

Translating Chandigarh: The Soft and Emotive Designs of Tourist Brochures

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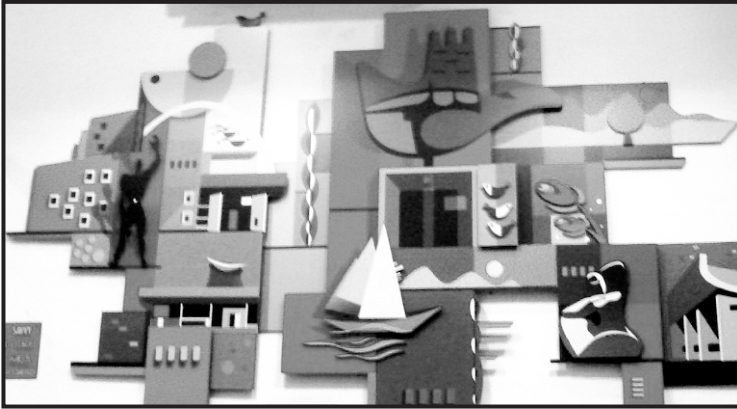
Abstract: Travel brochure as a genre does not only entices visually, disseminating information, but, rather becomes an ambassador of USP of geographies and locales; as the places cannot speak they need to be spoken for. The travel brochures are not innocent simulacras of the places to be visited but are strategically devised as persuasive advertisement material. The brochures are not only descriptive but prescriptive also. This paper is an initiative to unveil the images in the brochures of Chandigarh Tourism-Chandigarh “a city of surprises”. The brochures are available free of cost from the hub of “shop till you drop” Sector-17 market. The location of brochure availability, make the idea of knowing Chandigarh more happening.

Keywords: Chandigarh, brochure, tourism, Rock Garden, ecoinfotainment

The holiday *brochure* is a significant element of popular culture which has become so naturalized within society as a way to fill 'leisure time' that its existence as a *constructed commodity* is largely ignored. Certainly, the *travel brochure*, with its eloquent marketing philosophy, *perpetuates certain 'way of seeing'* [emphasis added] (as qtd. in Holliday 112).

Andrew Wernick has asserted that brochures are “actually neither information nor art, but rhetoric: the art of persuasive speech” (27). They present not only the *ways of seeing* for the tourist but also *structures of living* of that particular place [emphasis added]. Most of the time these anonymous brochures are available free of cost for active, voluntary reading though not enforced but still forces out money from many pockets!!! the reason being, its rhetorics of sales. The brochures are the image formation agents that shape the would-be traveller's destination image, hence, a special emphasis is laid on the quality of paper, the reproduction of illustrations and layout of the page. The discourse of these brochures is specifically based on the ideology to woo the potential tourists and it serenades not only through visual impact but through anthropomorfication of the places. Chandigarh- *lives*. It *breathes*. It *exudes freshness* [emphasis added] (Chandigarh Architecture brochure). This paper is an initiative to unveil the images in the brochures of Chandigarh Tourism-Chandigarh “a city of surprises”. The brochures are available free of cost from the hub of “shop till you drop” Sector-17 market. The location of brochure availability, make the idea of knowing Chandigarh more happening. The brochures open themselves into multiple surprises as the brand “Chandigarh” is not the show-stopper but the various lime-lights in form of separate brochures on “Sukhna

Lake,” “War Memorial,” “Greens and Gardens,” “Rock garden,” “Architecture” and “Shopping centres” along with hotels and private camping places makes it one. This structural differentiation adds to the degrees of appeal of the place to be visited. These classifications with a flow of consumer images and fragmented spectacles are overemphasized in order to create a heightened intense surface style to produce materially, 'reality' and 'emotional satisfaction.' Though, through this activity, travel is organized for commerce, but in turn, it intrinsically also deals with the idea of leisure. The classification of Chandigarh into various brochures, promote places for people to choose from the form of experience they wish to have. Moreover through this, it intelligibly does not commit the “sin of homogenization” (Pearce 2) as all tourists are not alike. Different people would like to have rendezvous with different aspects of Chandigarh according to their age, sex, needs and priorities.



Hues of Chandigarh, Wall Panel at Capital Book Depot Sec-17 (Photo: Author)

The pastiche of photographs on the brochure not only compresses “time and space” but also “blurs the distinctions between both social and cultural, and, subject and image” (Holliday 112) processing, initiating and directing the travel even before practically the tickets are booked. The world through the travel brochure is “semiotically appropriated and consumed without leaving the comfort of the armchair...empowering in that they allow for an increase in the amount and speed of cultural exchange and also enlightening in that they allocate greater freedom to the consumer to explore the world with the greatest of ease” (Holliday 112-113). With the pictures and delineated study of the places of visit, the brochure constructs in advance of the actual travel, the experience of the place in traveller's imagination. This whole forms the poetics and politics of the brochure which not only depicts the 'signs' of a place but its 'signifier' also, as it constructs the tourist's gaze. Not only this it dismantles the whole idea of trekking, strolling and discovery as the brochure exhorts one to do this or that which Nayar calls as “tourist imperative” (182). Chandigarh can be imaged as disneyfied America not only with its silicon valley in form of I. T. Park, Rose garden Asia's biggest

garden assuming the importance of Central Park, educational hub and intellectual public sphere in form of Panjab University and P.E.C, medical tourism with P.G.I, cultural fiesta at Tagore Theatre, Open Theatre at Rock Garden/Panjab University, ICSSR and Chandigarh Sahitya Academy, a miscegenation of cultures in form of a salad bowl, fast yet sluggish life in its contemporary lifestyle with fast foods, instant relationships, concrete structures and isolated lives; but with a journey to a land where nature in form of grooves and parks is still an integral part of everyday life. Here nature is not only an abode of grooves manifested into parks and gardens but a panoramic view of Himalayas from the Shivalik foothills contrasted with the Corbuiser's glass and concrete structures, scaffolding tourism industry not only for entertainment but for recuperation.

Chandigarh is the *best-planned city in India*, with *architecture* which is *world-renowned*, and a *quality of life*, which is unparalleled. As the capital of the states of Punjab and Haryana, and the Union Territory of Chandigarh it is a *prestigious city*. The *face of modern India*, Chandigarh, is the manifestation of a dream that Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru envisaged and Le Corbusier executed [emphasis added] (chandigarhtourism.gov.in).

This eulogization, sets one for a world-class experience with a quality of life which every one yearns for. The Chandigarh Tourism website shows it as the “hub of North India” and the brochure on 'Chandigarh Architecture' suggests the Master Plan of Chandigarh as analogous to a human body. Hence, Chandigarh becomes the dream city for many, with nature not contrasted but being the part of everyday life - A place which both takes “care of the body and spirit” (Sukhna Lake brochure). The brochure gives the multidimensional idea of ecoinfotainment, where tourism is a wholesome package of recuperation, entertainment, intellectual and creative feast, health and sightseeing. It becomes the modern city paradoxically not only of escape but also of indulgence.

The conception of the city has been formulated on the basis of four major functions: Living, Working, Care of the Body and Spirit, and Circulation. Le Corbusier planned the city as a living organism, with the Capitol Complex in the north representing the head, the city centre the heart, the open spaces the lungs, the network of roads as the circulatory system, the industrial area and the educational belts are the limbs (Chandigarh Architecture tourist brochure). Serenity and a city are two diametrically opposite concepts, which however, get belied in the 'City Beautiful'. Chandigarh is a rare epitome of modernization co-existing with nature's preservation. It is here that the trees and plants are as much a part of the construction plans as the buildings and the roads (chandigarhtourism.gov.in).

Chandigarh promotes itself for its *mechanics of living*. Further, the city is divided into sectors with the sum of adjacent sectors being exactly divisible by 13, there being no sector 13 which makes the city paradoxical in appeal and “full of surprises” enveloping the East and the West within itself. The Society for Tourist Entertainment and Promotion in

Chandigarh (STEPS) mentioned on Chandigarh tourism website aims to promote Medical Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Sports Tourism and all other forms of Tourism in Chandigarh UT and the region. Hence from a pilgrimage to a healthy stroll, all is available at one single place. Chandigarh not only evokes the common man but also the veterans of Bollywood's tinsel town with its Bollywood Facilitation Centre promoting Cinematic Tourism. The website lists 11 pointers revealing the cinematic potential of the City Beautiful:

11 Reasons why to shoot in Chandigarh:

1. Beautiful locations to suit all cinematic themes.
2. Neat, clean and Green Environs.
3. Pollution free environment- Blue sky.
4. Facilitative & Supportive Chandigarh Administration.
5. Convenient Air, Rail and Road Network with Mumbai.
6. Ready availability of local Talent & Skilled Artists for Set Designing.
7. Educated, Well behaved and supporting citizens.
8. Chandigarh being the hub of Tourism, Culture, Festivity and Business of North India.
9. Best Boarding, Lodging and Transport Facilities for Film Units.
10. Efficient Security arrangements for Film Units.
11. Single Window System for prompt permissions for film shootings.

Chandigarh does has its manmade 'Forest of Arden' in form of gardens and groves and a lake apart from other characteristic features accentuated by the people who reside there. These 'features' are used as baits to capture tourists. The persuasive elements lie mainly in the lexical items in the brochures in form of adjectives with positive connotations and metaphorical phrases like "wish fulfilled," "man-made picturesque lake," "elegantly landscaped promenade is favourite of all," "bewitching sight," "a walker's paradise," "a cultural jamboree," "a bird sanctuary," "longest channel of rowing," "ideal place for long walks and physical workouts," "casts a pervading aroma," "rare plants and species," "surrounded by Nature's bounty and freshness," "a walk...very rewarding," "shopper's paradise," "glitzy stores," "posh crowds," "trendy eateries," "enjoy amazing bargains," "epicenter of fun," "happening night life," "unwind and relax," "lush green fairways," "concept is daring, the appeal perennial," "rustic and exotic environs," "grand success story," "self sufficient units" to make Chandigarh "city beautiful" and city of power and cosmopolitan dynamism. The architectural image of The Open Hand also signifies the city's credo of "open to give, open to receive." This signifies Chandigarh's evolving character and not a rigid measured place. The enticing and hypnotizing power of the city works through the symbols and images created through the rhetorics and pictures on the brochures. This discourse of space makes us see the city through these representations. Perusing the Sukhna Lake brochure, reveals that linguistically at times the lake is objectified as if it existed quite independently of any visitor:

The curvilinear profile of the promenade along the banks of Sukhna hums with activity from dawn to dusk, reflecting changing moods of the day.

The Sukhna Lake is expressed as "Actors of Actions (Hatim 25)" where the visitor is held constant while the world is allowed to go around

him/her. Juxtaposing in the very same brochure, great prominence is also given to visitor who performs actions. Serious walkers pursue an exercise regime, families enjoy an evening stroll, nature lovers enjoy the serene environs and children enjoy fun games. Photographers and painters love to capture the scenic beauty of the setting sun, or the heavily clouded monsoon sky or the early morning mist in winter all set amidst the tranquility of the lake. The textual world emerging from this orientation is one in which the world is held constant while the visitor is allowed to go round it. The tension between the static and the moving world in the brochure creates a dramatic effect. Not only this, but the rhetoric informs that the place is for one and all, by listing the demography as well as the display of every season which an artist or a photographer would love to capture. The Rock Garden brochure makes a promise of return: *Visitors leave in admiration, only to return again.* Getting into a lost kingdom with “an air of suspense and curiosity at every corner, at every turn” gives the experience of a royal and plush environment and makes one feel like a king. Rock garden creates equilibrium and also gives one an idea of the philosophy of life. *The moment one enters the garden, the small entrance doors which make the head bow, not only creates an ambience of royalty but also imparts humbleness.* With its gardens and clean concrete spaces, Chandigarh, is one good place for walking and bicycling. Walking allows people to engage in contemplation- a slow but thorough immersion in the rhythms of everyday life. Moreover repetitive walking/bicycling along same routes creates familiarity, inter-subjectivity, sociability and communion with the acquaintances and familiar faces. The rich and stoic experience gets accentuated with the heritage site of War Memorial. For nature/architecture loving people and academicians this place becomes a place attached with a nationalist ideology. *Chandigarh War Memorial is perhaps the largest War Memorial of the country, with nearly 8459 names of the Deceased Soldiers since 1947 from Air Force and Navy.*

Where the open spaces in other cities are used up by the squatters here they are foliated to give scenic beauty. On the contrary the brochures do not talk about the back regions of Chandigarh like Dadumajra, Maloya, Dhanas and alike, which may break the image Chandigarh! because here the dirt and mess, have not been carefully scrutinized as in the represented parts of the brochure. This segregation on account of sightseeing leads to “sacralization of sight” (as qtd. in Nayar 199). Contrarily where Chandigarh sells itself for its ecology and ecotourism there itself the enormous water consumption for the upkeep of the golf grounds and meadows stay ignored. Hence though for many of us Chandigarh might be the place travelled frequently for work or other purpose but still for many others this place might be a short or long term migration for which the decisions are more influenced by perception of the place than they actually are. Moreover a place is basically known through its cultural politics of condensation and selection through brochures, reducing the place into instantly identifiable stereotypes as perused above. The city 'Chandigarh' becomes a city of satisfaction, complacency, enjoyment, relaxation with its laid back attitude seen through the visual cum linguistic features of the brochures. With its

planned and pastiche kind of set up it becomes a place of transit preferably for creative class, elite class and N.R.Is. Chandigarh with its peculiar appeal is micro, individualistic and plateaued as Prof. Akshaya Kumar also remarked in an interview, “Chandigarh is a planted city it does not have an organic past; there are not many people who can claim their ancestry to Chandigarh. This city is primarily a city of *babus* and primarily a city of people who come here for livelihood. Chandigarh as a city has a very limited kind of orbit (Web youtube).” Even sociologist Ruth Glass has characterized city as a “mirror...of history, class structure and culture” (as qtd. in Knox 34). The kaleidoscopic motion of people, lend a sense of flux to the city and also image it, as an unceasing changeable and malleable city- a *dream house of collective* or a *space of triumph*, as it does not seem to imprison or impress but democratize one's free will, though in reality it might create *consuming paradox*. Though the paper is a study of brochures still the *Life* between buildings and places is more interesting to look at in the long run, both because of social construction and social production; than are the concrete and cubical building forms. The brochures become alive as all the social/humanly activities bring life to public spaces. Chandigarh having good public spaces intensifies people's sense of civil society and increases the probability of their participation in local affairs and topical issues. Moreover, the city, with its wide choice of different roles and identities becomes a magic theatre and also the anonymity afforded by the ease of slipping from one role to another clearly facilitates the emergence of unconventional behavior. In sum and substance, with the city's “mobilizing function,” “decision making capacity,” “generative function” and “transformative capacity,” (Knox 15-16) Chandigarh can be defined as a place of complete living- the laughter and play of childhood, growing pangs of adolescence, existential angst of early adulthood, and the sense of fulfillment from a life that's leading somewhere; and the various places in the city become epitome of these metaphors.

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