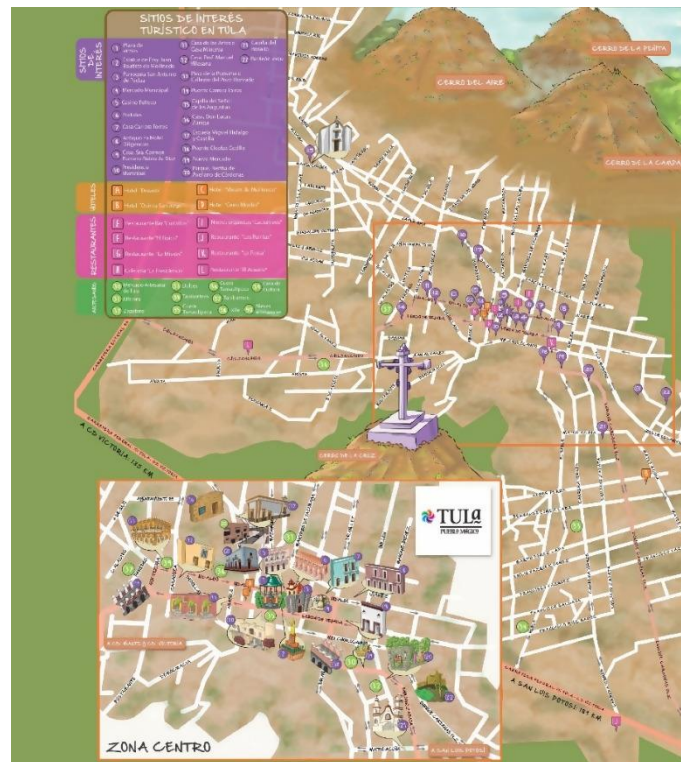
Figure 58: Map of Tula produced by community initiative, 2018 (Author)

In the summer of 2019 personal observation confirmed visitor's complaints in the survey there is still no signage about cultural sites and only two historic plaques in the town.   This issue has been raised by visitors on all three field visits since 2017 but still nothing has been done.

Despite the best efforts of the guides, the absence of information infrastructure means that most tourists observed follow a simple itinerary. They walk in the square, visit the local market and San Antonio de Padua church, buy local products at Arroyo Loco, go to a restaurant for lunch, buy an ice cream and go away. This type of visit does not allow the tourist to get to know Tula, as they are rushing out and missing important parts of the region's cultural heritage such as the 'Barrios', the museum and the Pyramid Cuitzillos. Figure 59 shows that local opinion formers are aware of the problem and are demanding a re-evaluation of the significance of the Pyramid Cuitzillos.

Figure 59: Newspaper article calling for better management of the Pyramid (Author)

Unless that happens, the findings show the restricted itinerary matters, because, according to my observations, local people believe that including more than one cultural activity encourages visitors to stay overnight or for the weekend.

In the absence of action from the local tourism authorities, local people have begun to take the initiative themselves. Inspired on a trip to Queretaro, Magical Town, a retired teacher from Tula who is also a representative of the artisans on the Magical Town Committee has designed a tourist information stall, selling local products and also providing visitors with the maps of Tula designed and printed by local hoteliers and restauranteurs and described above (Figure 60). Unfortunately, the local tourism authorities have not provided personnel to help staff the stall at weekends or high season which is precisely when observations show demand is highest and she only opens when she can to the dissatisfaction of visitors surveyed for this study.

Figure 60: The community run Tula tourism information stall (Author)

These are several aspects in which the infrastructure of the town has failed to keep up with growing visitor numbers. Access by public transport is one. There are only direct buses to two cities Ciudad Victoria and San Luis Potosi, run by the bus company, Transpais, only twice a day. In the main square a group of visitors were observed talking about the lack of buses and their gestures showed discontent. Also, if tourists have travel to Tula by car (which seems the best choice), during busy seasons this situation can cause traffic congestion and parking issues. In fairness this seems to have been a universal issue with theme branded destinations for many years. Compare, for example, the studies of the Beatrix Potter themed towns in the English Lake District (Craik, 1997).

Water and electricity services are a more serious problem. The Tourism board, claim they work well in Tula. However, in 2018, visitors complained about the shortage of water, power outages and internet/Wi-Fi not working properly, in the high season. (See interview findings below). Banking facilities are also inadequate. There is only one bank and cash machine in Tula which runs out of money in the peak season causing complaints from some visitors. It is imperative for the tourist authorities to exert pressure to get another ATM installed in the town although efforts to convert Magical Towns to contactless payment during the 2019 Magical Towns Fair might alleviate the problem somewhat (see 7.8, Table 3). The tourist and municipal authorities have failed to rectify these matters, at least

partly, as a result of their attitude to governance. The government claim to work in collaboration with the host community, but the local community does not feel that way. The political approach to decision making does not include the presence of the host community and they are not invited to meetings on the function of the initiative, or to share community opinions. The host community has complained about the interference of political parties of the state of Tamaulipas and municipality of Tula, who have shown different interests.

Dissatisfaction with the governance of the Magical Towns brand has led to a shift in the balance of power with local people increasingly taking the initiative themselves. The first event solely organised by local community initiative was the *Festival del Tamal*. Another gastronomic and artisan event, the first *Encuentro del Altiplano*, took place on the 17th of March 2019 and was also 100% organised by the host community without any participation from the local authorities or Tourism Board.

10.4 Interview Findings: Methodology

The third element of field research collected for this paper comprises interviews carried out in the summer of 2017 and 2018 with tourism professionals in Tula. Although the earlier rounds of questionnaires and observations offered valuable contextual material and data, the core of this thesis is the in-depth exploration of issues arising during these interviews. A total of seven interviews took place with officers from the Tourism Board of the Municipality of Tula, and tourism agents from the region and host community, recorded, in a variety of locations in and around Tula. These lasted on average about 40 minutes and, when transcribed and translated, generated about 9,000 words of text. A pre prepared set of questions was used for the first round of interviews in order to facilitate comparison of answers (See Appendix). However, the respondents were asked open-ended questions focused towards understanding the issues from the point of view of each respondent.

In some cases, the respondents were personally known to the researcher prior to this study. The sample were targeted for their ability to provide insights rather than being randomly selected and the researcher admits that she was not free of feelings and assumptions about the topic. This research was possible only as a result of the author's experience as an employee of the Tourism Board of the State of Tamaulipas. That prior experience enabled

her to easily contact tourism professionals and set up interviews. Far more importantly, it enabled the author to engage with them on a peer to peer basis, thus eliciting responses at a level of honesty and depth that would otherwise have been impossible. This industry experience gave rise to the research questions and the interpretation of the findings presented below has undoubtedly been influenced by an experiential lens.

There is a downside to this methodology. That is the obvious danger of simply projecting pre-existing views onto the research material. To mitigate this the author has engaged in extensive reading and discussions with academic colleagues from different disciplines and countries. This has resulted in ideas between the author's first-hand knowledge of the Mexican tourism industry and the more dispassionate and theoretical views of outsiders. In effect, the empirical transcripts have been processed in a dialogical way in which some of the assumptions taken for granted by insiders have been problematized by comparison with international, cross disciplinary research. A substantial bank of stories has been collected, some of them highly personal. I believe that the discussion of this evidence which follows justifies the conclusion that, in talking to a fellow professional rather than an academic researcher, some of the respondents were able to confide, probe, vent and engage in reflexivity. Some remained guarded and defensive, sticking to the official line but others did not hesitate to express strong views or reveal ambivalence and discrepancies. This offer valuable insights into some of the conflicting attitudes and emotions underlying the practical application of place branding.

The interview sample is, admittedly, small but extending the number of respondents would have weakened the way I have worked with the material. This involved a conscious rejection of qualitative coding software such as NVivo or Leximancer which can often become a mechanical routine and impede reflexion about how the researcher's own interests and prejudices may be interfering with the interpretation. Instead, I have used an iterative, discursive and reflexive approach. This involves repeatedly listening to the tapes as well as reading and re-reading the transcripts comparing the views of different respondents and probing for underlying meanings. I constantly iterated between the primary evidence and the findings of other researchers, both conceptual and in the form of case studies. The result is a structural diagram of the field material (Figure 61). It is my considered opinion that working with the data in this way offers a valid and valuable alternative. It is consistent with the developing reflexive approach to qualitative research in the social sciences in which academics place themselves, their values, assumptions, active role in the field work, and

any stake they may have in the findings and interpretations at the centre of their discussion (Cunliffe, 2003; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009; Özkazanç-Pan, 2012).

I applied the reflexive approach to a narrative methodology as outlined by Cresswell and Maietta, 2002). This means that the researcher elicits stories from the interviewee and probes for the deeper meaning by "restorying". In other words, identifying the key elements such as location, plot, characters and protagonists before placing in them in a chronological narrative with a beginning, middle and end (Cresswell, 2013). The process starts with narrativizing each individual story. In the second phase the results are synthesized into a "collective narrative" where meanings are overlapping or mutually reinforcing in a broader narrative.

There are two possible pitfalls in narrativization and restorying as a methodology. The first is that construction of such a collective narrative inevitably goes beyond the raw data and involves the application of empathy and creative imagination to bridge gaps in the material itself and between the empirical material and conceptual formulations (Taylor, 1971). This is particularly important in cultures using high context languages where what is left unsaid is often as important as what is explicitly stated, a point which will become important as we attempt to constructive a collective narrative from field work interviews. The second danger is exaggerating the level of conflict between protagonists in the story, in this case between the local community and the tourism authorities. Care has therefore, been taken to look for points of agreement and co-operation as well as tensions.

First Order Codes
Synthesis

Theoretical Category

Locals needed time to change attitudes and behaviour

Enthusiastic about opportunities offered by Magical towns

Young people not engaged

Cultural adaptation theories

Identity theories

Engagement

State of Tamaulipas attitudes towards Magical Towns

Tourist Board attitudes towards Magical Towns

Top down approach by authorities

Committee and representation

Governance theories

Complacency & defensivenes

Cultural heritage

Location

Place Branding theory

Initial success

Lack of communication

Corruption/nepotism

Lack of specialist skills/knowledge

Lack of economic support

Inadequate infrastructure

Leadership theories

Siloed thinking/ buckpassing

Lack of initiative/ coordination

Empowerment of women

Job creation

Momentum building

Figure 61: Data structure iterated from interview transcripts

10.5 Research findings: The collective narrative of the application of place branding in Tula

10.5.1 Unpromising antecedents

Before Tula was designated as a Magical Town in 2011 it was described as follow. "Tula was a poor town, there was no investment or jobs, a lot of members of my family had to emigrate to the bigger cities, even to the United States." (Interview 4, 2017). Taking a sociological perspective, one interviewee stated that before the arrival of the Magical Town brand Tula was "a community that for many years was characterised by high marginalization, living with very poor conditions, presenting vulnerability in many social aspects due to the lack of economic resources." This, in the opinion of the tourism officer, has presented challenges for tourism development (Interview 1a, 2018). One of those challenges, agreed upon by several interviewees, was the state of the local hotels. These were cheap but allegedly had such off-putting features as "ripped bed sheets and towels", unsatisfactory mattresses and poor décor (Interview 3a, 2018). Another sign of poverty and neglect was the state of potential local tourism resources. For example, "Before the implementation of Magical Towns the Pyramid Cuitzillos was abandoned, looted and left overgrown." (Interview 5, 2017).

10.5.2 Engagement

In 2011 Tula was designated as a Magical Town. Opinions differ as to how well this was managed.

> T*he state of Tamaulipas was ready to have a Magical Town, the Tourism Board was prepared to have a Magical Town, but, was the host community ready? There have been no investigations, to date regarding the use of cultural heritage and the community's acceptance of the brand.* (Interview 5, 2017).

According to Interview 1a, (2018) "Just before Tula was branded as a Magical Town, business consultants alerted the Tourism Board of Tamaulipas, saying that the infrastructure of the town will be ready before its people." This highlights the absence of any evidence, in either

the interviews or questionnaire responses from local people, of any form of academic research, or consultation with the local community, prior to the introduction of the Magical Towns brand.

Tula already had a strong identity prior to the arrival of the Magical Towns brand based on "their traditions, mainly religious celebrations as they have been the most popular events before and after the Magical Town initiative, it is an unbroken cultural aspect that has strengthened through generations." (Interview 5, 2017).

Prior to 2011, the Tourism Board were aware of this collective identity based on cultural heritage and sought to build on, "the Cultural elements that define the community, such as the traditional dress, *La Cuera,* the history of Tula in the country, their cuisine with local products, arts and crafts, their unique traditional dances and their religious festivities" (interview 1a, 2018). What was missing among the local community in Tula was pride in their identity.

In 2011, the Magical Towns initiative changed the slogan of Tula from "Tula, where *La Cuera* was born" to "Tula, Pueblo Mágico". Opinions among interviewees differ sharply about the response to this. The official line is that *La Cuera* was one of the main reasons Tula was successful in its bid to become a magical town but "there is no resentment from the local community about changing the old brand to Magical Towns because the old one didn't bring any economic benefits to the community." (Interview 2, 2017). That view is directly contradicted by the Rayna family, who first created *La Cuera* and strongly resent what they see as the commodification of the tradition (Interview 6, 2018). It is also implicitly contradicted by local tour guides who state: "There is a negative reaction from the community, they use both names." (Interview 3b, 2018). The use of the present tense is significant here. Locals have accepted the Magical Town brand but continue to use the earlier name. "Although Tula is a Magical Town, it still defines itself as the place where the Cuera (traditional dress) was born. That's hard to forget, as it is even written in songs. (Interview 3a). However, local historian, Dr Herrera told the interviewer that this veneration of La Cuera is hindsight as:

> Before the denomination of Tula Magical Town, the majority of the residents were not aware of the cultural elements that distinguished their town; There was no

consciousness about the traditional dress of the state being the representation of their lifestyles. (Interview 5,2017).

Whatever the truth of that assertion, by 2018 officials had apparently accepted that "both (brand) names can be used" (Interview 1b, 2018).

The interviewees, and the local questionnaire respondents were unanimous that the local community took several years to buy into the vision of the Magical Towns. But it is important to note that nobody made a direct, causal connection between the replacement of the *La Cuera* branding and passive resistance to the Magical Towns concept. The explanation offered by the interviewees is that, "In the beginning of the brand, local businessmen believed that Magical Towns did not benefit them as their clients were locals, and tourists did not buy from their shops." (Interview 1a, 2018).

A second central issue in the early years of Tula as a Magical Town was economic support. The Tourism Board understood the poor quality of local hotels was one of the main challenges facing the development of Tula as a destination. But they adopted a top down approach, "talking" to the hoteliers about making improvements. But "they refused to improve their small local businesses with their own money." There is no evidence from the interviews that the Tourism Board ever considered a more pro-active approach or a partnership approach such as underwriting business loans from local banks or helping the hoteliers to write persuasive business plans.

10.5.3 Initial success

When and how the passive resistance of the locals changed and they began to adopt a more positive attitude to the Magical Towns program is crucial to understanding the collective narrative of Tula as a place brand. Some interviewees put a date on the change. "Tula was named Magical Town in 2011, but it was not until 2015, that locals started to understand what it meant." (Interview 4, 2017).

Others identify a key turning point when:

A Tula native who returned from the United States, saw in Pueblos Magico's an opportunity for development and he built a modern boutique hotel with quality services, clean rooms etc. The fee per night is £30 and it became a popular hotel for visitors on weekends. That was the moment when locals realised that change had to be made in the hotels to satisfy visitor's necessities. Some members of the local community's attitudes started to gradually progress. (Interview 1a, 2018).

The national data for tourism in Mexico (1.2 above) shows that the United States is the most important source of international tourists for Mexico and the most popular destination for outbound tourists. This evidence suggests that the United States may play a third role in the development of tourism, as a source of entrepreneurial investment, which Is not captured in the existing data.

Outside investment in tourism opportunities in Tula has continued to be an important catalyst for the change in local attitudes. Another example applies to restauranteurs.

Before being a Magical Town, locals had to travel far afield, to neighbouring cities to get stock for our businesses such as food and ingredients, but now private business investors have opened cash and carry like stores around the outskirts of Tula with products from big markets that they were not able to get before, big improvement for the host community. (Interview 4, 2017).

Where talking down to the local community failed, outside influence succeeded in creating a shared vision in Tula of the opportunities presented by Magical Towns branding. Business investment was one strand of outside influence. The other, unanimously agreed upon by the interviewees, was participation in the Magical Towns Fairs organised by the Federal Ministry of Tourism. Since the 4th annual fair the Tourism Board has changed its policy and offers economic support, providing transport and expenses, to enable businessmen and artisans from Tula to attend (Interview 4, 2017). The result was that artisans:

bring their products, promote them and sell them. They had the opportunity to observe, compare themselves with other Magical Towns in Mexico and talk to other artisans about the tactics they used in their towns to improve the quality of their products. Local people showed a lot of interest in seeing how other towns promote

themselves in tourism fairs. It was also significant for tourist operators, as they can see what other Magical Towns offer, such as packages that included transport, visits and meals in the traditional restaurants. (Interview 1a, 2018).

Despite the reluctance of many locals to engage with the Magical Towns brand, it did bring success, at least as measured by tourism officials. Figures quoted by the Tourism Promotion officer of the State of Tamaulipas show that visitor numbers almost tripled in the first year of the new brand, 2011-12 (Interview 2,2017). Locals and officials alike believe that this was heritage tourism. "People are attracted to Tula for their cultural heritage, which means that it is significant for the development of the town. Without those cultural elements, Tula would be like any other town." (Interview 2, 2017). In this respect the Tourism board were building on existing foundations:

For years Mexico has experienced tourists with interest in going to small towns, for lunch, to attend mass or visit churches, buy crafts and artisan's products, take photos and see history, maybe one of the reasons why the Magical Towns initiative has been efficient in some localities.

However, the interviews also provide evidence for another cause of growth in visitor numbers; location:

The distance from two state capital cities is a significant factor, the town is located 140 kilometres from Ciudad Victoria (capital of the state of Tamaulipas) with 370,000 inhabitants and 180 kilometres from San Luis Potosi (capital of the State of San Luis Potosi) with 820,000 inhabitants. (Interview 1b, 2018).

10.5.4 Momentum building

In tourism, as in most kinds of business, success breeds success. Once attitudes started to change tourism products and services began to improve after 2015 as:

locals begin to see their tradition as a resource, locals have started to appreciate certain features of their culture that didn't have an important meaning before such as local cuisine, traditional dress, dances, music as well as their religious festivities. (Interview 5, 2017).

The result has been gains in other measures of success now used by the tourist authorities who claim that 250 extra jobs have been created in hotels and restaurants (Interview 3b, 2018). There has also been a deliberate reduction in the seasonality of that employment as a combination of official and grass roots initiatives have created new festivals and events to extend the tourist season (Interview 2, 2017; Interview 3a, 2017).

The local business community have benefitted from construction using local workers and local suppliers which has created further jobs and reduced emigration (Interview 3b, 2018). However, this appears to have been not so much a deliberate, theory-based policy as a consequence of the excessive cost of importing labour and materials (Interview 1b, 2018).

The infrastructure of the town has improved, a tourism officer cites the fact that:

> *When a town receives the Magical Town denomination, it is necessary to make adequate changes in its image to fulfil the requirements that the initiative demands. Some of the main guidelines established are to have underground wiring, cobbled streets, paved roads, … and not to modify original facades' design to keep them authentic.* (Interview 1a, 2017*)*.

The key word here is "necessary". Much of the infrastructure development carried out by the tourist and municipal authorities appears to have been compliance driven but, in the opinion of locals it has delivered benefits:

> *Improvements were made to kerbs and walkways, that were narrow, with wider spaces for people to walk with prams, and in every corner of the historical centre they now have a ramp to cross the street, for people with disability access. (*Interview 4, 2017).

The private sector has also contributed substantially, motivated by profit rather than compliance, but delivering a 103% growth in the number of hotel rooms and marked improvements in quality as well as nine new restaurants and 6 more artisans' shops (Interview 1b, 2018).

Local people can, presumably, see these physical developments and benefit from higher incomes and greater job security. But these gains do not entirely explain the current levels of enthusiasm for and engagement in cultural activities and the Magical Towns program. For example, they cannot account for the way "the dancers ask in advance, when is the next event. They don't get paid, they only get a packed lunch, but if you let them, they can dance all day and all night, they love to perform." (Interview 3a, 2017). The same speaker puts it down to, "The Magical Towns brand (having) made locals feel proud of being '*Tultecos*'." There is also a sense, supported by young peoples' in questionnaire responses that the town has become livelier. Visitors also notice this "in many of the cultural events visitors have mentioned that Tula has revived with the Magical Town initiative." (Interview 3a, 2017). Neither the interviewees not the questionnaire respondents have likely ever heard of the theory of cultural involution but that is what appears to be happening in Tula.

But perhaps the biggest factor in the transformation of the collective narrative in the past 2-3 years is the growing sense of empowerment. This applies particularly to women.

> *Before Tula became a Magical Town the community roles in the town were well established in which women stayed at home to do housework, raise children and cook traditional dishes, while the men worked in town and in the fields, as they produce a lot of olive oil in the region. This has changed, women are working in hotels, cleaning bedrooms, also in the market selling crafts, and cooking deserts to sell in the main square.* (Interview 4, 2017).

10.5.5 Complacency and defensiveness

Economic empowerment is only part of the story. The collective narrative of Tula as a Magical town is also the story of a shift in power distance relationships between the tourism authorities and the local community. According to the Magical Town regulations this must be mediated by a Magical Towns Committee which is supposed to put the local community's viewpoint to the Tourism authorities. By the time the first round of interviews were carried out, in the summer of 2017, there was a great deal of criticism of the way this system worked. The interviewees were not asked directly about governance, in theory or in practice, but evidence, nevertheless emerged of a system characterised by lack of initiative, complacency and a reactive, bureaucratic, compliance driven and siloed approach to governance.

Lack of initiative was evident in the early years of the Magical towns program. The Tourism board "recommended" hoteliers to improve their premises but took no initiatives to provide economic support. In another instance, a Tourism Officer of the State of Tamaulipas was asked in July 2017, "*Why is Magical Towns not helping families in Tula that live in dilapidated homes that are not in the tourist perimeter?*" His response was, "The authorities of the Municipality of Tula are the ones in charge of solving the poor housing conditions of the town, as they have a subsidy for those issues, not the Magical Town." (Interview 1, 2017). This statement is factually correct but there is no evidence of any negotiations to find a way to solve the problem, such as some kind of tourism tax that could be used to increase the municipal housing budget. A third example of lack of initiative concerns complaints made by locals and among others, regarding neglect of the Pyramid Cuitzillos (Interview 5, 2017). The response of officials was defensive and shows a problem with bureaucratic turf wars and siloed thinking obstructing progress:

> *Although the pyramid is by law Mexico's heritage, the land is still private. Until the government of the State acquire that land to donate it to the National Institute of History and Anthropology [INHA] who did the rescue works when it was discovered, there will be no staff to take care of and protect the pyramid.* (Interview 1b, 2018).

There is no mention of any negotiations with the landlord to transfer ownership or allow access for Tourism Board staff.

Complacency is evident in the lack of research before Tula was designated as Magical Town and in the approach to visitor numbers since. The figures quoted by (Interview 2, 2017) show tourist numbers plateauing after 2013 but Interview 1, prefers to take satisfaction from a 21% increase 2014-18 rather than consider the possibility that further progress has been hindered by negative comments on social media resulting from the lack of initiative, lack of communication and slow progress in improving hotel and other facilities (Interview 1b, 2018).

The negative effects of siloed thinking and over emphasis on compliance are shown by the fate of a project to link Tula with other Magical towns by creating "Magical routes" for tourists. The State Tourism board believes it is a good idea but it is "currently on stand-by

because the Tourism board has been asked to prioritize the development of Tula as the branded towns in Mexico are subject to constant evaluation to prove effectiveness". (Interview 1a, 2017).   In other words, each town must comply in isolation and shared benefits do not count. The one firm initiative that was taken before 2017 to evict the pedlars of cheap Chinese imports from the Main Square of Tula was also probably compliance driven, as other Magical Towns had been stripped of their designation for allowing this problem to get out of hand (Alvarado- Rosas ,2015).   It also caused resentment among the locals although the interviews do not show any causal relationship with subsequent reforms of the Committee.

Nevertheless, frustration with failures of governance in general came to focus on the Magical Town Committee. Tourist officers were content that it complied with the Federal Ministry of Tourism guidelines (Interview 1b, 2018). But by 2017 there were complaints from the local community that "they did not feel integrated with them (the Committee) and felt that they were ignoring their requirements. They also claimed that people from the committee did not have appropriate skills for tourism development." (interview 3a, 2017). The community demanded and got reforms.   "In 2018, the Magical Town committee included members of the community. Now hoteliers represent hotels, a restaurateur represents restaurants and bars, and artisans represent their own crafts in an attempt to benefit local commerce and tourism." (Interview 3b, 2018). This has proved to be a pivotal moment in the collective narrative of Tula as a place brand.

10.5.5 Initiative passing to the local community

The initiative in tourism development has now passed to the local community. They have created a new event the *Festival de Tamal*. "The community are the ones who are making the success of the Magical Town with their integration." The same speaker suggests this is because the Committee is still not fully representative or effective. (Interview 3b,). But a committee member sees it as being part of a new collective identification which has seen a change in the language local people use to talk about the Magical Town:

> *At the beginning of the Magical Towns initiative in Tula, locals were distanced from the brand, it was common to hear: 'Tula is a Magical Town' but now they say: 'We are a Magical Town' expressing how they feel more linked to the place now."*
> (Interview 4, 2017).

However, the narrative diverges at this point. Not all the local community have engaged with the Magical town brand. There are complaints about vandalism and disrespect for newly constructed tourist facilities such as Arroyo Loco among the young people of the town (Interview 5, 2017). It should also be noted that all those interviewed were professionally connected with tourism and the Magical Towns program and therefore have a positive approach to it. Consequently, the interviews do not correspond to the questionnaire responses which show that some local people and some barrios still feel excluded from the benefits.

The growing empowerment of most of the local community does not mean that the tourism authorities have abdicated. They are actively developing three new strategies to diversify the tourist appeal of Tula. The first is increasing use of social media for marketing purposes. According to a Tourism officer, this has achieved some success, "The Tourism board official web page of Tamaulipas www.turismotamaulipas.com is constantly updated to provide the most accurate information about Tula's cultural festivities. Also, the Tourism Board's Facebook page currently has over 80,000 followers and the Twitter account @VisitTamaulipas have become very helpful for younger generations." (Interview 2, 2017).

The second strategy is to link Tula with other Magical Towns along organised tour routes with the aim of encouraging more tourists to stay overnight (Interview 4, 2017). This makes sense to the local tourism professionals such as him because the location of Tula has traditionally meant that most visitors came from neighbouring cities on day trips, a fact supported by the visitors' questionnaire responses.

The third new strategy is to develop Tula as a destination for romance tourism. In the words of a Tourism Officer:

> *The Tourism Board of Tamaulipas see this as an opportunity to attract young tourists and families, to see this town as a destination for big events such as weddings. Tula has the unique character, traditional cuisine and folklore to host this type of event that will benefit the host community as the products and resources used will be from the town and region.* (Interview 2, 2017).

Based on the interviews, this idea also appears to have the active support of the local community.

10.5.6 Leadership deficiencies

The local people have changed their attitude to the Magical Town brand and, as shown above, there are now shared strategies with the tourism authorities. But the tourism authorities have not changed their mindset or way of working and governance issues continue to hold back progress. For example, the interviews with officials show no awareness that social media can be a two-edged sword and there appears to be no strategy in place to manage negative feedback such as arose from the inability of the town's electricity and water infrastructure to cope with the tourist influx during the 2018 high season. Instead the response was again dependency, defensiveness and siloed thinking, "This issue must be solved by the municipality" (Interview 1a, 2017). Meanwhile the Tourism Officer for Tula blamed the municipality for being unprepared and showing a lack of responsibility (Interview 3b, 2018). There is no sign in these responses of any joined-up thinking or initiative to solve the problem, such as a water saving campaign in local hotels of the kind which is common in Mediterranean tourist destinations.

Resources continue to be underutilised through lack of leadership and initiative. For example, a focus on training members of the local community to deliver better service to tourists in hotels and restaurants has paid off, but may have reached its limits. That is because there is no mechanism in place for trainees to achieve certification which would enhance their employment prospects.

> *Locals have been attending workshops with a local professor and historian to gain knowledge of Tula's history and traditions. However, they are not yet certified by any official institution, as it is the local authorities and Tourism Board who are the ones who should provide that qualification. But it's expensive and requires a minimum of 10 participants* (Interview 3a, 2017).

Surely, distance learning technology and online certification could overcome this problem with a bit of initiative?

Another significant example of inertia concerns the most common complaint among visitors; lack of signage and information for tourists. The interviews show that tour guides are well aware of this and the lost opportunity it represents:

Although Tula has the advantage to be on the best route from Mexico City and Central Mexico to the north and the United States, there is no signage about the Magical Town on the main road wasting a big opportunity for the town to be a stop-over for drivers and families. (Interview 3b, 2018).

But nothing has been done. Similarly, the Tourism Officer of the State of Tamaulipas told the interviewer that, "There is a map that identifies old haciendas, waterfalls, rivers, an area of indigenous species mainly cactus. A total of 113 species are considered biological rarities that must be preserved." (Interview 1a, 2017). But this map has not been made available to tourists.

10.5.7 Future prospects: Empowerment, consent and cooperation

The collective narrative of Tula as a Magical town does not yet have a conclusion; not least as a result of recent changes in the political landscape of Mexico at federal government level. There are grounds for optimism and some worrying portents for the future in the interviews.

The first downside indicator is trust. Retaining the new-found confidence of the community in the Magical Town brand depends on transparency. However, there are hints in the interviews of emerging discontent with this, especially about corruption and nepotism leading to waste. One critic alleges that:

There has been speculation involving the family relationship between contractors of the infrastructure project and the officials who make decisions. I do not understand why they did not build a museum instead of 'Arroyo Loco' that is frequently empty. (Interview 5,2017).

Secondly, the international tourism literature shows that successful development brings its own problems. Three, at least, are beginning to emerge in Tula. So far, the cultural heritage of Tula has retained its authenticity but there are worries that this might not continue:

La Cuera is iconic not only in the state of Tamaulipas, but in the whole country, and families from Tula still manufacture them there. The cuisine still is authentic, the bread made in clay ovens; food is cooked on firewood and drinks are preserved in clay ornaments. Tortillas that are a main part of the Mexican cuisine, are made from scratch by hand, whereas in modernized cities people use machinery to make them. A lot of traditional elements are intact, in a society that is still quite inexperienced. It's likely that eventually Tula will be a victim of an automatization process, due to technology and education. If there is more demand for business; restaurants, cultural events that will cause tourism to take off in the town, and this exceeds the capacity of resources in Tula, then it can lose a little bit of its authenticity. This happens in most of the Mexican cultural destinations, where locals ended up selling MADE IN CHINA products. (Interview 2, 2017).

A second potential issue emerges in answer to the question "*Are the prices of tourism and services accessible for locals or only for tourists?* One reply was "I think they are getting higher rents for spaces in tourist areas and restaurants. Some locals have complained about the rise in prices of traditional food." It is not clear who "they" refers to but this should be a warning about a potential them and us conflict between outside investors and/or local elites and the local population.

The third potential danger is brand diffusion. The tourism authorities' approach is quite imprecise:

Tourism in Tula has identified its market, for example for the motorbike helmet blessing they target young people that like to party, drink and enjoy live rock music. All the other cultural festivities such as religious festivities, dances, cuisine events are targeted for tourists with their families which is the main type of tourism in Tula. (Interview 3a, 2017).

The speaker seems to see no contradiction between the two types of event or two target audiences.

The newly empowered community could overcome these threats to the success of the Magical towns brand, especially if it works with rather than against the authorities. If that happens then there are future opportunities. The most apparent from the interviews is

nature tourism. The INHA has already identified scenic features and rare flora and fauna which could be exploited (Interview 1a, 2017). Local tour operators such as Tammapul are also already operating trips to regional waterfalls and landscapes. Local people appear to regard natural resources are regarded as part of the cultural heritage of Tula and the surrounding region. For example, they use a mixture of mud brick and local cactus slime for building material (Interview 3b, 2018). Potentially, development of these resources could fit harmoniously with Tula's brand image as a cultural heritage destination. That could make the town a hub for regional tourism thus encouraging more overnight stays and spreading prosperity to outlying barrios as the residents want.

The interviewees were not asked for their predictions about the future of the Magical town brand in Tula. Based on the questionnaires, observations and interviews, there are many uncertainties. But all the interviewees would agree, that if the worst happened and Tula lost its Magical town denomination:

> *The identity will be the same, as it is very strong, however the tourism influx will considerably drop as the brand is what made the change in the town regarding the number of visitors. Also, the economy will be affected because artisans, restaurants, hotels and tourism services are benefiting from the Magical Town programme.* (Interview 3b, 2018).

Any predictions about the future of the Magical Towns brand in Tula and elsewhere depend partly on changes in the political landscape at federal government level. The community does, indirectly, have a say because Mexico is a multi- party democracy and a new president is elected every six years and the Magical towns initiative is bound up with that electoral cycle. It began as an initiative in 2001 when PAN *Partido de Acción Nacional* (National Action Party) was the political party in charge led by President Vicente Fox. His successor, Felipe Calderon also strongly supported Magical Towns. In 2012, Mexico changed to a different political party, PRI *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Revolutionary Institutional Party) but their leader, President Enrique Pena Nieto continued to support Magical Towns as he considered them the main cultural programme in Mexico. The initiative was consolidated and internationally promoted sufficiently to endure through two decades. However, in January 2019, Mexico experienced a significant change with the election of a new president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador with a left political party and new ideologies MORENA *Movimiento de Regeneracion Nacional* (National Regeneration Movement). MORENA

support reductions in government spending, claims to be focused on the population and to respect human rights. This ideology raises concern in some sectors of Mexican society. In the tourism context, tourism boards fear the winding up of the Tourism Promotion Council in Mexico CPTM (*Consejo de Promoción Turística de Mexico*) and their offices in Latin America, North America, Europe and Asia.

I explored the issues arising for the Magical Town of Tula in a further telephone interview with an Officer of the Tourism Board in Tamaulipas, in the spring of 2019. He informed me that for this year (2019) The Magical Towns program is still going on, but for now there will be no new localities to add to the programme. The Magical Towns program's future is uncertain. Although there is nothing official yet, tourism boards fear a reduction of funding for the towns, as this new administration is focusing on a huge new tourism project called Mayan Train '*Tren Maya'*, that intends to create a Mayan Route through a few states in the south of Mexico that will give an alternative opportunity to Mexicans to travel in their own country.

In the following chapter the implications of these findings and their relationship to existing theories of place branding, leadership, empowerment and cultural involution will be explored and a tentative new theory offered to encapsulate the experience that the community of Tula has undergone during its years as part of the Magical Towns umbrella place brand.

Chapter 11- Discussion and Conclusions

This study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways does place branding help or hinder the development of a small town/rural tourist destination?

2. To what extent, and under what circumstances, can the implementation of the Magical Town place brand in Tula, Tamaulipas, be made more effective with participation by the host communities?

3. Is revitalisation and commodification of cultural heritage as tourism products in Tula, compatible with maintaining the authenticity and integrity of local traditions and enhancing the tourism experience?

This chapter will discuss some concerns based on the findings of the primary research carried out in Tula and interpreted in the light of the academic literature reviewed in the earlier chapters.

11.1 Question 1: Place branding and the development of a small town/rural tourist destination

Recent literature has seen some controversy about the meaning of the terms "destination branding" and "place branding". The findings of this study support the views of Govers and Go (2009), (2010) and Briciu (2013) that the terms are not synonymous. Destination branding sharpens the focus of the authorities on improving the tourism experience in order to derive economic benefits. It is focused on benefits for the tourist not the local community. Marketers are able to select or discard aspects in order to give a destination a consistent, positive image which acts as a point of differentiation (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002; Cai, 2002; Park and Petrick, 2006; Ashworth, 2009). On the other hand, place branding takes a more holistic approach. It takes account of the interaction between a place and its environment as well as the totality of economic and social activities including community services such as education and health care, not just the tourism sector. Place branding is about involving the entire community in improving the town as a place to live as well as a place to visit (Briciu, 2013).

What is new in this study is the realisation that many of the practical problems identified in the findings of this study stem from the failure of the tourism authorities to grasp this

distinction. They have envisaged Magical Towns as a destination brand. But the questionnaire responses make it clear that the local community expect improvements in housing and education as well as tourist facilities such as restaurants and hotels. Although unaware of the academic terms, the implication is that the local community in Tula wants Magical Towns to be a place brand. Part of the reason for the failure of the tourism authorities to grasp the importance of the distinction is that Tula was designated as a Magical Town without first evaluating locals needs, or researching the previous history of destination branding and place branding in the international tourism literature. These findings are believed to be of global relevance.

The desire of the community of Tula for full place branding appears to contradict the view of Prentice (2003), Li (2006) and Tosun (2006) that the economic benefits stemming from a successful destination brand are sufficient to gain the support of the local community for the initiative provided that they are spread rapidly. The primary research in this study clearly shows that economic benefits have been substantial. They also occurred shortly after the Magical Town designation in 2011 with visitor numbers tripling in the first year (Interview 2, 2017). The economic criteria were met but still the interview and questionnaire evidence are unanimous that the community did not believe completely in the Magical Town's vision for at least five years. Some sections of the community in Tula are still not onboard and there is pressure for further rejuvenation of the town along the lines of the Butler model (See p.254).

One possible reason for the discrepancy between the findings in Tula and the literature from elsewhere is different political systems and, therefore, expectations of democracy and community benefits. However, Prentice (1993) studied a developed democracy, the UK; Li an area of Tibet under autocratic Communist rule in an emerging market economy; and Tosun developing countries under a variety of governance regimes. Yet all of these researchers concluded that economic benefits alone are sufficient to satisfy the local community. Therefore, it is unlikely that local insistence on a true place brand is correlated with the prevailing political system. Similarly, countries being at different stages of economic development can be ruled out.

Another strand of the literature argues that it is the nature and extent of economic benefits which makes destination branding acceptable to the local community. Smith

and Robinson (2006) take the view that widespread diffusion of economic benefits makes destination branding acceptable. According to Scheyvens (2002) one key aspect of that diffusion is involving the local supply chain in new developments. The evidence shows that geography has ensured that this criterion has been satisfied in Tula where local transport costs have required that local materials and labour have been used in construction projects.

Meanwhile, Mtapuri and Giampiccoli (2013), argued that it is also essential to encourage common ownership of physical assets. This is more problematic in the case of Tula. There is some sense of common ownership. The community of Tula seems to feel that the church is communal. Local traders were also given priority for leases in Arroyo Loco (Interview 1b, 2018). While there has been external investment, for example in two new hotels and cash and carry businesses, there is no evidence of local resentment of expropriation of profits such as Mtapuri and Giampiccoli found in Namibia. But there is evidence of frustration that the private ownership of the Pyramid is preventing its preservation or full exploitation (Interview 5, 2017). The overall impression is that the community of Tula do not feel total ownership of their tourism assets and this may be contributing to the desire to go beyond destination branding.

The questionnaire responses also show that some people, especially in the outlying barrios, feel excluded from the economic benefits of the Magical Town as a destination brand. However, it is probably impossible for tourism to deliver economic benefits, or a sense of ownership to every individual in a community. Certainly, longitudinal studies such as Getz (1994) show that other towns in established tourist destinations such as Scotland have failed to do so. The benefits in Tula have reached most local families and limited diffusion of benefits cannot explain the rejection of destination branding and the insistence on fully fledged place branding and rejuvenation which shows so strongly in the field evidence from Tula. The conclusion must be that the community in Tula does not reject destination branding or economic benefits.   In fact, they desire further economic benefits. This is most clearly evident in the local community initiatives to create new festivals and reduce seasonality in the tourism market (Interview 2, 2017; interview 3a, 2017). The culinary festival of a main dish 'Festival de la Enchilada Tulteca' started with an initiative by the tourism board of Tamaulipas, in order to highlight the local resources and the traditional

recipes of the town. The response was so successful that the 'Festival de la Gordita' and 'Festival del Cabrito' were added to the calendar on strategic dates in the low season.

The community in Tula never rejected destination branding. Rather the indifference of the local community in Tula to destination branding in its early years was caused by a sense, however inarticulate, that it was insufficient to meet their needs and aspirations. They aspire to the benefits of fully-fledged place branding and rejuvenation as well. These conclusions are in line with other studies of the impact of the Magical Towns brand in Mexico. Perez-Ramirez and Antolin-Espinoza (2016) state that;

> *There are economic benefits with Pueblos Mágicos, but its implementation is questioned because the authorities focused their main intervention on the main square of the branded town, leaving locals' necessities unattended such as education, health and public services. They are giving priority to the visitors needs over the residents. The investment and economic resources go directly to the tourist infrastructure.*

Unfortunately, neither the literature nor this study of Tula have provided a clear model of the mechanism by which revenues generated from cultural tourism can be channelled to public services such as education, health and public housing in order to meet the community's aspirations for fully fledged place branding in the sense described by Briciu (2013).

11.1.1 Branding theories in business and tourism

An issue raised by Anholt (2009) is whether a place brand should be simple or complex. When marketing products, a clear, simple message is generally believed to be advantageous. The earliest experiments in place branding took the same approach, as described by Seaton (1996a; 1996b) in his work on Hay on Wye. In that case an obscure small town focused on a single attribute, second hand book sales, and ran with it very successfully. But more recent studies have taken a different view. It has been claimed that: "Simplification has a tendency to reduce appeal of a country is its richness and complexity." (Anholt, 2009). This helps to explain the most contentious aspect of the Magical Town brand in Tula; the replacement of

the town's traditional slogan *'Tula, la cuna de la Cuera Tamaulipeca' by* a new slogan *"Tula, Pueblo Magico'*. The tourism authorities of Tula Implicitly agree with Anholt's view because Tula, Pueblo Mágico slogan embraces a complex subtly different picture of a town with many strands of cultural heritage. It is clear from the tourist's questionnaire responses that, that diverse appeal resonates with visitors who value a range of cultural attractions. This also supports Fordham, 2012) who argues that a single, cohesive brand message is neither possible nor appropriate in a rural small-town context. The problem in Tula was that the town already had a mono identity based on *La Cuera* and this identity was personified in a family; that create a unique style. They have become a focal point of resistance to the more complex identity of the Magical Town in a classic case of the kind of contested identity also described by Fordham (2012) in Scotland.

This evidence intersects with two other points of place branding theory. Ashworth (2009a) looked at the instruments used in successful place branding theory. He in identified three, "personality association", "signature urban design" and "event hallmarking". It needs to be born in mind that destination branding, and even more so place branding, is only helpful if it works with these existing instruments and can be an irrelevance, or even a hinderance, if it is perceived to undermine existing identity and is regarded with indifference or hostility by the local population (Ashworth 2009a).

Macleod (2009), believes that a branded theme should have a strong association with the unique assets of a product, emphasizing its identity. In his study of Scottish theme towns Macleod argued that success was more likely when a town already had a strong element of at least one Ashworth's instruments prior to theme branding. In the case of Tula two elements were present: design and personality association. Admittedly the design was of style of clothing designed for rural use, not of architecture, but I would argue that they are equivalent because in both cases design motifs have spread throughout the town (See Figure 56). However, the tourism authorities in Tula have chosen to concentrate almost entirely on event hallmarking. The new insight from this study is that by doing so, the authorities created a clash of identities which delayed success for the place branding initiative by at least five years. Had the authorities carried out prior consultation with the local community, this trap might have been avoided. The conclusion for other towns considering place branding must be that it is essential to work with existing instruments of branding and their stake holders whilst at all costs avoiding the appearance of ignoring or depreciating them.

Business branding theory stresses the importance of product differentiation and of marketing a unique offering. Gilmore (2004) comes to the same conclusion regarding destination branding. This study reinforces that conclusion. Tula had a unique selling point, *La Cuera* before it became a Magical Town and the field work evidence shows that many local people believe that it is key to the success of the Magical town initiative in Tula. However, the authorities diluted the uniqueness of *La Cuera* by removing it from the town's slogan and diversifying the town's appeal. That only served to sow doubt and confusion in the minds of the local community.

A further discussion question arising from business branding theories is brand extension and brand diffusion. Can the success of the Magical Towns place brand be enhanced by developing extensions such as *Turismo de Romance* as is currently proposed, or should it stick to its current unique proposition, the mix of *La Cuera,* religion, gastronomy and folk dancing which has been so painfully forged over the last 8 years? Neither the literature nor the field evidence in this study provides a clear answer and it will be vital to continuously monitor the progress of such initiatives.

A third issue arising from contemporary branding literature in the business world is how to measure success. It is apparent from the evidence of interviews and official documents that the results of the Magical Towns programme, are evaluated mainly through quantitative official indicators such as tourist influx, hotel and restaurant occupancy rates, tourist spending, or customer satisfaction ratings and even that data is inadequate. This is in accordance with the literature which shows that cities often have no effective measure of success or, if they do, mostly rely on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or benchmarking (Zenker and Martin, 2011). However, these are unlikely to capture qualitative measures such as well-being, morale or civic pride as required by the place branding model. The lesson appears to be that it is essential to have a holistic understanding of what constitutes success and how to measure it at every stage of a place branding programme.

To answer the question 1, "In what ways does place branding help or hinder the development of a small-town/rural tourist destination?" I have to considered an issue arising from current business branding theories. A lot of attention has been paid to the relative merits of product branding, which treats each product or place in isolation, versus corporate

branding which seeks to attach common values to a family of related brands or places. Business marketers have not reached a definitive conclusion about which strategy is the more effective but in tourism the evidence is clear: corporate branding, also known in the tourism literature as umbrella place branding, works. A pioneering study by Cai (2002) found that "spreading activation theory" applies to the collective branding of rural destinations and does lead to tourists developing a consistent attributes-based conception of a region. Macleod (2009) and Fordham (2012) did not refer to corporate branding theories but reached similar conclusions in relation to the small Scottish theme towns of Wigtown, Kirkcudbright and Castle Douglas which have grouped themselves together under the slogan "Glorious Galloway" and enhanced their social capital by collaborating. But, crucially, they have not had to compromise their individual identities in the process. Wigtown remains a Book Town, Kirkcudbright an Artist town and Castle Douglas a Food Town.

The evidence from Tula is that the town has benefitted substantially from the umbrella brand promotion and exchange of best practice offered by the annual Magical Town Fairs and the common logo, to the point where the brand name Magical Towns is the biggest single draw for visitors (Figure 46). The potential reputational risks from failings in other towns have not so far negatively impacted Tula and it has retained its distinctiveness under the umbrella. All this evidence suggests that the plans of the tourism authorities of Tamaulipas to link Tula to other Magical Towns along organised tour routes are soundly based. It is, therefore, probable that the Magical Towns brand can become more successful in both economic and social terms as long as it retains federal government backing.

The admittedly limited quantitative evidence collected for this study suggests the umbrella effect of the Magical towns brand extends to the audience it attracts. Figure 51 above shows that almost three quarters of the visitors sampled in Tula were in the two middle aged groups. This is comparable with the data from Jalisco presented in 1.2 above. A similar pattern of diversification across the Magical Towns attracting growing numbers of families and people visiting friends who are travelling independently. The organised tour sector remains weak throughout the Magical towns programme.

11.1.2 The Butler Model and branding in Tula

To return to the research question; "In what ways does place branding help or hinder the development of a small town/rural tourist destination" the conclusion, from the evidence of Tula, is that we do not know because fully fledged place branding has yet to be achieved.

Development so far has largely followed the classic Butler model with a minimal and inadequate exploration phase before 2011 followed by rapid expansion of visitor numbers in the development phase in 2012 immediately after branding as a Magical Town. Visitor numbers have since plateaued in a stagnation phase from 2014-16 (Interview 2, 2017). The town is currently at a crossroads and could follow either the path of decline or of rejuvenation (Figure 62.)
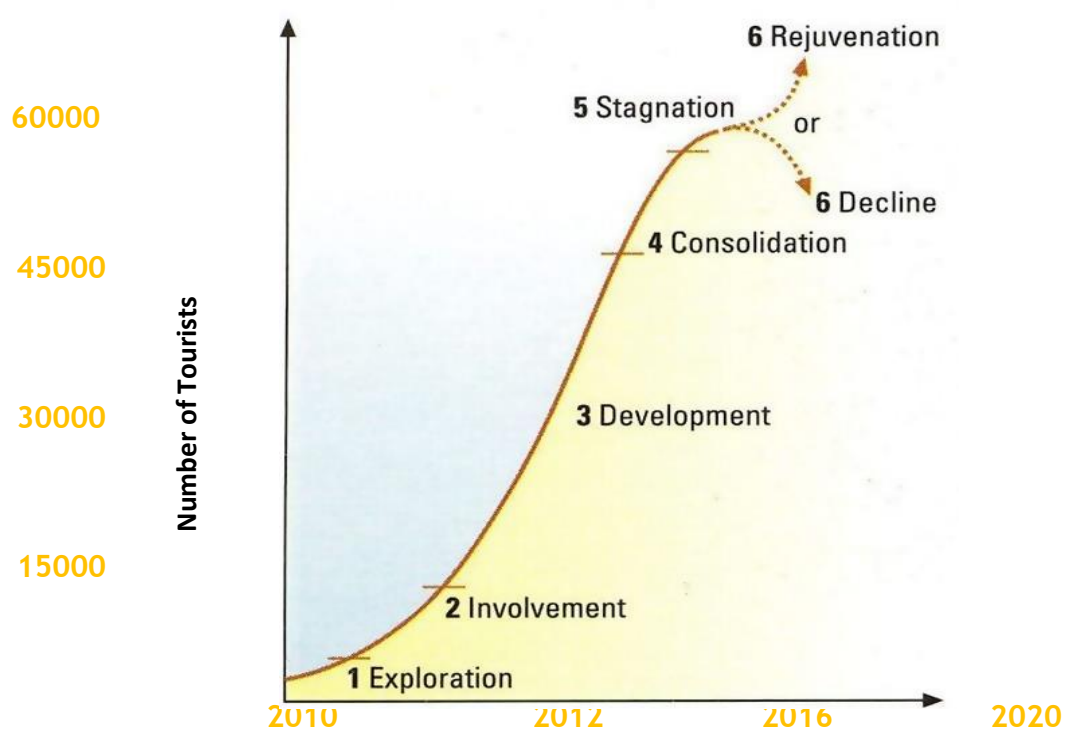
Figure 62: The Butler model of tourism development applied to Tula (Author)

Umbrella style destination branding, in which Tula was associated with the wider Magical towns offering from 2011 onwards, has been generally helpful in achieving the results shown in Figure 62 by creating an association in the minds of tourists with desirable attributes, in this case cultural heritage. That generated interest boosted visitor numbers and brought substantial, measurable economic benefits to most, but not all, of the local community. In the case of Tula, these benefits have taken the form of increased stability and resilience. Emigration has decreased, jobs have been created and existing businesses have remained open. The increase in visitor numbers and the new status have helped to upgrade many

places because destination branding has increased the attractiveness of the town for inward investment. There have been measurable improvements in infrastructure, but these tend to benefit tourists rather than the local community. However, the continuation of the destination branding approach may lead to slow decline as resentment about the lack of social benefits for the community grows. On the other hand, if full place branding can be achieved with social as well as economic benefits for the community, then rejuvenation becomes a real possibility. Which path the town follows from 2020 onwards is likely to depend on community participation, leadership and governance. It is, therefore, to these questions that the discussion must turn next.

11.2 Question 2: Community participation and governance

When Tula was first designated as a Magical Town in 2011 the municipal government and tourist authorities failed to appreciate the importance of community participation. They launched the programme without any prior consultation or research into local assets which might be utilized (Interview 5, 2017). As Schofield (2011) showed in his study of responses to tourism proposals in Salford, England, it is residents' perceptions of future benefits and costs that shape attitudes, not the reality. Lack of research and consultation meant that the authorities in Tula missed an opportunity to shape those perceptions. In the early years of the Magical Town the residents did not perceive the economic benefits which would accrue because the authorities failed to appreciate that the local artisans and traders are the ones with knowledge of their own social dynamic and the value of their cultural resources. This led to several years delay before artisans began to adapt and improve their products to meet customer's requirements or hoteliers began to invest in improved standards of accommodation.

Lack of planning and research prior to joining the Magical towns programme in 2011 extended to ignorance of comparable initiatives elsewhere. For example, there is no evidence that the authorities in Tula knew about the success of Hay on Wye as a theme town based on books, or the Scottish theme towns project. The academic literature, which emphasises the importance of community participation and the enhancement of social capital to the success of these projects, had been available for years (Seton, 1996; Macleod, 2009). Language barriers may have played a part here. Less excusable is ignorance of a *Pueblos Mágicos* programme involving 38 towns in Spain. However, tourism officials in Tamaulipas confirmed in telephone interviews with the author that they were unaware of this programme when planning the Magical Town application for Tula even though the

Spanish programme actually started in 1997, 4 years before the Magical Towns in Mexico. It is an initiative of a not for profit institute for local development and, unlike the Mexican programme, they don't have funding from government (pueblosmagicos.es). But they do claim to focus on rural projects with similar aims and lessons could surely have been learned. But it was only after an encounter at the FITUR conference in Madrid in 2017 that the two organisations began to share ideas and even held a joint event in Veracruz in March 2019 (Figure 62).

Figure 62: Promotional material for the joint event of the Magical Towns of Mexico and Spain, 2019 (Author)

However, with the benefit of hindsight, failing to utilize accumulated knowledge in the international tourism industry, or local knowledge in the early years of the Magical Towns brand in Tula has been a grave mistake. On the international stage, Lenao and Saarinen (2015), in their study of tourism development in rural Botswana, show that community participation in the preparation and planning stages is vital to success. Previous cases studies of Magical Towns, by Luyando et al (2016) in Tapijulapa and Balsev Clausen and Gyimothy (2016) in Alamos, come to the same conclusion and assert that community participation throughout the life of the programme is the key to the success of the Magical Towns initiative.

11.2.1 Tourism services in Tula

It quickly became apparent to the authorities in Tula that the standard of local tourist facilities, particularly hotels, was inadequate. They tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade local hoteliers and restauranteurs to invest their own money in improvements and launched a sustained training programme for tourism staff which continued until 2018. Unfortunately, they ignored the teachings of human capital theory when they planned and implemented both responses. However, in Tula both attempts to inspire entrepreneurship and tourism training seem to have been delivered in a prescriptive, normative, compliance based and top down manner. This differs from the experience of the Scottish theme town where the initiative and investment came mostly from the motivated individuals and local, private sector SMEs with the state merely providing marketing and. in some cases seed capital (Macleod, 2009; Fordham, 2012). Unbeknown to the authorities, the public sector driven approach they adopted in Tula might have been appropriate in a big city but was received with passive resistance and had little effect in a small Mexican town (Interview 3, 2017).

Unlike the Scottish theme towns where skills do not seem to have been a constraint, training was and is needed in Tula. Uhnak (2014) has graphically described what can go wrong in a Magical Town when development of the skills base and standards of customer service are neglected. In addition, Luyando et al (2016) and Lopez Ramos (2017) both argue that the development of human capital is vital to the success of the Magical Towns programme. This study reinforces their findings. Murphy showed as far back as 1988, in his study of rural tourism development in Canada, that a collaborative, workshop approach to improving tourism skills delivers better results. The evidence from this study is that failure to learn this lesson was a serious mistake and delayed realization of the full potential of the Magical Towns programme by several years.

However, there has been a major change in the attitude and level of engagement of most of the local community towards the Magical Towns brand and it will be worthwhile to understand what brought that change to Tula and whether it can be replicated elsewhere. Research by Luyando-Cuevas et al (2016) in Tapijulapa has shown how the theory of social capital can be applied to the Magical towns programme because it can build mutually beneficial inter-connections.

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11.2.2 Means of participation in Tula

In Putnam's (2000) definition of social capital, he stresses the importance of civic engagement and participation in democracy but does not specify the form this democracy should take: consultative, representative or participatory. The Guidelines for the Magical Towns Programme are based on a representative model of democracy and participation. They included from the beginning a requirement to form a representative committee. The findings of this study show that the tourism officials in Tula have always taken a compliance-based view of this and believe that the committee is fulfilling its designated role (Interviews 1a, 2017; 1b, 2018; 2a,2017; 2b, 2017). The Committee does indeed function in a way which fulfils the requirements but it appears to do so in a hierarchical manner. The method of election of delegates is unclear and the committee relies on vertical networking between a sector representative and his/her constituents rather than in the form of horizontal integration across different aspects of the towns cultural heritage and tourism industry.

The representative model of participation in Tula has been ineffective. The community does not trust the committee to represent its views. There appear to be several reasons, such as loss of trust in all forms of institutions; a reflection of the fact that confidence and satisfaction levels with government in Mexico generally were only 33% in 2015, well below the OECD average (OECD, 2015). The interviews and questionnaire responses in my research also hint at a sense of being forgotten and abandoned by the authorities before Magical Town branding, and also dishonesty mentioned in the interviews, e.g. the award of contracts for the construction of *Arroyo Loco*.

But the main reason for lack of confidence in the Magical Town Committee is probably its structure and method of operation. As Balsev Clausen and Gyimothy (2016) have pointed out the communities in Mexican Magical Towns are not homogenous. Different sectors have different interests and their representatives tend to use the Committee to fight for those interests. This supports what Fordham (2012) identified as "contestations" over the identity of the place brand in Scottish them towns. However, in Scotland this resulted in a more or less amicable compromise which has seen the towns embrace a more diverse appeal whereas in Tula the decision to brand the town as a destination offering diverse aspects of cultural heritage has not ended the disputes and appears to be hindering the realisation of synergies and linkages between different sectors.

According to the findings of Li (2006) and Tosun (2000) economic success has to come before holistic rejuvenation of the community. However, the community of Tula did not have sufficient <u>trust</u> in the authorities to believe their promises that raising standards of hotels and artisan products would bring economic benefits. They, therefore, participated unwillingly, or not at all, for the first few years despite an obvious increase in visitor numbers. The relational social capital required to persuade hoteliers and artisans to invest their own money did not exist.

These insufficient motivations to innovate and move beyond the stagnation stage of the Butler model (reached in 2014-16), reflects a long-term and continuing failure of engagement and trust. The perception and opinion of local inhabitants is still all too often irrelevant, the involvement between the local community and the local authorities is still almost nil, and they have no participation in decision-making. For example, locals were not asked if they preferred to improve the local medical clinic, or drinking water, or the rubbish dump. They did not have the opportunity to choose between having concrete roofs for their houses or the refurbishment of facades in the town, because the Magical Town authorities said that the improvement of houses is the responsibility of the municipality. The continuation of this kind of buck-passing and lack of participation in decision making is also reflected in lack of confidence in a hierarchical, transactional model of leadership which has failed to inspire, or to provide vision and direction.

The first turning point came with the arrival of the first foreign invested hotel. That set a new standard of service in Tula. It was able to charge higher prices and yet make a profit. In other words, it was the stimulus of tangible evidence and competitive market forces, not promises or training programmes which did not create networks of mutual trust and support, which created the social capital needed to stimulate improvements.

The second turning point came when the tourism authorities did provide economic support for members of the Tula community to attend the annual Magical Towns Fairs from the 4th Fair in Monterey in 2017 onwards. This ended the isolation of Tula and created an entirely new level of bridging social capital in which local entrepreneurs and artisans were able to share innovations and best practice with counterparts from other Magical Towns. It also led, unintentionally, to a major shift in the power distance relationship between the authorities and the community of Tula. Sometime after 2017 the levels of bonding, bridging

and structural social capital reached a point where local people were no longer dependent on the authorities. They developed sufficient capacity to seize the initiative and organise their own events such as the new 'Festival del Tamal', as a complement to the events that were once organised by the tourism board.

High levels of social capital are correlated with a sense of ownership (Putnam (2000; Cook, 2014). The people of Tula had always had a strong local identity and connection with the place. This matters according to Strzelecka et al (2017) who argue that people need to have been previously attached to a place in order to be empowered by the branding and promotion of it. But it was only when the local community in Tula felt ownership of tourism events as well as the location that they began to participate much more enthusiastically, and the Magical Towns initiative began to deliver real benefits to the local community in terms of morale, civic pride and wellbeing as well as purely economic benefits.

11.2.3 Leadership and management of the Magical Towns brand

The evidence presented in 10.5.6 above shows that leadership remains weak. It is characterised by inertia, a compliance rather than evidence driven approach, lack of initiative, unwillingness to embrace community participation and buck passing between siloed bureaucratic entities. This impedes resilience and remains a major vulnerability. These weaknesses need to be improved in order to maximise the benefit of the Magical Towns brand. A recognition is required that the community is not homogenous, and involving social capital should be used to make decision making as inclusive and diverse as possible. This is important because the interview evidence shows that there is a group of mostly young people in Tula who do not yet 'buy into' the vision of the Magical Town brand and who damage it by engaging in anti-social behaviour at the Pyramid and at Arroyo Loco. The research of Liu et al (2014) on eco-tourism shows that cognitive social capital defined by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) as shared narratives, visions and culture, can be used to overcome such problems and create more inclusive buy-in to the vision of the Magical Town brand. Similarly, the principle of inclusivity means that it is important to employ local resources for cultural and tourism events such as, local food and crafts for decoration whenever possible.

Specific measures to improve leadership, governance and service provision should include:

- Local authorities should organise on the first Sunday of every month an interactive, tour free of charge for locals, to explain and explore their own cultural heritage. This could be an opportunity to guide them on what questions to expect from tourists and how to contribute in a positive way. Co-creation could be used to shape the content of the tour by eliciting the questions and gaps in knowledge that local people have about their own heritage. For example, during this author's three summers of field work in Tula she was unable to get an explanation of the origin of the practice of drowning a figurine in water if St Anthony has not listened to prayers from a girl to find a boyfriend.

- The knowledge of local tour guides and academic historians and ethnographers such as Chemin Bassler, (2004), Contreras Islas (2005), Ramos Aguirre (2008), (2011) and Garmundi (2013) can be synthesized into a coherent story for the brand and disseminated. This will enable visitors to mediate tourists understanding of the cultural heritage of Tula by answering such questions. Doing so will enable visitors to gain the maximum benefit from a visit to the town and enhance the Magical town brand (Herbert, 1989a).

- The authorities should take the initiative in further developing the new town museum. Exhibitions should be designed to give a sense of ownership to local people as well as entertain visitors. For example, donations or loans of artefacts could be solicited from local people. An oral history archive should also be created for the people themselves and professional historians to understand the history of Tula and its significance in national history. Thirdly, a space should be planned, integral with the museum, to show the traditional elements of local identity, a place to perform the *Historias vivientes* (Living history), when children can get dressed up, be entertained and learn.

- Improve the facilities at the Pyramid Cuitzillos, Tammapul by resolving the issues about ownership of the land and archaeological finds and upgrading the existing museum into a visitor centre. Based on feedback from the tourists surveyed this needs to include toilets, places to rest and facilities to educate locals and visitors about the significance of the site in the region. If this is done, the Pyramid could become one of the main attractions when visiting Tula. However, it would be necessary to add paths and rope barriers to avoid damage as unfettered access is not

appropriate on archaeological sites. The current impetus towards co-creation should be harnessed through a local volunteer working group set up to plan and raise money for this project while investing "ownership" in the local community.

- An electronic citizens' card should be created entitling locals to discounts in restaurants and shops in Arroyo Loco, so they won't feel that the improvements are only for tourists.

- In another example of co-creation, an online community forum should be set up to construct knowledge, exchange experiences, and promote cultural actions for social transformation. This would serve as a resource for brainstorming solutions to future threats and enable emerging bottom up leaders to persuade management to back and execute their ideas. It would also provide a mechanism for the Magical Towns Committee and tourism planners to gauge residents' views on major issues before decision making through surveys or referendums.

- Transform the way in which the host community is informed and trained about the brand, Pueblos Magicos and its implications as well as guide them to understand their role and involvement in the hospitality of their town. The tone needs to be different from previous efforts based more on the guidance of equals and not top down instruction.

- Communicate to all the institutions involved such as educative, cultural, health, security, and transport entities, the vision of the Magical Towns brand and what their tasks are. This initiative will utilise the principles of co-creation by internal stakeholders. Co-creation can appear threatening to managers who are used to traditional power-distance relationships and territorial office politics, so management education will be needed. SMART goals need to be used to ensure that tasks set are realistic, achievable and time limited.

- Develop a new range of KPIs to provide measures of success more attuned to the aspirations of the local community for comprehensive socio-economic development. This should be a high priority because the current failure to collect comprehensive data leaves the town vulnerable to changes in government policies which they do not have the evidence to resist.

- Use co-creation and bottom up leadership, again in the form of a working group, to explore how funds generated by tourism can be transferred to the municipality for investment in education, health and housing for local families. This will require breaking down the siloed thinking and blame culture which currently characterises relations between the municipal and tourist authorities.

11.3 Question 3: Cultural heritage, authenticity and commodification

Heritage tourism has generated some of the most active controversies in the whole field of tourism research (Timothy, 2018). This study has shed significant light on two of these, what is meant by "cultural heritage" and whether authenticity can be preserved or whether tourism development necessarily leads to commodification and the distortion or destruction of the local culture the tourists come to experience (Ashworth, 2009).

11.3.1 The definition of cultural heritage

Tula follows the conventional definition of cultural heritage which takes in both tangible and intangible aspects. The tangible asset of the church of St Antonio de Padua has been promoted and there has been some effort to promote a local architectural style by decorating facades in the town. However, the main emphasis has been on intangible cultural heritage. This is not only pragmatic but resonates with the local community who do not have a high opinion of their tangible heritage. One local questionnaire respondent even stated "Tula is ugly. I don't understand why people come here." On the other hand, it is evident from this study that a great part of the residents of Tula are in favour of the cultural tourism initiative in their town. They support the rescue and preservation of their mostly intangible local cultural heritage, and the use of these aspects as a tourism asset. This is despite the fact that the heritage of Tula is not famous outside Mexico. Thus, this study supports the claims of Timothy (2011) that cultural heritage does not have to be iconic or exceptional in order to be valuable and worth preserving. As we observed above a place needs to be distinctive, even unique, in order to establish a successful place brand. But the evidence from Timothy's work and from observations in Tula is that any town which has a distinctive history and culture can establish a successful place brand even though it was not well known previously.

Several researchers have compiled lists of aspects of cultural heritage which can be promoted to tourists (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002; Cassasola, 2011; Timothy, 2011). Tula uses nearly all of the commonly recognised elements because, as discussed above, it has chosen, correctly, to promote a diverse offer rather than focus on one aspect of heritage. However, the range of elements regarded as part of cultural heritage is getting wider in the literature. For instance, Casasola (2011) includes local landscapes on the grounds that

historically landscape shaped culture. Strzelecka et al (2017) also argue that landscape forms part of the attachment of a local community to a place. The stronger that attachment the more successful place branding will be. The local tourism authorities have been informed that the countryside around Tula has distinctive flora and fauna, mostly species of cactus (Interview 1b). These are embedded in local culture. For example, they are used in building materials and *La Cuera* was originally devised to provide protection against cactus thorns for guerrilla troops. However, there has been little attempt, so far, to promote these aspects and there appear to be missed opportunities for brand extension. This supports a key criticism in the literature about the Magical Towns programme; it focuses too much on town centres and neglects the outlying areas (Casasola, 2011).

11.3.2 Brand coherence and storytelling

A diverse offering of cultural heritage needs a coherent narrative. But the evidence from this study is overwhelming that this element of coherence is missing in Tula. At a local level there is absence of organisation, guidance and control of the Magical Towns project to accomplish integral development with participation of the host community. To improve this tourism can profitably borrow techniques from business branding and leadership theory and practice. But one aspect which has not yet been picked up to any extent in place branding for tourism is storytelling.

The resurgence of interest in storytelling as a transformative leadership technique stems from the work of Denning (2004). He uses the analogy of the head and the heart and states, "Analysis might excite the mind, but it hardly offers a route to the heart and that's where we must go to motivate people." In tourism, although most tourism businesses are independent private enterprises there needs to be an element of central direction regarding regulatory commodification; issues such as standards of service, pricing and product technical standards. Storytelling, according to Denning, can act as a catalyst for acceptance and implementation by employees/internal stakeholders of a case for change proven by data, such as the need to improve the hotels in Tula.

Furthermore, Denning states that storytelling can "help leaders define their personality for their followers, boosting others' confidence in the leaders' integrity and providing some

idea of how they might act in a given situation." This is the element of social capital that is missing in Tula. Finally, Denning claims that storytelling can be used to build cohesion and community spirit between leaders and the community because by telling a story we are "making others feel the ways in which we are similar to them" (Denning, 2011). From the tourist perspective, they are essentially customers buying a meal, an artefact or an experience. Story telling is relevant because it places each of these within a coherent narrative of the local culture and allows tourists to engage emotionally as well as financially with the transaction. It is that coherent narrative interpretation of their history, in the ownership of the community leaders and the local population which is deficient. If the government of the state and the Tourism Board do not relate the essence of town with its historic knowledge, then that represents a missed opportunity to communicate the essence of the region to visitors. This is the underlying meaning of the tourists' complaints about lack of maps and information.

It is a basic function of transformational leadership to communicate clearly with followers and customers and to coordinate efforts in order to achieve a coherent, shared vision. The kind of bottom up leadership which is emerging in Tula can generate human capital and social capital and can produce innovation but it can only replace the role of communication and coordination from the top to a very limited extent. Unless the authorities embrace these lessons and utilise narrative as a tool of a more transformational leadership style, then lack of communication and shared vision will continue to threaten the success of the Magical Town brand in Tula.

11.3.3 Authenticity and commodification

Ever since the work of Greenwood (1977) in Spain the question of the commodification, distortion and destruction of cultural heritage has been a central question in heritage tourism. This study does not support Greenwood's central conclusions that commodification robs traditional culture of all authenticity and meaning: Understanding why may be helpful to other places faces similar dilemmas when considering the adoption of place branding.

Greenwood (1977) found that local people declined to take part in religious festivities which in their view had lost all meaning when performed solely for the benefit of tourists. This study suggests that Greenwood's concerns have been applied too generally and there are

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two crucial differences between the *Alarde* religious festival in Fuenterrabia, Spain and the cultural heritage of Tula.   The difference is that the *Alarde* is still associated with one specific date in the minds of local people and lost its authenticity when performed on other dates. Religion has also been commodified in Tula but it focuses on local folk beliefs in the powers of intercession of a saint or virgin. In some cases, such as the power of St Anthony of Padua to find a boyfriend for females, this was originally associated with a particular date (June 13th). But the significance of the date has been lost in history and the culture has evolved so that local people now believe the benefit of intercession can be accessed by the faithful at any time of year. In Tula, folk dances and local recipes have never been date specific.

Another difference is the origin of the visitors. Cultural traditions and events require more mediation for international visitors from different cultures than they do for domestic tourists. In Fuentarrabia the audience was multinational and from a variety of religious traditions but in Tula the audience is overwhelmingly Mexican and Catholic, so differences of religion, gastronomy and art are much less pronounced, hence there is less need to compromise authenticity in order to make them intelligible or attractive.

The discovery that domestic tourism requires less modification and mediation of cultural heritage also negates the argument of Urry (2002) that cultural heritage tourism always presents a selective and sanitised version of the original. There is clear evidence that the application of the Magical Towns brand in Tula does not encourage visitors to venture into the poorer, run down areas of the town and some inhabitants of such barrios resent this and feel excluded. But there is no evidence of a deliberate policy to sanitise the brand and the reality is more likely to be the result of neglect and failure to grasp the potential of place branding to revive the services available and reduce poverty and inequality. Therefore, this thesis does not support Urry's arguments about a "tourist gaze".

Urry (2002) believed that the process of selection and sanitisation was exacerbated by online mediation. Since he wrote the digital technology available for tourist applications has moved on and understanding of its implications for mediatory commodification has to keep pace, however this is a big topic and outside the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that the authorities are making active use of the internet to promote the brand of Tula as a Magical Town but there is no evidence that the virtual image is different from the reality.

Theoretically, this can obviously happen but, in the case of Tula, there were no complaints from tourists in the survey evidence of being misled.

One advantage of the absence of leadership and coordination of the Magical Towns brand in Tula is that the cultural heritage presented to visitors in Tula has not been selected; if anything, the opposite. The findings of this study show that what is happening is cultural involution at its best. Bottom up initiatives are identifying and reviving long forgotten aspects of local cultural heritage, such as the Pyramid, abandoned for centuries but now being re-understood, and utilising them in innovative brand extensions. By avoiding the use of personality association as an instrument of place branding, Tula has also avoided the danger of bias raised by Ashworth (2009a).

11.3.4 "Negotiable culture" "Commodification" and "Emergent authenticity"

Most of the widely cited criticisms of commodification and loss of authenticity turn out to be unfounded in the case of Tula for specific reasons. But what positive light does this study shed on the process of commodification and the preservation of authenticity? How does it explain the fact that the inhabitants of Tula have not lost a sense of themselves but have maintained their uniqueness and cultural diversity?

Firstly, this study does support the view of McKercher and Du Cros (2002, p.101) that:

> *A unique asset, culture, or building is not a tourist attraction unless its tourism potential is actualized by enabling its consumption". Some degree of commodification is therefore necessary to the success of place branding in order to take into account the consumer's requirements which may not be the same as those of local consumers. If a cultural product does not contribute to tourist satisfaction, it is therefore a waste of time, material and financial resources.*

Local artisans report that some commodification of this type has taken place in Tula, but the important point is that it seems to offend neither locals nor tourists.

Cohen's (1988), argues that excessive, unacceptable commoditization only occurs when the cultural tradition being sold is dead and no longer of value to the local community. But

there is a difference between dead and dormant, Cohen sees culture as a living, organic entity not something frozen in time. Culture is evolving in host communities all the time, including in Tula as a result of a host of outside influences including economic change, developments in transport infrastructure, education and the internet. According to Cohen, the process of evolution is negotiable, and the negotiations include external actors, such as government, tourist authorities and tourists themselves as well as locals. In Tula, dormant traditions are waking up such as traditional dances. Admittedly, as discussed above, the official spaces and forums for these negotiations and revivals to take place are underdeveloped. But some negotiation of the content and meaning of local culture is taking place through the channels of bottom up leadership and co-creation. As a result of such negotiation, Cohen puts forward the concept of "emergent culture". This is what appears to be happening in Tula as local people revalorise features of the locality which have previously been taken for granted. For instance, recipes which have long been used for household consumption are being shared and adapted to a festival context.

Similarly, local wedding traditions are not being replaced but are being elaborated and commoditised for romance tourism. These emerging elements of culture are still authentic, they are just contemporary as well as traditional. The reason is that the social dynamic has changed in Tula. There is no longer a gender division because the Magical Towns brand has empowered women and given them financial independence and an equal stake in making the brand work. Similarly, the generation gap has been partially overcome because business owners are now demanding that their children work in the family business on the weekends because it is getting busier. This has partly overcome the chronic problem of youth unemployment in the town.

11.*3.5 The integrity of local traditions and tourism experience*

To return to research question 3: "is cultural heritage the key element for Tula's development" the answer, based on the findings of this study, is emphatically yes. The participants in this study are unanimous on this point. The ongoing community development programmes promote the active participation and integration of the host community, to enhance their local identity, rescue and transform public spaces for cultural purposes and reinforce values. The Magical Town brand, based on cultural heritage, has led to a large increment in tourist numbers, some improvements in human and social capital, parallel

infrastructure improvements and a reaffirmation of the identity, culture and pride of belonging to that region of Mexico. Work must be done to further enhance human and social capital as well as facilitate better participation of the community in decision making regarding issues, needs and solutions. But the Tourism Board of Tamaulipas' plans for brand extension (so that Tula becomes a gastronomic, cultural and romance tourism destination) are realistic.

11.4 The importance of this study

There's is limited literature on the Magical Towns programme in general, Tamaulipas region, and the town of Tula in particular. This study is timely because the region is facing a crossroads in its development. Historically, Tula relied on its position astride the trade route from the Atlantic seaboard of Mexico to Texas and the Southern United States. That was responsible for the town's boom period in the late XIX and early XX centuries. It facilitated both trade and emigration. But the future of those links is threatened by President Trump's plans to build a border wall and possibly close the border entirely. Cultural heritage tourism is, therefore, the most realistic remaining instrument for the continued socio-economic development of the Tamaulipas region. However, in January 2019, Mexico experienced a significant change with the election of a new president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the leader of the left-wing MORENA party. Tourism officials fear this may lead to the closure of the Tourism Promotion Council in Mexico CPTM and the withdrawal or reduction of support for the Magical Towns programme. Assuming that any such divisions will be based on data and not on ideology, cronyism or corruption, then the failure of the tourism authorities to collect adequate data or create a favourable media profile will leave the town highly vulnerable to changes in government policy. In this context the importance of this study is that it provides further evidence, from a previously unresearched region, that the Magical Towns brand does deliver urban regeneration as well as revitalizing the cultural heritage of Mexico and is therefore worthy of support.

This investigation is also important because it shows how Mexico can learn from international studies on cultural heritage tourism and place branding to close the knowledge gap regarding the implementation of cultural initiatives in host communities as drivers of economic development in Mexico. The findings should encourage the government, the Tourism Board and tourism planners to continue embracing cultural preservation through

tourism activities that will enhance and build residents cultural identities with their branded town, Tula.

Furthermore, my research highlights ways in which the Magical Towns brand can move forward by borrowing from current business and leadership theories in order to achieve enhanced community participation, better leadership and brand extension strategies. This is important because there is still a long way to go to realise the full potential of the Magical towns brand to deliver its socio-economic objectives.

11.4.1 Limitations of this study, replicability and suggestions for further research

Successful place brands are by definition unique (Morgan and Pritchard, 1999; Ashworth, 2009). Therefore, not every detail of the findings of this study will be replicable even in other Magical Towns in Mexico. The results obtained refer only to the present situation in Tula, Tamaulipas, Mexico where the study and fieldwork took place, and they do not pretend to generalise the situation of the other 121 towns in Mexico which share the Magical Towns Brand. However, the findings of this study have proved to be broadly aligned with case studies carried out in other Magical Towns, so it is very likely that at least some of the insights provided by interviewees and survey respondents in this study will be replicable in Magical Towns elsewhere which may have in their community development.

The political, economic and geographical context of Mexico is unique as is the governance structure and leadership of the Magical Towns programme and, consequently, findings about the development priorities, scope of community participation and the limitations of leadership will not necessarily be applicable outside Mexico. Consequently, questions remain regarding the replicability of one of the key insights of this study: that tourism authorities wittingly or unwittingly, try to implement destination branding but the host community expect more holistic place branding. At first sight, this finding appears to contradict the view of Prentice (2003), Li (2006) and Tosun (2006) that the economic benefits stemming from a successful destination brand are sufficient to gain the support of the local community for the initiative provided that they are spread rapidly.

However, cultural heritage tourism and destination branding or place branding are a worldwide phenomenon, so the principles and best practices identified in this study could be replicable almost anywhere with only minor adaptations to the local context. The business branding and leadership theories referred to in this study are also widely accepted and should be replicable in other tourism studies, as should the methodology I have employed.

This study has spatial, temporal and methodological limitations which provide opportunities for further research. As described above this study describes a single town and a single brand in a single country, all of them unique. Future studies should apply a similar approach in other towns and other countries in order to generate more insights into community tourism development and how place branding is working, particular in small towns and rural areas to enrich knowledge about its potential for bringing about community development and urban renewal.

During the research period of this thesis an important shift in the attitudes of the local community towards the Magical Towns brand was taking place, along with a major shift in power distance relationships and the emergence of new community led initiatives. While this study captured important insights into the reasons for these shifts and the mechanisms through which they occurred, it does not capture the long-term outcomes. Future longitudinal studies should investigate how successful the community led initiatives have been and how the authorities have responded in terms of embracing, or obstructing partnership and co-creation.

In terms of methodology, one limitation of this study is that it does not fully compensate for the general lack of quantitative data about the demographic characteristics of domestic tourism in Mexico revealed in Chapter 1.2. The sample sizes used are too small and too localised to do that. It is possible that much larger samples of tourists, local people and officials, in Tula or a comparable town, and a more sophisticated, quantitative approach, would yield additional insights to compliment the ethnographic and qualitative approach adopted in this study. For example, cultural sensitivities made it impossible to ask questions face to face about visitor's occupations or incomes to compare with data from other states such as that provided by Jalisco (2020). But an anonymised, online survey might yield such data which could then be matched with the level of services being offered by restaurants

and hotels to see if the tourism offer is being optimised for the audience. With hindsight it would also have been useful to collect data about visitors home towns and distances travelled. Future research could collect and analyse such data in order to identify the catchment area of a Magical town and optimise the provision of transport infrastructure.

It is also possible that a researcher with a deeper knowledge of contemporary sociological and business theories regarding human capital, social capital, bottom up leadership and co-creation might be able to develop new conceptual models of how these theories interact with place branding and cultural heritage tourism. A particular aspect which merits further investigation in Tula, and more generally, is what kind of mechanism could be set up to channel tourism revenues into the development of public services such as education, health care and public housing for the local community.

11.5 Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the effectiveness of a place branding strategy based on cultural heritage tourism in Tula, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The study has established that cultural heritage tourism has become a world- wide phenomenon in recent years driven by the internet and demand for physical experiences of other cultures first encountered in the virtual world. Tula has succeeded in cashing in on the growing diversity of marketable cultures. No longer is it necessary for sites to be iconic or exceptional in order to attract visitors; authenticity and uniqueness are more important.

The second important conclusion of this study is that many lessons from business branding research are applicable to place branding and cultural heritage tourism. The research suggests that prior studies of the community and its potential heritage attractions are essential before any tourism development initiatives are launched. Failure to do so is likely to lead to passive resistance or worse and significantly delay the onset of economic benefits from a branding programme. The field work carried out in Mexico has aided our understanding of the perceptions of the people of Tula regarding cultural heritage tourism and the specific Magical Towns brand. This should assist with identifying and asking the

right questions during planning and preparation if other towns are added to the Magical Towns roster in the future or if similar initiatives are launched in other Latin American countries.

A further lesson from business branding theory is that a successful place brand has to be unique, or at least distinctive but unlike business theories, a diverse offering works in cultural heritage tourism, at least in small towns and rural areas, by attracting a wider range of visitors, enabling linkage of related attractions and spreading the economic benefits more equitably among the host community. Furthermore, corporate place branding in which towns with related attributes are packaged and marketed under an umbrella as a corporate brand works particularly well. When we say branding works in cultural heritage tourism, the evidence from Tula is abundantly clear that branding Tula as a Magical Town has been vital for its economic success and development and most, but not all, of the community believe they have benefitted.

However, the study has highlighted the importance of a distinction which has been underplayed in the literature; that between destination branding and place branding. Destination branding, which is what has been carried out in Tula, brings economic benefits but is primarily intended to enhance the tourism experience and does little for the social fabric or public services of the town. Place branding takes a more holistic approach and is aimed at benefitting the host community as well as the tourism experience.

The essential conclusion of this study is that successful place branding requires empowerment of the local population and community participation in not only economic activities but also in decision making. In Tula, it was only when the community seized the initiative and began to develop their own social capital, independent of the municipal and tourist authorities, that the Magical towns brand really began to change the mood in the town and create a new sense of optimism and civic pride alongside prosperity.

The final conclusion of this study is that when the community are participating fully, the culture being offered to tourists will be a dynamic, evolving and not static. When this happens, the community will rediscover and revalorise lost aspects of their own culture. Contrary to fears in some of the literature the negotiated, emergent cultural offering which

emerges will remain authentic. This is what has happened in Tula since the turning point in local attitudes and participation over the period captured in this study.

The Magical Towns programme faces an uncertain future as a result of political changes in Mexico. But the conclusion of this study is that it is highly worthwhile, it has achieved its main objective, urban renewal, and it has the potential to do even more in the future provided that the community remains fully involved in the evolution and co-creation of the brand. There is no other comparable instrument of economic development in sight for the eastern seaboard of Mexico and the programme should continue to receive the full backing of government at all levels.

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Appendices

Appendix A.
1.Ethics approval from the University of Glasgow, College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

1/06/2017

Dear Karina Guerrero Portillo

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: A Critical Examination of Cultural Heritage and Branding for Tourism with a focus on Tula, Mexico

Application No: 400160194

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 26/06/2017_____
- Project end date: 18/05/2018_____
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research:(http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_227599_en.pdf) (Unless there is an agreed exemption to this, noted here).
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used:
  http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer

2.Plain Language Statement (Translated into Spanish by the author) given to participant in field work surveys

University
of Glasgow
VIA VERITAS VITA

College of Social
Sciences

A Critical Examination of Cultural Heritage and Place Branding for Tourism with a focus on Tula, Mexico.

You are being invited to take part in a Ph.D. research study on the development of Tourism. It is important for you to understand why the research is being done in Tula, Mexico and its implications. Can you read the following sheet and if you have any questions or you would like more information, please let me know? Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

To get more knowledge and data about the use of Cultural heritage, the real situation of *Tula 'Pueblo Magico'* in Mexico and the post branding perceptions of locals in the town.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen randomly, for being part of the local community of Tula.

Do I have to take part?

Only if you feel comfortable about it, only you can decide whether you wish to participate.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be part of a survey used for a Ph.D. Thesis.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, all data will be treated as confidential and the information will be only use by myself for research purposes and will be destroyed when finishing the thesis.

*Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

They will be part of my Research fieldwork and they will be no longer used after finishing the thesis.

Who is funding the research?

CONACYT, Mexico

Who has reviewed the study?

Ph.D. supervisor Dr Donald MacLeod, University of Glasgow Campus, Dumfries

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

3. Consent Form signed by all participants in the fieldwork survey

I understand that Karina Guerrero Portillo is collecting data in the form of personal interview for use in an academic research project at the University of Glasgow. The research is a Critical Examination of Cultural Heritage and Place Branding for Tourism with a focus on Tula, and its purpose is to get more knowledge and information about the real situation of the '*Pueblo Mágico'* Magical Town, post branding perceptions of the local community and tourism development.

I give my consent to the use of data for this purpose on the understanding that:

The material will be treated as confidential and use only for research purposes, data will always be kept in secure storage and destroyed after the time required by the University of Glasgow.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Researcher's name and email contact: Karina Guerrero Portillo
k.guerrero-portillo.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Supervisor's name and email contact: Dr Donald Macleod
Donald.macleod@glasgow.ac.uk

Department address: School of Interdisciplinary studies, University of Glasgow, Crichton Campus, Dumfries DG1 4ZL

Appendix B

Background information of Interviews of Participants of the Research.

For privacy reasons, they will be referred in their statements as: Interview 1,1a,2,3,3a,4 and 5.

Participants of the Research	Position	Year /Place/Duration
Interview 1	Director Tourism Board of Tamaulipas	**2017** Face to Face 60 min
Interview 1ª	Director Tourism Board of Tamaulipas	**2018** Face to Face 60 min Offices of the Tourism Board of Tamaulipas
Interview 2	Manager of the Tourism Promotion and Diffusion Department	**2017** Face to Face 60 min Offices of the Tourism Board of Tamaulipas
Interview 3	Municipality of Tula and local tour guide	**2017** Face to Face 60 min Town of Tula
Interview 3ª	Municipality of Tula and local tour guide	**2018** Face to Face 60 min Artisan's Workshop
Interview 4	Member of Magical Towns Committee and local tour guide	**2017** Face to Face 60 min Tula's downtown
Interview 5	Historian of the State of Tamaulipas	**2017** Face to Face 60 min Home Office
Interview 6	Local Artisan and visit to workshops	**2017** Face to Face 45 min Artisan's workshop

Appendix C

Participants Questionnaire for locals and Visitors (Translated to Spanish)

a. Age 18-30 _____   31- 45 _____   45-60 _____   Over 60_____

b. Gender   F____ M_____

Locals:

1. Do you think the Magical Town programme has been effective for the development of Tula?

2. What aspects of Culture Heritage of Tula attracted you?

3. How integrated do you feel with the Magical Town initiative?

4. How do you feel about the presence of tourism in Tula?

5. Are you happy with the Magical Town programme in Tula?

Signature_____

Visitors:

a. Age 18-30 _____   31- 45 _____   45-60 _____   Over 60_____

b. Gender   F____ M_____

1. Reason for visiting Tula?

2.What Cultural aspect did you enjoy the most?

3. What does Tula need to improve?

4. How long are you staying?

Signature_____

Appendix D: Inventory of tourism services in Tula

Table 1: Hotels in Tula 2017. (Author)

* Hotels	Rooms	Price per night
Hotel Quinta San Jose *** Internet, restaurant, banqueting hall, swimming pool and sun decks	**33** 28 Doubles 5 (4 people)	**£30**
Hotel Rossana ** Restaurant, TV, internet	**28** 10 Doubles 10 (4 people) 8 (3 people)	**£20**
Hotel Mollinedo ** Restaurant, internet, telephone, TV	**17** 7 Doubles 7 (3 People) 3 Singles	**£20**
Hotel El Dorado ** Internet, telephone, TV, Aircon	**13** 10 Doubles 3 3 People)	**£23**
Hostal el Mirador * TV	**4** (4-5 people)	**£20**
Hotel el Rincon Huasteco ** TV, telephone, internet	**25** 20 Doubles 5 (5people)	**£20**
Hotel Butique *** Restaurants, parking spaces, banqueting hall, internet, TV	**32**	**£30**

Table 2. Restaurants in Tula 2017. (Author)

Restaurants	Type of Food	Average Price per Meal
Cuitzios	*Regional and traditional food*	**£3**
La Pesca	*Seafood*	**£4**
La Mision	*Regional and traditional food*	**£3**
Bar Casino	*Traditional food and Bar*	**£8**
Cafeteria La Presidencia	*Traditional food and take away*	**£3**
El acuario	*Seafood*	**£4**
El Quijote	*Traditional food*	**£8**

Table 3: Guided Tours available in Tula, 2017. (Author)

Tour Operator	Tourist Services	Price
REYMA	- Guided Tours to historical Centre and the town. - Guided Tours to historical Centre and Pyramid Cuitzillos - Tour to 'Gallos Grandes' waterfall	**£2** Adult **£1** Children
TAMMAPUL	**Architectonic Tour**: Guided tour to historical centre, relevant facades and two ex-haciendas.	**£2** Adult **£1** Children
	Religious Tour: Visit to chapels, old cemetery and church of San Antonio de Padua.	**£2** Adult **£1** Children
	Tour to Gallos Grandes Waterfalls: guided tours to the waterfalls and horse rides.	**£5** Adult **£3** Children **£7** Adult

	Tour to Ejido Acahuales- Virgen del Contadero y Milagrosa. Horse rides and motorbike tours to waterfalls and landscapes. (Transport included) **Recorrido Pirámide-Mezcalería-Procesadora de Aceite de Oliva.** Guided tour to Pyramid Cuitzillos, Mezcal manufacture and olive oil manufacture.	**£4** Children **£5** Adult **£3** Children
	Living Stories: Guided Tour to historical centre in which dressed up actors tell the story of important characters of the town such as Carmelita Romero de Diaz, General Alberto Carrera Torres, former President Porfirio Diaz, and La llorona.	**£4** Adult **£1** Children
TOUR BUS	Bus Tours to historical centre and visits to Pyramid Cuitzillos.	**£2** Adult **£1** Children
	'Vivencias' visiting artisan's workshops: The tourists can buy or design their own craft ítems in the artisan's workshops	