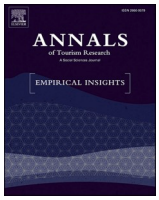
Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights 5 (2024) 100120

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights

journal homepage: www.sciencedirect.com/journal/annals-of-tourism-research-empirical-insights



The use of the civil wars in Colchester's tourist image☆

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ARTICLE INFO

Handling Editor: Kirilova Ksenia

Keywords:
Tourism
Useable past
British civil war
Marketing
Commercialisation

ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between useable pasts and tourism to show how towns reinvented themselves using their local and unique histories throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To achieve this, the article focuses its attention on the growing influence and importance that tourism had on Colchester's development. It shows how important visible landmarks and mythical stories are in ensuring a past's usability. Alongside this it highlights the importance of local stakeholders and businesses in owning the past and marketing the town as a historic location. In doing so it demonstrates the ways in which Colchester reinvented itself from an old Market town to become an Historic town. Focusing on the controversial history of the Siege of 1648, it will show how towns dealt with tragic narratives as they began using the past to sell themselves to the nation.

1. Introduction

We are in a period where heritage and the past have become relevant and important in town marketing (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2011; Light, 2015; Miranda & Ruiz-Moreno, 2022; Pousada & Larrinaga, 2022). Yet our understanding of what makes a past useable in marketing across time and space has been understudied. This article will demonstrate that the concept and theory of useable pasts is an incredibly important tool for contemporary place marketers as they sell their localities, nationally and internationally (Sunstein, 1995). To achieve this, it will examine how pasts have been tailored to present an image, a story, and a commodity to tourists. Through the lens of Colchester, and the history of the British Civil Wars, this article will highlight how histories can be used in the marketisation of place. It will show that useable pasts within tourism follow particular themes, such as being locally led, embedded in the landscape and in heroic or mythical stories. This is important as it will demonstrate that these pasts are adaptable, are part of a shared and collective story and vision which can be tailored to create a successful 'historical location'. By examining useable pasts, it will show how history can be reinvented and used in marketing and branding, helping practitioners meet the needs of residents and visitors alike.

This article uses qualitative and historical methodology to help us understand useable pasts in contemporary marketing. Historical research is rare in tourism, marketing and organisation studies (Maclean & Harvey, 2014). Nonetheless, Towner (1985) and Lickorish and Jenkins (2007) have argued that history is vital in the study of tourism because ideas for the future can be found in the past, and analysis of the past can also help us understand aspects of modern, contemporary tourism. Historical methodology offers an opportunity of expanding our understanding of tourism research 'by revealing temporal and historical dynamics in the field that may hitherto be unseen or insufficiently explored.' MacKenzie, Pittaki, and Wong (2020) argue historical analysis in tourism should follow the 5Cs framework: *Change over time, Context, Causality, Complexity, and Contingency*. This analysis will help us observe how a particular past can be used, shaped and transformed, over a period of time, to redefine and create places as historic tourist locations in changing political and social contexts. It will allow us to examine the causality of town marketing alongside the complexity of town reinvention and the contingency of a place's past in its contemporary marketing. This methodology uses many elements of social science research techniques, but also critiques and analyses a variety of primary sources found in the archives at the Essex Record Office, including analysis of posters, newspaper articles, travel guides and travel diaries from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This methodology provides a way of tracing people, organisations and events that are not otherwise accessible and will allow us to uncover new insights from existing datasets (MacKenzie et al., 2020).

The historical analysis will focus on the long-nineteenth century as tourism became an increasingly important element in the local economies of British towns due to the increased disposable income and mobility of elites (Berghoff, Korte, Harvie, & Schneider, 2002; Kearns & Philo, 1993). According to Hubbard and Lilley (2000), p. 231),

☆ Research interests: The concept of useable pasts within the tourist industry and how this has developed over the last few centuries. Also interested in place management and the urban past.

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annale.2024.100120
Received 2 August 2023; Received in revised form 12 January 2024; Accepted 14 January 2024
Available online 20 January 2024

nineteenth century local authorities used marketable pasts to promote 'particular aspects of the town's history and development.' Local businesses bought into this reinvention and were keen to present themselves as being in 'historic locations' (Nead, 2005). Alongside the local interest in using the past, national government and private companies also found value in marketing history. For example, railways emphasised their historical links to attract the public to use their services; after all, these were companies which were all private enterprises, whose aim was to create profit. They produced guides to persuade people to travel to interesting destinations. Young (2015) has noted that the aim was to promote history of the nation to people of all classes, as well as to point the reader to sites 'worthy of interest'. This period provides ample evidence of how localities can remodel themselves as 'historic' locations.

This article follows Adeyinka-Ojo, Nair, and Khoo-Lattimore's (2014) argument that a single case study approach is helpful to understand complex topics and is generally favoured by practitioners. Colchester proves to be an interesting case study for the study of useable pasts in tourism. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, local elites in Colchester used the British Civil Wars (1642–1652) to reinvent the town as a historic tourist location, even though the stories of the Civil Wars were complex in the nineteenth century due to their political nature (Bann, 2020). In doing so, they carefully constructed the place's image using aspects of the past —Roman, Norman and the Siege of Colchester to appeal to visitors and residents alike. As towns once again consider their historic image in tourism, this article looks back to examine how histories can be used, repurposed, and reconciled in their marketing strategies (Bryce et al., 2017; Wadhwani, Suddaby, Mordhorst, & Popp, 2018).

2. Literature review

2.1. Useable past theory

There have been some attempts to understand history in tourism studies. Halewood and Hannam (2001) and Waitt (2000) focused on authentic pasts in tourism; Ward (1998) and Kearns and Philo (1993) analysed how the past was used in the marketing of towns. Kearns and Philo (1993) have argued that the past was deliberately manipulated by local elites and place marketers, who have been able to transform difficult and negative historical images into stories of initiative and enterprise. This provided towns and cities with unique selling points over their rivals (Ward, 1998). Mooney-Melvin (1991) has demonstrated that romantic pasts lured people to locations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This study aims to build on these previous studies to provide a theoretical framework around useable pasts for further research and for practitioners engaged with place marketing and branding.

The theory of useable pasts expands upon research by Calvi and Hover (2022) who argue that local attractions use myths to add extra layers of meanings and purpose for visitors to enhance their experience, and Moscardo (2020, p.9) who has argued that 'stories are a central and universal structure in human understanding and communication and thus play an important role in tourism'. Woodside and Martin (2015) have also demonstrated the importance of stories in place promotion. History is an essential story for many localities, and that throughout time, places have identified useable pasts which they can market to a national and international audience. By exploring the theoretical concept of useable pasts, this work will add important contributions to the academic and practitioner field (Stergiou & Airey, 2018) and will add to research on leisure, planning, branding, transport, experience, and sustainability (Lohmann & Netto, 2016).

The useable past in tourism can be defined as a process where individuals or communities within places find elements in history that can be commercialised and deployed to reach a wider local, national and international audience (Sunstein, 1995). They are histories which are shaped by the community and are collaborative in nature. They can be pasts which help address contemporary political, social, and environmental issues, and their usability is defined by an understanding of a place's uniqueness alongside wider national and international issues. Hodgkin and Radstone (2009, p.1) state, 'history is about the present' and that its usefulness depends on its contemporary meaning. The past is reinterpreted down by communities' values and thoughts. This subjectivity means that some histories will be left out, others will survive and the most popular and will be pushed to the forefront and marketed (Fentress & Wickham, 1992). Building on the useable nature of the past, Lloyd and Moore (2015) have shown that society aims to forget or silence certain stories due to political ideologies, social changes or local against national versions. Whilst other stories are promoted as they are comfortable and are about our predecessors, of heroic deeds or sacrifice. Certain stories are used because the society finds them acceptable and uses them to make sense of their own world.

This article will focus on three direct themes of useable pasts in tourism, the romantic landscape, mythological stories and local ownership. Levine (1986) has shown town elites and local stakeholders across England triumphed in the histories contained in buildings and individuals. Landscapes with buildings associated with the Civil Wars were popular and local elites promoted them locally and nationally (Porter, 2011). Mythological stories of heroes and villains were also extremely important in the nineteenth century as people looked for stories of valour and chivalry (Johnson, 2014). The Civil Wars, as shown by Carlyle's (1841) work, were full of individuals who could be used to tell tales that had the potential to be exploited by towns and organisations for touristic purposes. The conflict also drew interest from those interested in romanticism, inspired by the publication of Walter Scott's *Rokesby* (1813) and *Woodstock* (1826), which presented individuals from the conflict as romantic heroes (Strong, 1978).

In researching the theory and development of useable past within tourism, this article contributes to the discussion started by Lucarelli, Cassinger, and Ågren (2021) on the commercialisation of Stockholm, analysing 'how the process of commercialisation historically changes over time.' Following their definition that commercialisation overlaps themes such as place making, promotion, marketing and branding, this article shows how the British Civil Wars have been used in how Colchester sold, marketed, and branded itself as an authentic historic location to visitors. This will address the gaps into research of the British Civil Wars, where studies into the cultural significance of the wars are limited (Legon, 2019; Stoyle, 2004; Vallance, 2019). In addition, it advances our understanding of how places use the past to advertise themselves and provides insight into how contemporary places can advertise themselves. In essence, it aims to highlight that those involved in the historical branding of place need to understand the importance of local ownership and the themes of the past which make it useable. Lucarelli et al. (2021) have argued that the meanings of the past are always being revised and reinterpreted to make sense of the present and to reach a contemporary audience, yet, they argue, the marketing of the past needs to be explored further in touristic studies. This article contributes to the debate and explores how the past is reinvented and reimagined for touristic purposes.

3. Case study and context

Colchester was picked as a case study as it was affected by the Civil Wars. A Parliamentarian town in the east of England, it remained untouched until the Second Civil War, where in 1648, it was taken by Royalists and drastically ruined in the siege. Colchester also housed the myths of Royalist martyrdom with the death of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle. The town was unique in how it struggled to rebuild, but it harnessed the memory of the war as it developed its political, social, and cultural scenes (Porter, 2011). Colchester's industrial economy saw a rapid change in the eighteenth century, partly due to the siege but also due to continental wars that impacted the local bay and textile trade (Baggs et al., 1994, pp. 135–147). Local gentry, who were the main

commercial leaders in the town, aimed at continuing the towns vitality harnessed the siege story to transform the place into a tourist destination. Even in the present, Colchester still uses the siege to advertise itself to national and international audiences (Anon, 2023). It provides a good case study of how these histories can be navigated and used to transform places across England. The period in question, the long nineteenth century, has been chosen as it reflects the growing tourist interest, development and commercialisation of historic towns and locations. Colchester saw the arrival of travel writers in the eighteenth century, the railway in the nineteenth century, and the pageants in the early twentieth century. This period allows us to trace the continued use of the past in the historical transformation of Colchester.

To understand how and why the siege was used in Colchester's emergent tourist economy, we need to dissect its significance to the town. The Siege of Colchester in 1648 was one of the most brutal events of the combined British Civil Wars. The circumstances leading to Siege of Colchester began during the second phase of the war with a Royalist rising in Maidstone, Kent in 1648. Although defeated, the army of around five thousand men moved to into Essex and on to Colchester, home of the Royalist Sir Charles Lucas, with the intent of rallying the forces and marching on the capital. They were soon sieged by the Parliamentarian forces led by General Fairfax (Gentles, 2022, pp. 169–172).

The siege had profound consequences for the people of Colchester. They suffered from starvation, fire, and destruction of property over a period of nearly three months. Around three hundred houses were burnt mostly in the suburbs of the town by both sides who thought they offered protection to their enemy. On one of the worst nights, it was reported that, ‘a terrible red duskeye bloody cloud seamed to hang over the Town all night’, and the crackling of the fire could be ‘heard a mile or two’ away (Wire, 1843, pp. 13-14). Buildings were ruined, houses destroyed, and it should be no surprise that Colchester became known as that ‘mournfull city’ (Donegan, 2008, p. 313). After the siege ended with the Royalists surrendering, two of the Royalists, Lucas and Lisle, were executed and the Parliamentarians subjected the town to a fine of £14, 000 for their involvement (Martin, 1959, p.10).

4. The findings

4.1. Romantic landscape

The question is, therefore, how could this terrible event be useable in Colchester's rebranding as an ‘historic town’. As tourism grew in the late eighteenth century, Colchester became an appealing place to visit. Even though the siege was a catastrophe for the town, the ruins of the Civil War began to gather interest from those who could afford to visit. This interest in visiting historic sites associated with the British Civil War began with a relatively small number of elite travellers (Mowl & Earnshaw, 1981). The growing taste for the gothic, as well as the influence of William Gilpin and the broader movement of the ‘picturesque’, encouraged interest from people across the country in sites of antique ruin as a source of aesthetic enjoyment and interest (Berghoff et al., 2002; Glipin, 1786). The useability of history for late eighteenth and nineteenth century culture was found in the need to establish a national past also made sites associated with British history an engrossing topic for travellers (Thomas, 2012; Walsham, 2011). The groundwork for tourism was prepared by publications such as Francis Grose's *Antiquities of England and Wales* (1773–76), that produced and printed topographical surveys with images full of ideas for interesting destinations for day trips as well as longer visits to historic sites of interest (Mowl & Earnshaw, 1981).

The siege ruins in Colchester provided the antiquarian and the traveller with stories of romantism and the national past. They captured the imagination and appeared regularly in travel writers' diaries and books. This was due to the restoration of Charles II, which established Colchester in national historical memory as a place of martyrdom and tragedy (Donegan, 2008). The antiquarian William Stukeley (Haycock, 2004, online) included Colchester in one of his expeditions in 1718 and produced etchings of buildings that had been damaged in the siege alongside a detailed map of siege sites (Stukeley, 1718, 1724). Many antiquarians actively engaged with the history, for example Grose provided images of the sites accompanied by histories of the siege (Grose, 1783-97). The travel diarist Celia Fiennes visited Colchester in 1698 recorded in her travel journal her impressions of the ‘ruinated’ churches damaged by the siege (Fiennes, 1888). Daniel Defoe also stayed in Colchester and included a detailed description of the town in his famous *Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain*, first published 1724–26 and regularly reprinted throughout the century. His principal subject was the contemporary economy and urban landscape, but he was moved by the physical evidence of Colchester's Civil War history. Commenting that the town ‘still mourns, in the ruins of a civil war’, uniquely amongst his urban descriptions, he paid detailed attention to the Civil War's impact on the urban fabric which gave him a platform for his political railing against ‘tyrannical and *jure divino* rule.’ Defoe included a reproduction of a seventeenth century Royalist siege diary, reprinted as an antiquarian document to illustrate the siege story (Speller, 2011, p. 594).

The siege story provided romantic ruins for artists who came to Colchester to produce etchings, landscape paintings and watercolours of varying quality that depicted the siege ruins and its Castle in various romantic and rural settings. In general, these artists, influenced by the romantic movement, were less interested in the history of the buildings than in their emotional impact on the viewer (Stewart, 1996, p. 400; Walsham, 2011, p. 146). They certainly bought in to Colchester's market town identity as the images displayed rural life. Typically, they included contemporary visitors in the foreground of their pictures, slightly away from the ruins, in leisurely poses, displaying the appealing nature of the siege ruins with amateur as well as professional artists of the period. (J. Pridden, 1763-1840). A drawing made by Robert Withman of the Abbey Gatehouse in 1791 is just one of numerous examples (Turner, 1827; Smith, 1807; Hassell, 1807; Morden & Pask, 1696-1700). Whether it was the history or just the romantic image that had been created by the war these sites proved to be popular. Long before the railway and local initiatives, Colchester had begun its reimagining as a ‘historic town’ through the perception of visitors to the town. As Neumier (2005) stated, ‘It's not what you say it is. It's what they say it is.

As the nineteenth century arrived, locals were evidently aware of the romantic useability of the siege landscape and began to sell it to attract visitors (Essex Standard, Friday 06 April, 1849, p. 3; Essex Archeological Society, 1860, p.3). As it boosted the town's economy, local - and often Tory - antiquarians drove the emerging tourist trade by appealing to learned visitors to Colchester with the offer of specialist tours of these ruinous sites. These were often reported and promoted by the local press who worked alongside antiquarians in presenting Colchester as a ‘historic location’. In 1855 the local antiquarian, the Reverend E. L. Cutts led a tour for the Essex Archaeological Society. (Chelmsford Chronicle, Friday 31 August, 1855, p. 3). The local antiquarian Henry Laver also organised and conducted many walking tours of the siege sites in the town, and in 1884 the local historian and Tory politician, John Horace Round guided the London based antiquarian society known as the ‘The Cocked Hat Club’ around sites of historic interest and entertained guests to a summary of the history of the siege. A local press report explained that Round, ‘led the party next to St. John's Abbey Gate, where he was able to point out much of the general scheme of attack and defence at the siege of Colchester’ (Essex Standard, Saturday 12 July, 1884, p. 6).

Local stakeholders understood this interest and published guidebooks throughout the century to allow tourists to explore the sites on their own, such as that produced and published by Charles Benham (1895). Benham noted a list of buildings in Colchester worthy of a visit. Amongst the most important were the Castle, St Botolph, the Abbey, and Holy Trinity (Benham, 1895, p. 16). Images of these buildings were complemented by detailed historical and romantic content of the siege which was carefully chosen by the authors. Local and national

newspapers joined in and published illustrated histories of the siege, as seen in *The Illustrated London News* of 1869 which featured a short history of the siege of Colchester together with images of the ruins of St. Botolph's, St. John's and the Castle (Illustrated London News, Saturday 19 June, 1869, p. 8; and Anon, 1835, pp.199–200).

The construction of Colchester's Museum in 1860 provides another insight into the siege's useability. Like guidebooks, museums reflected the interests of their founders, who were local elites, and this was no more obvious than in Colchester where John Horace Round and Henry Laver displayed their vision of the history of the town (Special Committee Minute Book, 1856–1878). Laver became the honorary curator of the museum in 1876 and he published a guide for the growing number of visitors in 1893, 'to direct attention to those specimens considered to be the most interesting' (Laver, 1893) The museum aimed to present a chronology of the history of Colchester and so the museum ended the display with objects associated with the siege in 1648 as locals believed it to be the last great event for the town. In 1900 Charles Benham wrote and published a guide to the Castle and Museum, describing the building as 'a truly commanding edifice which has stood the brunt of many a siege and defied alike the ravages of time and the determined efforts of man,' (Benham, n.d; Wheeler, 1920). Residents were clearly aware of the useable themes of romanticism within the landscape and understood that the ruins provided the town with a story, with a beginning, middle and end which mattered locally and nationally. Landmarks store stories and provide useable pasts as they offer places with a beginning, a middle an end, or in some cases, all three, and in this case the siege provided an end point for Colchester's story.

4.2. Mythical stories

In addition to the appeal of the romantic landscape created by the siege, the mythical stories of heroes and villains ensured the useability of the history. These stories emerged from the Restoration and centred around the two Royalist knights Lucas and Lisle. These myths stated that the grass would not grow where the martyrs had fallen. Although this was a political myth with the aim of commemorating the Royalist cause, the political usability remained because of both contemporary national and international events. For example, the political revolutions in France increased visits to siege sites in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Parallels were drawn between contemporary and historical events, and these developments made Colchester an even more appealing destination to native and international traveller alike (Deane, 1748; Stukeley, 1724). An Italian referred to it in a travel journal on his visit to Colchester (Essex Standard, 21 Mach, 1891, p.7). The Frenchman Francois de La Rochefoucauld toured Suffolk in 1784 but he was intrigued by the siege stories and noted how residents had made the town as a visitor destination. (Scarfe, 1988, p.113). Although political, the site was a popular place to visit as Morant (1748) argued, the spot was most likely worn out by 'the great resort of people to see the place', who were clearly taken up with the mythical story. Evidently, the siege had a wide, international appeal, and the mythical stories could be used in this instance to help visitors make sense of contemporary events across Europe.

Mythical stories of heroes and villains were repurposed the siege myths to attract visitors. However, these guides and tours still promoted a conservative version of the siege. Many of these writers referred to Philip Morant and his 1748 work as their source for the siege (Edward Walford, 1882, p.7); and so, followed the Royalist narrative that had emerged from the Restoration government in 1660. For example, one referred to, 'the brave and loyal cavaliers', and 'the traitorous leaders of the victorious Parliamentarians?' (Anon, 1860, p. 30). The Tory Henry Laver, "spoke with measureless severity of Fairfax and Ireton, amid the approving 'hear, hears' of a clergyman, whose Royalist zeal led him temporarily to forget he was in a church" (Chelmsford Chronicle, Friday 14 September, 1894, p. 6). When Benham wrote his guide to the museum, he described the storming of the walls by Fairfax and his troops and what to him was the 'tragic' and treacherous imprisonment and death of Lucas and Lisle within its walls (Benham, Castle and Museum Guide, p.11). Laver's obelisk erected in 1892 in the spot supposedly where the knights were shot, also came an attractive place for tourists interested in the myths that lay behind the history (Norfolk News, 22 October, 1892, p. 9). Although the siege still maintained its political dimensions, it had successfully repurposed the political Restoration story of Lucas and Lisle and had marketed it to appeal to a wider audience.

The stories of heroes and villains continued in the 1909 Pageant which drew a total audience of around sixty thousand. Colchester's history was presented in six acts, the last of which being the Siege of 1648 and heavy attention was drawn to the execution of the Royalist knights. Often these pageants avoided the Civil War because it was divisive, but the mythical nature of the siege stories ensured that it was an integral part of its historical image. The siege episode was a spectacle, the Pageant Master, Louis Parker took advantage of the military presence in the town to recreate battle scenes to impress the audience. Rather than focusing on the Royalist narrative of martyrdom, the organisers used the appeal of the story of the execution of the knights to an Edwardian audience who were greatly attracted by the idea of chivalry and the heroic individual (Colchester Pageant Programme, 1909). Local businesses and the local army garrison all contributed to the performances and presentation, and it highlights how different groups collaborated, and how the town came together, using histories like the siege, to present Colchester as an 'historic' location. The political narratives that originated from the siege and later Restoration in 1660 had been successful repurposed to present a mythical and heroic past which appealed to wider interests of tourists. These mythical stories were also flexible and adaptable and allowed different meanings and interpretations to be drawn out in different times.

4.3. Local ownership

The siege was also useable because the siege story mattered locally, and it helped in the cementation of place identity. Benham wrote about how the siege had impacted the development and infrastructure of the town; the visible scarring ensured the legacy of the wars continued for residents. Furthermore, locals clearly understood that tales of heroic sacrifice and the romantic landscape were popular. In his guide he included a detailed account of the death of Lucas and Lisle, in which he embellished and romanticised still further the description of their dying speeches as described by Morant (Benham, 1890, pp. 14–15). He also pointed visitors to landmarks such as King's Head, the public house, where the Royalist officers were placed after the surrender (Benham, 1890, p. 22). An advertisement for his guide in the *Essex Standard* in 1900 included images of the ruins and images of characters from the siege (Essex Standard, Saturday 07 July, 1900, p. 4). Locals recognised the histories what aspects of the past were useable and knew how to tailor them to meet visitor needs and interests.

Locals engaged with the marketing of the historic environment. For example, postcards were developed locally by the *Essex Standard* to take advantage of the developing and booming tourist industry and these focused on predominately the siege ruins and historic figures such as Lucas and Lisle (Post cards from around, 1900–1920). Local businesses linked their trade with the historic environment, and in doing so, took advantage of the great interest in the 'historic town' of Colchester and the romantic nature of the siege ruins in their marketing. In 1892, for example, a local pharmacy owned by Walter Everett located in St. Botolph's street used the site of St. Botolph's Priory to sell perfume (Colchester Roses, 1892, p. 6; Kelly's, p. 126). According to the advert, 'The bottles and style are extremely elegant, the label bearing a beautiful engraving in miniature of that interesting ruin St. Botolph's Priory.' Businesses and residents understood the attractive qualities of the historic landscape and stories and repurposed the past to meet popular demand.

Locals had control of how the siege was marketed and presented and were active in the reshaping and repurposing of the siege story to ensure that it remained useful. Although, the nineteenth century was dominated by the Royalist narrative of events, the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was marked by a period of political reconciliation which made the siege a divisive narrative to deploy (Baggs et al., 1994). An example of this is the Oyster Feast where a programme was published to accompany the festival in 1899. In this there was an image which included images of Royalists and Parliamentarians seated together alongside other famous local individuals (E. J. Sanders & Benham, 1899). The 1902 Town Hall and Pageant also shows that, although divisive, residents wanted the siege to be an important part of the history displayed and reconciled the stories to display the Parliamentarians and Royalists as equals (Benham, 1902). In a changing political world, the siege was still considered to be important for locals, and residents adapted the stories to meet the marketing and tourist demands of the period. It is evident that useable pasts are those which are owned by residents but can also be reinvented, reused, and repurposed to meet contemporary and changing needs.

4.4. Harnessing the useable past

The connectivity of these themes of the useable past is evident in the Railway, who used them in their own tourism marketing and advertisements of Colchester. These companies actively used and promoted local narratives of the siege to appeal to a national audience to increase the number and social type of tourists that used the railway to visit the town (Simmons, 1984, p. 201). The era of the railway coincided with a peak of great popular interest in the history of the Civil War, encouraged by paintings, poetry, plays and the publication of Walter Scott's romantic historical novel Woodstock that had an significant impact on people's interest and attitudes to the past (Strong, 1978, p. 31). Therefore, the author of railway guides of Colchester drew on the popularity of the siege and the historical landscape to market itself to these new visitors. As soon as Colchester station opened in 1843 the past was used to appeal to visitors, for example, the Great Eastern Railway guide of 1865 describes Colchester as a historic destination and presented the town as an ancient and historic place, keeping pace with civic progress but avoiding industrialisation. Many guides spent a good amount of time focusing on Colchester and its heritage because it was marketed as one of the most interesting locations to visit (Young, 2015, p. 266). The siege was a central part of the appeal as it displayed a romantic and mysterious past (Brown, 1980, p. 162).

The town was marketed as an important stop on the Great Eastern Railway. Its first guide was published in 1851 and Colchester was clearly marketed as a historic destination. The entry in the guide for the town ended with a detailed account of the Siege of Colchester during the Civil War. The text followed the conservative guides and invited visitors to explore the Romantic ruins and told mythical stories of the martyrdom of the Royalist knights (J.A.T. Smythe, 1851). The trauma of the siege alongside the myth of the martyrdom of Lucas and Lisle had commercial value and was promoted intensively to cater to public appetite. For example, it is interesting to note that when the Eastern Counties Railway officially opened at Colchester, 'A party of ladies and gentlemen from London had already visited the town by railway and inspected the Castle ruins, St Botolph's Priory and St. John's Abbey Gate' (Sherry, 1982, p. 15).

Histories like the siege were vital in creating a 'visual experience' (Nead, 2005, pp. 58–59). In the 1851 guide, for example, detailed attention was paid to buildings that were damaged by the Parliamentarians during the siege and great emphasis was placed on the destruction caused by Fairfax and his troops to the castle, the abbey and the priory. The anonymous author also noted that 'St. John's Abbey was destroyed by the guns of Fairfax and that what remained was the porter's lodge and a few monastic buildings which became a barn.' The story of Fairfax's complicated connection to the Duke of Buckingham was also included in the text. According to some accounts, Buckingham, who was married to Fairfax's daughter, asked Charles II to erase the inscription on the tomb of Lucas and Lisle in St. Giles Church in Colchester, which stated that Fairfax barbarously murdered the knights. Such stirring stories of intrigue and treachery were romantic images that captured the imagination of the reader (J.A.T. Smythe, 1851, pp. 1, 56).

As time went by, more illustrations were included in the guides (Measom, 1865). George Measom, railway topographer, illustrator and philanthropist, pioneered this approach (Martin, 2005). He addressed his guides directly to the reader, providing practical guidance for tourists and historic descriptions of points of interest. He wrote his guide in an engaging narrative style, designed to fire the imagination of the reader by using the present tense. For example, he described an episode of combat outside the town during the siege (Measom, 1865, p. 144). These guides also seemed to follow the conservative message which was found locally. However, Measom drew out and focused on the romantic and heroic aspects of the story to add intrigue and interest. In the section on the castle, he explained that 'On the ground floor beneath, opening on the ruined quadrangle, is the little arched, dark, dismal room in which Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle were lodged the night before they were led out to receive their death shots' (Measom, 1865, p. 141). As with many guides to Colchester in the nineteenth century, the account drew on Morant's Tory interpretation to construct its narrative of events and in doing so he used the appeal of the Romantic myth of the noble sacrifice of the two knights to entice Victorian visitors, thereby shaping a story that appealed to popular tastes.

The history of the siege continued to remain important in the early twentieth century (The Official Guide to the Great Eastern Railway Illustrated, 1910). The author of the 1910 guide is unknown, but the focus was the same as earlier publications. Considerable attention was given to the story of the siege and detailed descriptions were included of the ruin of the buildings that were damaged in the conflict. (Reading Mercury, Monday 12 October, 1835, p. 4; Essex Standard, Friday 25 May, 1849, p. 2; Essex Standard, Saturday 18 November, 1893, p. 8; Essex Herald, Tuesday 10 May, 1892, p. 3; Carter, 1745, p. iv). They also included sections with individual descriptions of the buildings and their histories of the castle, the priory as well as the new town hall. The death of Lucas and Lisle was once again used to stir the imagination. The writer stated that, 'The triumph of Fairfax was sadly marred by the precipitate execution of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, two gallant noblemen who had commanded the Royalist infantry' (The Official Guide to the Great Eastern Railway, 1910, p. 123). The railway guide of 1914 was written along similar lines (The Official Guide to the Great Eastern Railway, 1914). Railway companies followed the useable themes, and focused on the romantic landscape, the mythical stories and ensured the narratives stuck close to local interpretations. The analysis of the railway use of the siege highlights that these themes should be connected to ensure useability of the past in tourism marketing and branding. Crucially, the successful use of the past in the historic rebranding of places occurs because of the active collaboration of companies like the railway, local stakeholders, and the place's economy which harness the landscape and stories of the past.

4.5. The result: Colchester's reinvention as a 'historic town'

These themes of the useable past are crucial in how history is used in the reinvention of place. It has been shown that the siege past was essential in Colchester's tourism industry which by the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had seen tremendous growth (Readman, 2018). Residents in Colchester used the siege, alongside other histories, to rebrand it as an 'historic town'. Individuals in Colchester's Corporation actively and explicitly harnessed useable pasts to promote local identity and civic pride, for example the new town hall of 1902 and pageant of 1909 and the increasingly elaborate annual Oyster Feast, where toasts were made to 'loyal and historic Colchester' (East Anglian Daily Times, Friday 21 October, 1910, p. 5). Colchester's history

and credentials were acknowledged in a book series published by Longmans of London in 1888 that included Colchester amongst the select band of cities including Exeter, London, Bristol and Oxford that were thought to possess a history sufficiently prestigious to claim such a label (Brown, 1980). Posters and advertisements were produced that tried to entice people to visit 'historic Colchester' (Great Eastern Railway, 1901). Success of this rebranding can be noted in the visitor count collected by the museum in 1872, which claimed of having exceeded ten thousand visitors, and by 1909, the visitor count had reached 34, 453 (Brown, 1980, p.45; Report of the Museum and Muniment Committee, 1909).

The siege was essential in this rebranding because it provided Colchester a unique selling point. In fact, Colchester is unique in how it sold the war. Many places which had similarly powerful associations with the Civil War tended not to reshape the stories and generally avoided any discussion of it. Birmingham and Bournemouth, for example, where fighting had been fierce, failed to mention the impact of the war at all. Other places only mentioned the subject in passing as was the case for West Somerset (Brannon, 1864; Jeboult, 1873; Kirk, 1899). Admittedly, some towns which were deeply impacted by the conflict were more likely to discuss the war but interestingly interpreted and presented events in very different ways to Colchester. For example, a guide to Bristol discussed the occupation of the city by Royalists in 1643. Although the town had a long-standing political association with royalism, the account in the guide condemned the King's troops and the plunder that followed it, hailing Sir Thomas Fairfax as a liberator (Pryce, 1861, p. 406). The guide to Oxford, another Royalist stronghold during the Civil War and site of the war court established by Charles I, avoided commentary on the conflict altogether, and simply presented images of the impact of the war in its guide (Parker, 1875; Parker, 1881). Useable pasts vary from location to location. However, for Colchester, the siege was used, to make it into a unique location with a unique story. This was achieved because useable pasts are those which residents have consciously adapted to ensure their continued use in the reinvention of places as a 'historic location'.

5. Useable past theory: implications for tourism

This article has demonstrated that useable pasts help towns construct a positive, accessible, and meaningful tourist image that benefits both visitor and resident, and in doing so this exploration has helped us to further understand the use of history in the successful branding of places. Practitioners need an understanding of useable pasts in their efforts to create an historical brand, so that they can identify particular local pasts which can be sold to a wider audience. This article has identified that useable pasts within place branding are stories which are adaptable, but need to be continually examined and molded to meet contemporary demands. It has also shown that these pasts form because of collaboration between a variety of stakeholders; businesses, residents and local government who have come together to shape and present an image of the past which they all identify with. The article has indicated that useable pasts already exist for places and practitioners should be aware of their past use, how they were formed and developed over time, and identify ways they can be reimagined to help shape place branding in the present and future. Following on from Moscardo's (2020, p. 9) work identifying the varied meaning stories provide visitors, this article has also demonstrated that useable historical stories allow varied interpretations. However, this article also identifies that their useability is often a result from their connection to the local landscape and local mythologic narratives. Therefore, this article has argued that understanding the concept of useable pasts is important to effective historical place branding and has built upon the work of Moscardo's (2020) and Woodside and Martin (2015), on the use of stories in the development of place promotion and tourism. Consequently, it has also provided a theoretical framework of useable pasts in tourism, marketing, and place branding.

This exploration of useable pasts within tourism demonstrates that successful branding initiatives must center around local ownership of the past. It also highlights that practitioners need to understand the place's story, landscape and myths. In essence, the article has shown how the past can be used to develop effective tourism strategies. Historical rebranding must allow the past to provide a variety of meanings, and efforts need to be made to ensure the histories are visible to the resident and visitor alike. The article also demonstrates how historical analysis can be used to help us understand contemporary ways of marketing our places. In this instance it has highlighted how places can successfully reinvent themselves as historic locations. Research which examines what makes a story and history to be deemed useable and unusable; wider themes of useability, the ranking of histories, and whether the useability of the past can vary in different periods will offer valuable insights for expanding the theory in tourism research.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Although a complex and political history; residents, stakeholders and national organisations collaborated to use the Siege of Colchester in town marketing. The myths, legends, and urban environment (Johnson, 2014; Porter, 2011), that emerged from the siege gathered interest in the eighteenth century and were commercialised to help market the town in the nineteenth century (Lucarelli et al., 2021). Local stakeholders clearly saw the economic benefits of using the conflict in the towns rebranding, selling, and marketing as a means of attracting tourists in an era where tourism development grew (Berghoff et al., 2002). Residents reinvented and shaped the siege from a divisive political tragedy into a unique and cultural selling point (Kearns & Philo, 1993; Ward, 1998). In doing so, Colchester had been transformed into a 'historic town' by the twentieth century and provides us with an example of how to rebrand a historical location.

As 'historic towns' have become an attractive proposition for town marketing (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2011; Maitland, 2006), this article makes several important contributions. Firstly, it suggests that there needs to be further historical analysis and study of useable pasts in tourism as it is valuable in providing insights for contemporary strategy and marketing (Dredge, Jenkins, & Whitford, 2016; Lickorish & Jenkins, 2007; Walton, 2011). Secondly, this study makes an important methodological contribution, being informed by extensive archival research, to help understand contemporary methods and inform future approaches to tourism (Maclean & Harvey, 2014; Towner & Wall, 1991; Towner, 1988;Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2019). It adds to the literature which has examined the uses of the past in tourism, commercialisation (Lucarelli et al., 2021; Towner, 1995) and the ways places have sold themselves to the public (Kearns & Philo, 1993; Ward, 1998). Furthermore, the article highlights the strong connections between the past and the contemporary (Lamond, 2005). Alongside this, it has shown that the pasts which are often engaged with are both an organic conception that are rooted in local events; being harnessed, continually reconstructed, and reinvented by locals and organisations to create a story which they are not only comfortable with, but one which they can sell.

This article is useful for practitioners as it has explored ways in which town reinvention has been achieved (Ward, 1998) and has highlighted the ways in which complex narratives can be used in place marketing. It has shown that the rebranding of towns and cities as historic locations works when there is a collaborative vision shared amongst residents, local government and local and national businesses which harness the same stories and histories to present to visitors. As towns have begun to rebrand themselves using the historic stories of their location, our understanding of the useable past is crucial (Glover, 2008; Pousada & Larrinaga, 2022; Walton, 2005; Weineck, 2015). It is important that practitioners remember that useable pasts, regarding branding, will differ from place to place and do not have to coincide with what is necessarily popular within the national history, but must be rooted

within the local consciousness. As visitors are regularly interacting with the past as they engage with heritage trails, museums, city walls and the urban landscape around them (Kearns & Philo, 1993, p. 1), it is important to understand that the stories that are found within our towns can be reinvented or restructured to make them relevant for our own contemporary world (ibid., p.29).

This article reminds us that historic images of place will adapt and change over time and that towns need to constantly analyse their image. History is not static, and meanings change; the stories in our towns have many layers and can be reinvented to make them relevant for our own contemporary world. Tourism had ensured the transformation of the Civil War as a history with which the nation lived with to one where locally, they lived by (Lloyd & Moore, 2015). The study of the useable pasts in tourism, marketing and town development is important in our understanding of contemporary tourism, and it does require more attention by scholars to help understand how some pasts are forgotten, repurposed, or reimagined in our contemporary world.

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annale.2024.100120.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Michael Sewell: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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