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Unwrapping the Toronto Christmas Market: An Examination of Tradition and Nostalgia in a Socially Constructed Space

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Abstract

Little research explores the creation of an outdoor Christmas Market, and the role that tradition and nostalgia theory play in this socially constructed space. This thesis offers an examination of the Toronto Christmas Market, an extravagant Christmas-themed pop-up market in Toronto’s Distillery District neighbourhood, and seeks to understand how the design or execution of the market serves to articulate the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. The market’s sizeable attendance for the 2018 season of an estimated 650,000 people is a sheer testament to the merit it has as a social event in a public space. Through a discourse analysis and ethnography of the Toronto Christmas Market’s print advertisements and physical space respectively, this thesis seeks to reveal how the physical design of the Toronto Christmas Market aims to achieve a Christmas ‘just like the one we used to know’, while simultaneously employing phantasmagoric activities to achieve a Christmas like never before. By critically examining and problematizing how the site is constructed, and how the site communicates its presence within a historic space such as the Distillery Historic District, this thesis reveals that the Toronto Christmas Market is both creating and recreating an invented tradition through the use of nostalgic tropes.

Keywords: Toronto Christmas Market, tradition, nostalgia, Christmas market, invented tradition
“Nostalgia is the advertising equivalent of comfort food.”

Unknown
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

A visit with Santa and his reindeer. A Ferris Wheel and Carousel. A 50-foot Christmas tree. These are just a few of the eye-catching activities offered at the Toronto Christmas Market (TCM)\(^1\). Located just east of downtown Toronto in the pedestrian-only Distillery Historic District neighbourhood, the TCM is an extravagant, Christmas-themed, European-styled pop-up market that opens annually to the public for six weeks in November and December. When the TCM first started in 2010, the event did not attract many visitors (Broverman 2018). However, the TCM’s popularity has grown dramatically since, with more than 650,000 people estimated to have attended during the 2018 season (Broverman 2018). Each year, new attractions and features make their debut for families, friends, and couples to enjoy. What remains the same though are the cobblestone streets, antique street lamps, and Victorian buildings that make up the Distillery District’s architectural and industrial heritage.

Presently, the Distillery District neighbourhood acts year-round as an arts and culture destination that juxtaposes Victorian Industrial architecture with 21\(^{st}\) century design. This mixture of old and new is also visible inside the buildings, which host one-of-a-kind stores, shops, galleries, studios, as well as contemporary performance venues, restaurants, and cafés. While these creative spaces are unique due to their placement in a Victorian industrial landscape, the Distillery District is particularly distinctive because it

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\(^1\) For the remainder of the thesis, I will refer to the Toronto Christmas Market as the TCM.
is a national heritage site that once housed the largest whiskey distillery in the British Empire (Distillery Heritage 2007). 

Despite the Distillery District’s importance within the city of Toronto, only a few scholarly works examine the Distillery District or the TCM. A PhD Geography dissertation studies the redevelopment and marketing of the Distillery District as a distinct place (Mathews 2010). Similarly, a 2010 journal article in *Globalizations* discusses the adaptive reuse of the Distillery District and its relation to consumption and nostalgia in a post-industrial landscape (Kohn 2010). But no scholarly works examine the TCM as an invented tradition within the Distillery District. My thesis will fill this gap by exploring and analyzing what a ‘traditional’ Christmas Market looks like through a case study of the TCM. Through a critical media studies lens, I will problematize the ‘traditional’ and ‘nostalgic’ tropes that exist within the TCM by exploring the market’s physical place, along with the events, experiences, and activations that happen within this space. In other words, I will seek to understand how the design and execution of the TCM serves to articulate the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. This is important because while the TCM is still a relatively new addition to the city, it was launched in 2010 as “an annual Christmas Tradition for the City of Toronto” (Toronto Christmas Market 2011) and is currently advertised as a “Toronto Holiday Tradition” (Toronto Star 2018). Such promotional language raises further questions about the TCM and the ‘invention’ of this Yuletide tradition.

I focus on the TCM located within the Distillery District for a number of reasons:

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2 An activation refers to an experiential or event marketing tool that links “advertising and promotional tools, such as sweepstakes, competitions, product sampling and themed brand websites” (Gillooly et al. 2017, 406).
1) it was the first Christmas Market to open in Toronto; 2) the TCM in the Distillery District operates in a unique historic site; and 3) the TCM is advertised as an experience where visitors of every age, ethnicity, and faith are welcome. In sum, this study seeks to examine the tropes of tradition and nostalgia vis-à-vis the TCM. I will begin this chapter by historicizing the Distillery District, followed by an overview of how the TCM emerged within the Distillery District. From there I will detail my research objectives, research questions, and outline the methodology. The chapter concludes with a reflexive discussion in relation to my research.

1.2. HISTORY OF THE DISTILLERY DISTRICT

In 1832, brothers-in-law James Worts and William Gooderham built a 70-foot brick windmill on the edge of the bay in York (later named Toronto). Soon after the mill produced its first batch of flour, the partnership of ‘Worts & Gooderham’ was established. By 1837, Gooderham had added a distillery to the already prospering mill, and the production and sale of whiskey began. Almost a decade later, the sons of the founders - James Gooderham Worts and George Gooderham - became full partners in the business and the firm was renamed ‘Gooderham & Worts’. Their first order of business was to build a wharf and expand the distillery around the old windmill tower so that they could focus primarily on the distillery. The Stone Mill & Distillery opened in 1861, which resulted in an increase in whiskey production capacity from 90,000 to two million gallons. By 1877, Gooderham & Worts was the largest distillery in the world (Distillery Heritage 2007, Gibson 2008).

Hard times fell on Gooderham & Worts with the onset of prohibition in Canada. The Ontario Temperance Act of 1916 banned the sale of liquor for beverage purposes
(Gibson 2008, 20). When the First World War ended, and prohibition remained in place, the Gooderham heirs opted to sell the business to Henry C. Hatch in 1923. Hatch changed the company name from Gooderham & Worts to Hiram Walker-Gooderham & Worts (Distillery Heritage 2007). Production at the Toronto distillery gradually declined, with whiskey production finally ending in 1957. In 1988, the federal government designated the Gooderham & Worts site as a national historic site and the final flow of alcohol from Gooderham & Worts stopped in 1990. From 1990 to 2000, the industrial site remained abandoned and largely unused.

In 2001, Cityscape Holdings purchased the site and began to refurbish it into an arts, culture, and entertainment centre, while still preserving the Victorian industrial architecture that gives the Distillery District its distinctive identity (ICSC 2011). Between 1990 and 2003, the uninhabited Distillery site was the backdrop for hundreds of movies and television shows, including the musical Chicago. Filmmaking in the Distillery District stopped shortly after the new Distillery District officially opened in 2003. Once a space of alcohol production, the Distillery District became a space of cultural consumption (Mathews 2010) and is now open year-round as a creative centre for arts and culture to co-mingle, and for tourists and locals to consume the products offered by the Distillery District tenants. As such, the Distillery District is not a shopping centre, but not a festival marketplace either. At present, the Distillery District still excludes national and international chain stores from being permanent retailers. “Instead of selling mass produced products, there are over a dozen galleries featuring original art works and the retail shops tend to feature upscale, artisanal products like jewelry or ceramics” (Kohn 2010, 355-356).
1.3. THE EMERGENCE OF THE TORONTO CHRISTMAS MARKET

The Distillery District hosted its first TCM in 2010. While the first TCM was only set up for a few weeks in December, and did not gain much traction from visitors (Broverman 2018), it has since become an annual event that takes place for six weeks in November and December. Foot traffic within the 2017 TCM has reached over half a million visitors (Toronto Star 2017), proving the market to be a destination worth visiting for tourists and locals alike. The initial idea for the TCM came from a collaboration between the Distillery District owners and a public relations firm. Cityscape Holdings\(^3\) is a residential and commercial real estate development company that owns the Distillery District, and thus the TCM. Based out of Toronto, it is important to note that Cityscape Holdings is the same company that purchased and revitalized the Distillery District in 2001 (ICSC 2011). While the Distillery District was thriving from its 2003 revitalization to an arts and culture centre, in 2010 Cityscape Holdings wanted to come up with an event or campaign that would enhance the historical site during the winter months, and entice audiences to visit and participate (Torchia 2016). The solution was to hire Torchia Communications, a public relations firm, and create an outdoor Christmas Market similar to European Christmas markets from the 1400s. The first TCM officially launched in December 2010. According to the TCM’s Executive Producer Matthew Rosenblatt, the first TCM was advertised and promoted as an ‘annual Christmas Tradition’ for the City of Toronto (Toronto Christmas Market 2011). Soon after the TCM’s first season, its creators sent a formal document to the City of Toronto, asking the city to recognize the

\(^{3}\) Cityscape Holdings is an affiliate company of Cityscape Development Corp., which is a residential and commercial real estate development company based in Toronto.
TCM as an event of municipal significance. The creators described the 2010 TCM as such:

The Event captures all of the tradition, heritage and romance of the European Christmas Markets, while showcasing the best artisanal products of Europe as well as Toronto and its surrounding regions. The Toronto Christmas Market transforms the authentic Victorian-era industrial architecture of the entire Distillery District into a Christmas wonderland complete with specially designed wooden cabins where vendors are selling unique products and European Treats, a Massive 40’ Christmas tree, a stage with free family friendly entertainment and an exotic menu of European beers, Mulled Wine and other warming winter food and drinks. (Toronto Christmas Market 2011)

The collaborative efforts between Cityscape Holdings and Torchia Communications was recognized early on. In 2011, the TCM became an award-winning sales promotion and event campaign, as awarded by the global trade association of the shopping center industry known as the International Council of Shopping Centers Inc. (ICSC) (ICSC 2011; ICSC 2018).

While Cityscape Holdings owns the Distillery District at present, it was their early collaboration with Torchia Communications that turned the TCM into a reality. The public relations firm specializes in communications architecture services\(^4\) that aim to enhance overall communication and engagement between their client and the client’s target market (Torchia 2016). In other words, Torchia Communications offers a wide range of counsel in areas such as media relations, integrated marketing, and event planning (Torchia 2016). According to a 2012 TCM press release, Torchia representatives were the primary contacts for any public questions regarding the TCM. The company also lists the TCM as one of its current clients on its website and social

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\(^4\) Torchia Communications defines communications architecture services as their ability to “project or campaign-specific support and regular services that propel [the client’s] organizational Communications functions to a new more strategic, expansive and powerful level” (Torchia 2016).
media platforms (LinkedIn n.d.). Information surrounding the inception of the TCM may be limited, but it is clear that a combination of Cityscape Holdings and Torchia Communications helped to create what is now recognized during the winter season as one of “the best Christmas market[s] in North America” (Muther 2017).

While the TCM was once a free event, the current market advertises online and in print as a not-for-profit organization that charges an admission fee for visitors to gain access to the seasonal outdoor market (Gignac 2018, Sloan and Morrow 2018). An admission of $6 is charged on weekends beginning at 5pm on Fridays. TCM visitors are also able to purchase an ‘Express Pass’ for $20 that allows the ticket holder to bypass the General Admission lineup. Admission proceeds support the growth of the TCM, along with the following charities: The Daily Bread Food Bank, Plan International, and the Toronto Star’s Santa Claus Fund (Toronto Christmas Market 2017). Although the TCM is a not-for-profit organization, as outlined on their website, I could not find conclusive public information regarding the percentage of proceeds that goes to charity. The lack of transparency regarding the TCM’s proceed distribution process leads to additional questions regarding the authenticity of the TCM, which is further addressed in Chapter 4.

The TCM’s other revenue sources include on-site cabins rented by vendors, and corporate sponsorship opportunities for companies wanting to leverage their brand (Toronto Star 2017). For a $10,000 fee, companies can become corporate sponsors of the TCM (TCM Overview 2010). In return, the TCM allows these corporate sponsors to create brand interactions and experiences for visitors that complement the TCM’s overall ‘Christmas’ aesthetic and cozy atmosphere. The TCM also allows a select number of corporate sponsors to sell merchandise within the market space. The combination of local
vendors, corporate sponsored activities, and the Distillery District’s permanent tenants results in numerous opportunities for visitors to consume their products and services.

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Given my research orientation and methodological approach, my theoretical framework will engage with, and draw upon, concepts and ideas within critical theory. My thesis recognizes critical theory as an approach to understanding culture that uses the work of critical thinkers to confront the structures that produce and constrain culture (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). Thus, research in the field of critical theory is designed to allow the researcher to observe, describe, and interpret the particular site of study while simultaneously critiquing its purpose or value as it stands within social life. I have chosen this theoretical framework because I am interested in grappling with the creation of the TCM and exploring what the execution of the site communicates. In the same spirit, I am also interested in comparing external forms of advertising presented by the TCM, namely its newspaper advertisements, and unpacking how its promotional discourse compares to the operation and physical characteristics of the TCM. For this reason, I will be using a media studies approach to unpack theories on tradition and nostalgia to understand not only how the TCM is constructed, but also how this is communicated in a greater social context.

As human interactions have become increasingly digital, we often lose sight of the importance of space and place. Research on the TCM is an important addition to media studies because, as David Harvey suggests, “how a city looks and how its spaces are organized forms a material base upon which a range of possible sensations and social practices can be thought about, evaluated, and achieved” (1989, 66-67). As such, it is
worthwhile to examine the TCM not only as a socially constructed space, but to also examine how the TCM communicates its presence to the general public through its advertising because these forms of communication govern the way we think, act, and interact with surrounding spaces. Thus, it is worthwhile to use the TCM as a case study to reveal 1) how physical space can be organized or socially constructed, and 2) how the organization of space is communicated to the general public through advertising and promotional tactics. Moreover, the TCM’s sizeable attendance for the 2018 season of an estimated 650,000 people is a sheer testament to the merit that it has within a public space. Thus, the TCM must be studied through a critical media studies lens in order to problematize how the site is constructed, and how the site communicates its presence within a historical space such as the Distillery District.

Apart from my theoretical considerations, it will be important to provide context to the history of Christmas Markets and how contemporary Christmas Markets around the world work and look, as this partially backstops my research questions. This objective will therefore engage with scholarly debates as to what constitutes a Christmas Market. Ultimately, engaging with the TCM from a media studies approach necessitates a set of research questions that assesses the market’s self-proclamation as a ‘tradition’, addresses its on-the-ground execution, and critiques the tropes that are used to formulate and promote the TCM’s milieu.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My thesis is guided by three interrelated research questions:

*Research Question 1: What constitutes a ‘traditional’ Christmas Market, and in what ways, if at all, can the TCM be considered a traditional Christmas Market?*
The founders of the TCM describe the market in their promotional materials as “a Toronto Holiday Tradition”, even though it only opened in 2010. This study interrogates these promotional materials, problematizing the language and narratives they use, and compares them with the on-the-ground execution of the TCM. It also examines what defines a ‘traditional’ Christmas Market, to determine the veracity of the TCM’s promotional material.

**Research Question 2: How is the physical design of the TCM constructed to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia?**

This study will also examine how tradition and nostalgia are formulated and promoted in both the TCM’s promotional materials and its physical layout. This will involve focusing on the Distillery District’s commercial tenants, the TCM’s corporate sponsors, the TCM’s shopkeepers, and activities or adornments that are constructed by the TCM’s creators.

**Research Question 3: How are the tropes of tradition and nostalgia embedded into the TCM’s milieu, and what purpose(s) do they serve?**

Together, the above research questions seek to uncover the overt and covert ways that the TCM constructs their space to emulate their self-identification as a ‘Toronto Holiday Tradition’.

### 1.6. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method will follow a multi-method approach consisting mainly of a microethnography and a discourse analysis. A multi-method approach is different from a mixed-methods approach because while mixed-methods encompasses both quantitative and qualitative research, a multi-method approach can be solely qualitatively driven
(Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010, 10). In other words, a microethnography and a discourse analysis are both qualitative approaches to make up this multi-method research design.

A microethnography is a specific form of ethnography, which aims to understand the social meanings or activities of a particular social or cultural setting (Brewer 2000; Atkinson et al. 2001). This form of ethnography involves studies of a shorter duration, is focused on a single social situation, and is conducted by one researcher (Merrigan and Huston 2015, 304). I will perform a microethnography on the physical TCM. Discourse analysis is a qualitative approach that “considers how language, both spoken or written, enacts social and cultural perspectives and identities” (Gee 2005, i). I will thus perform a discourse analysis of a selection of the TCM’s print advertisements to reveal how the language in the advertisement reflects the physical design of the TCM.

A qualitative, multi-method approach is ideal for this project for several reasons. First, there are no existing qualitative studies of Canadian Christmas Markets, so performing a qualitative study would fill this research gap because it explores and analyzes what a ‘traditional’ Christmas Market looks like through a case study of the TCM. In other words, qualitative research is more complementary for exploratory work on phenomena that have rarely been a subject of investigation (Goldberg and Allen 2015, 6). Second, I am especially interested in understanding the design, operations, and physical layout of the TCM, specifically how these serve to articulate the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. Since the TCM is only open for six weeks in November and December each year, the microethnographic approach was best suited for this study.

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The print advertisements consisted of three newspaper advertisements that appeared in December 2018 copies of the Toronto Star.
because it is specifically designed for shorter studies of a single situation or defined space. The on-site location aspect of this research project will focus on the TCM during the 2018 Christmas season. I attended the TCM on four specific occasions, as outlined in Chapter 3.3, and observed the milieu which included the Distillery District tenant activities, sponsorship brand interactions and experiential marketing activities, the TCM’s shopkeepers, and activities or adornments constructed by the TCM creators.

My research is also interested in unpacking the promotional materials disseminated by the creators of the TCM, specifically their print advertising, and problematizing the language and narratives depicted in these texts. For this reason, a discourse analysis was the best approach because this method is concerned with “language-in-use” (Gee 2005, 11) and the ways it details social activities or settings. I will conduct a discourse analysis on the TCM’s print advertisements that were presented during the 2018 year, as outlined in Chapter 3.4. A multi-method approach that includes a microethnography and a discourse analysis is also advantageous because drawing from more than just a single methodology can increase depth, breadth, and validity of research (Goldberg and Allen 2015, 11).

1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY & REFLEXIVE SUBJECTIVITY

My personal interest in experiential marketing animates this research project. Experiential marketing, or engagement marketing, is a tactic designed by a business to stage the entire physical environment and the operational processes for its customers’ experience (Yuan and Wu 2008, 388). This tactic both identifies and satisfies customer needs profitably, engaging them through communications that bring brand personalities
to life and adds value to the target audience’s experience (Smilansky 2017, 12). Unlike traditional marketing, which is focused on promoting a product or service, experiential marketing is focused on an entire experience that a company creates or constructs for its customers (Yuan and Wu 2008, 388; Smilansky 2017, 3). Broadly speaking, this study examines the experiential marketing tactics occurring within the TCM and, more specifically, uncovers the ways in which tropes of tradition and nostalgia are represented, or misrepresented, in this particular place. While much literature has focused on the way that tradition and nostalgia are used to market a tangible product (Boym 2001, Banet-Weiser 2012; Cross 2017), my interest lies in the way that these two terms, ‘tradition’ and ‘nostalgia’ are manufactured and disseminated in a historical, physical place. The quotations surrounding the terms tradition and nostalgia are intentional, as the mere existence of a commercialized experience being considered traditional or nostalgic is likely a personal and subjective concept. What is considered traditional and what is considered nostalgic for one person may not be the same for another. Knowing that I am observing the presence of nostalgia and tradition through my own lens, I must be reflexive in my judgement making.

Ultimately, this study is a significant addition to academic literature in Media Studies because it is the first to examine a Canadian Christmas Market through the lens of nostalgia cultural studies. Additionally, the TCM is particularly significant because it hosts over 650,000 visitors in just six weeks, rivalling other Canadian tourist attractions such as the Christkindl Market in Kitchener, Ontario and the Toronto Santa Claus Parade. As well, with the TCM’s hosting location being a national historic site, this space arguably plays an important role in helping to construct the narrative of how to define
Canada. The juxtaposition of the Distillery District’s permanent historical architecture and the TCM’s ‘pop-up’ milieu signals the (re)imagination and gentrification of prime real estate in the country’s largest city. All of these factors contribute to making the site worth investigating. Results and analyses gained from this study will contribute to future debate and discussion surrounding what constitutes a ‘traditional’ Christmas Market, why certain tropes are embedded in a Christmas Market’s milieu, and their purpose in a larger social context.
 CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is something to be said about the nostalgic qualities of owning a tangible object that you once loved as a child. Now, with dust forming and edges tarnished from use, an object saved from childhood embodies a kind of souvenir quality that accumulates shelf space and is kept in an attempt to encapsulate a memory that you never want to forget. Visiting the TCM is a social and cultural activity that aims to serve a similar purpose. Instead of an object acting as a placeholder to assign a certain memory, a physical place can create space for memories to form – whether that be memories of past experiences, new experiences, or perhaps something that was never once experienced at all (Boym 2007, n.p.). Despite the cynicism that can form with the ever-increasing commercialization of the holiday season, Christmas usually brings “a sense of ‘recognition’ that is largely dependent upon a sedimented evocation of its history” (Whiteley, 2008, 2). Christmas is “laden with fixed notions about tradition, nostalgia and reflection”, and is “inextricably bound” to these notions in all aspects of social life (Rosewarne 2018, 93, 95). Physical experiences, however commercial, are therefore implicated in tradition and memory just as much as tangible objects. The TCM is therefore a physical experience implicated in cultural memory, in personal memory, as well as in tradition and nostalgia – manufactured or ‘real’ - that I intend to explore further in this chapter.
2.1. **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

Few scholarly works examine the creation of Christmas markets, and those that do focus on visitors’ expenditures or visitors’ use value (Castérán and Roederer 2012; Brida, Meleddu, and Tokarchuk 2017; Brida and Tokarchuk 2015, among others). In other words, most scholarly works study the economic impact of Christmas markets rather than considering the physical layout or execution of the events, experiences, and activations taking place within the market. For these reasons, my research investigates the design of the TCM, and considers how its execution serves to articulate the tropes of tradition and nostalgia.

As such, this chapter begins by navigating through a history of Christmas markets and explores their growth and movement from Europe to the rest of the world. The subsequent sections delve into the literature surrounding the terms ‘tradition’ and ‘nostalgia’ as they exist within the context of critical theory. Drawing from Shils (1981), Hobsbawm (1983), Boym (2001), and Hamilton and Wagner (2014), among others, this chapter seeks to gain critical insight into the ways ‘tradition’ and ‘nostalgia’ permeate in a consumerist culture. I acknowledge that these terms are large in scope, however it is integral that I ground my research in concepts and ideas within critical theory to engage with and explore the TCM as a set of texts.

2.2. **HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS MARKETS**

Christmas Markets (CMs) have a history that extends far beyond the TCM. In fact, it was German CMs from the 1400’s that served as inspiration for the TCM (Broverman 2018). While historians are hesitant to place an exact date on the earliest CM, and little academic literature historicizes CMs or traces their origin, grey literature
can be called upon to uncover early formations of CMs as they evolved from their placement in small towns throughout Europe, to a global phenomenon where different countries around the world host their own version of a CM. Before they were called CMs, various winter markets were scattered in cities across German-speaking parts of Europe and eastern regions of France during the Late Middle Ages (The German Way n.d.). These markets were open-air street markets, and they were held near the hosting city’s main church in an attempt to attract visitors to the town (Wilson 2018). The open-air winter markets typically took place over the course of a few days and were a chance for aristocrats to mingle, purchase food or handcrafted items, and to essentially stock up for the long and cold winter. The term ‘Christmas Market’ became more widely used throughout Europe after 1531 when Martin Luther started new customs for the Christmas Season. In addition to the pivotal role he played in the Protestant Reformation (Bainton 2013), this German professor of theology was known for popularizing various Christmas rituals, one of which was gift giving on December 24 from the Christkindl or Christ Child (Getty 2017; ‘Christkindlmarkt’ 2018). The spread of this practice led many European cities to rename their winter markets ‘Christmas Markets’ or, for the German-speaking regions, ‘Christkindlmarkts’. While the term ‘Christkindl’ has religious underpinnings, it is important to note that the early European CMs often downplayed the religious aspects of Christmas in favour of winter fairytales (Schulte & Widl 2014 in Stout et al. 2018, 7). The intentional blurring of the religious aspects of Christmas is one reason why religion will not be a focal point of my thesis. I further discuss the relationship (or lack thereof) between religion and the TCM in Chapter 4.
The first themed CM to be discussed in academic literature was the Berlin Christmas Market in the eighteenth century (Brida et al. 2013, 1176). This particular CM separated itself from other general markets in Europe because its purpose was to create a unique Christmas-themed atmosphere where families could purchase gifts for children (Brida et al. 2013, 1176). The market attracted both middle-class and bourgeois families, and with more than 300 stands, became the first of many Christmas markets to focus on the sale of food, drinks, specialty Christmas goods, and toys (Haid 2006, n.p.). The success of CMs as a space to sell handcrafted Christmas items and indulgent food led to the expansion of CMs to additional cities throughout Europe. Many European cities believed that hosting a CM during the Christmas season would attract tourists in the low season, and draw more attention to a wintertime destination (Brida and Tokarchuk 2015, 57).

The dynamics of industrialization and urbanization dramatically transformed the role of the CM throughout Europe. According to historian Joe Perry, the luxurious Berlin Christmas Market that was once recognized as Europe’s earliest CM became tasteless and cheap in the early to mid-nineteenth century in the interest of production efficiency and capital exchange. Booths that sold quality goods were replaced with cheap trinkets, unlicensed beggars aggressively roamed the market, and unruly crowds from a multitude of class hierarchies threatened the sentimental spectacle of the European CM (Perry 2011, 162). By the end of the early modern period in Europe, CM’s had turned into a “peasant celebration marked by excess” (Tracy in Horsley and Tracy 2001, 2). What was once a CM known for harmony and order had become one that was undermined by modern commerce.
By the late nineteenth century, the celebration of Christmas in several parts of the world had become “the most frenzied shopping period of the year” (Sansom in Hancock and Rehn 2011, 738), and with the arrival of department stores and shopping malls in European and North American countries, CMs were no longer recognized as simply a shopping destination for locals. Instead, CMs became a tourist event for visitors. CMs did not fit into a singular category, as they were considered “both fair and festival; it was the very image of preindustrial abundance” (Schmidt 1995, n.p.) with extravagant, yule-tide features that expanded beyond typical Christmas decorations. CMs expanded their horizons to include music, performances, and other features. Such features no longer created a simple winter holiday atmosphere (Brida et al. 2017, 57), but a winter holiday atmosphere that encouraged its visitors to consume:

During the decades bracketing the First World War, the arrival of mass culture, and new media landscape of daily newspapers and then radio and film altered conventional nineteenth-century consumer practices. Commercialization appropriated popular traditions – like the annual outdoor Christmas markets set up in German towns and cities – and sold them back to the masses in new forms. (Perry 2010, 142)

By the early twentieth century, the idea of a ‘German CM’ experience extended beyond the confines of Europe. Soon, European-inspired CMs began popping up in countries across North America and Asia. Each CM had their own unique flair, but often called themselves “Christkindlmarkt” or a “German-Inspired Christmas Market” and still aimed to simulate an early European-style market by “combining the charm of tradition with the hustle and bustle of an open-air market-place” (Perry 2010, 156). Contemporary CMs in the late twentieth century were hosted in Shanghai, China; Montreal, Canada; Chicago, USA; Prague, Czech Republic; Birmingham, UK; and Copenhagen, Denmark, to name a few (Minihane 2018; Christkindlmarket 2019).
Contemporary CMs hosted in Germany remain a popular tourist destination for both international tourists and locals throughout the Christmas season. Not only have the number of visitors increased, but the number of CMs in Germany has also swelled. In 2014, Germany hosted 2,234 CMs, the most of any country in the world. France followed with 273 (Brida et al., 2017). While these contemporary CMs have introduced modern features such as carnival rides and Christmas market tours, the contemporary European CM still create an atmosphere where visitors can mingle, and purchase food or handcrafted items:

Visitors shop for expensive handcrafted gifts, cheap plastic kitsch, and all manner of decorations. They munch on grilled bratwurst and gingerbread and drink mulled wine, play games of chance, and put their children on carnival rides. Travel agents offer seven-day “Christmas Market tours” through markets across Germany, with mandatory stops at the most famous, including the Weihnachtsmarkt in Berlin, the Streizelmarkt in Dresden, the Christkindchesmarkt in Frankfurt, and the Christkindlesmarkt in Nuremberg. (Perry 2010, 156)

These executional decisions within contemporary German CMs are an attempt to mirror the CMs from the Late Middle Ages. This tactic is not limited to contemporary CMs in Germany, though, as there are countless Christmas-themed markets that open during the holiday season throughout Canada that aim to reflect early European Markets and their milieu. Other Canadian CMs inspired by European CMs include the Christkindl Market in Kitchener, Ontario; the Vancouver Christmas Market in Vancouver, British Columbia; and the TCM in Toronto, Ontario (Minihane 2018). What makes the TCM worth investigating in comparison to these other Canadian CMs is the fact that it operates within a unique historic site, thus playing an important role in helping to construct the narrative of what defines Canada.
2.3. NOSTALGIA

The concept of nostalgia is woven throughout the above section on the history of CMs. Nostalgia is contemporarily defined as a sentimental desire or longing for the past or of happy experiences from the past (Becker 2018, 244). If the TCM is modelled after European CMs from the 1400s, and those same CMs no longer exist, the TCM inherently has nostalgic qualities that must be further explored. While the following section investigates the origins of nostalgia and unpacks the discourse surrounding the term, it does not necessarily align itself with any particular definition. Rather, I use the discourse on nostalgia to provide context for critiquing the TCM in relation to the tropes of nostalgia that exist within the Distillery District.

2.3.1. Nostalgia as a Diagnosis

Nostalgia today is a catchword for looking back. The term circulates in public discourse, is used in corporate advertising, and is often discussed in academic research across multiple disciplines. But nostalgia was not always synonymous with associations from the past. The term originates from the medical field, coined by a physician named Johannes Hofer in 1688. Hofer’s research was dedicated to analyzing the symptoms associated with displaced European soldiers’ homesickness (Dodman 2018, 16-24). By fusing the ancient Greek words nostos (to return home) with algos (pain or longing), Hofer created a term to describe these soldiers’ mood disorder caused by the painful yearning to return home (Davis 1979, 1). By the eighteenth century, nostalgia was a synonym for a particularly intense form of homesickness that resulted in high fever, nausea, loss of appetite, and heart trouble (Boym 2001; Farrar 2008). In other words, nostalgia was something that one ‘had’ as opposed to something one ‘felt’ (Dodman
It was a clinical disease with both physical and psychological aspects, and not only did people have it, but people died of it. For Hofer, “the physical and the psychological triggers of the illness hung together indissolubly, because the physical phenomena were released by the image of the homeland in the sufferer’s thoughts” (Landwehr 2018, 255). It is evident here that Hofer’s understanding of nostalgia in 1688 is specifically focused on this sentiment of loss and displacement from the homeland or a particular space, that is based on the past, or the “what-has-been” (Landwehr 2018, 260).

Roughly two hundred years after its inception, the definition of nostalgia as a clinical disease began to disappear (Landwehr 2018, 255). This is partially thanks to most medical taxonomies dropping the diagnosis altogether (Dodman 2018, 3). Contemporary understandings of nostalgia began to transition so that the term was less of a diagnosis and more of a sentiment or longing for the past. It was also around the late 1800s that the editors of dictionaries recognized nostalgia’s new meaning (Becker 2018, 239). By 1961, Webster’s dictionary still defined nostalgia as ‘homesickness’ but also added a second entry: “a wistful or excessively sentimental sometimes abnormal yearning for return to or return of some real or romanticized period or irrecoverable condition or setting in the past” (Webster in Becker 2018, 239). German dictionaries took even longer to recognize the transformation in the definition of nostalgia, adding “also: yearning for the past” to the original definition of ‘homesickness’ in 1969. Nevertheless, nostalgia was no longer recognized in the medical field or in public dictionaries as a disease, and this eventually translated to public discourse. Instead of nostalgia being a clinical disease, it became an adjective to describe a universal human emotion that lies “at the very core of the modern condition” (Périer in Dodman 2018, 5). The term nostalgia, then, is used to describe an
“innocuous, even comforting longing for the past – an emotional disposition now tethered by time and memory” (Dodman 2018, 3). Instead of people being diagnosed with having nostalgia, people felt ‘nostalgic’ about past memories, past experiences, and even moments in time. And as academics continued to research and write about the meaning of nostalgia and its effects, differing opinions and unique findings began to emerge.

2.3.2. Nostalgia as an Emotion

Sociologist Fred Davis (1979) contends that not only does the word nostalgia appear to be demilitarized and demedicalized in the modern era, but its rapid assimilation into American speech since roughly the 1950s has altered the very connotations surrounding the term. Davis noted that nostalgia was no longer affiliated with fixations of home, or homesickness, but instead with a more general yearning or obsession for the past. In other words, “there is no longer nostalgia for one’s local home, but instead for being at home in the world” (Boym 2001, n.p.). Despite nostalgia’s past as a clinical disease, Davis argues that the ‘new wave’ of nostalgia can produce both positive and negative emotions within people. Positive emotions can arise from the fond memories created in the past, whereas negative emotions stem from the realization that one can never return to this place and this time.

While he does not state explicitly whether nostalgia is a positive or negative emotion, historian David Lowenthal (1985) describes nostalgia as an emotional state where people long not just for the past in a general sense, but for an idealized past. He states that nostalgia “transcends yearnings for lost childhoods and scenes of early life, embracing imagined pasts never experienced by their devotees or perhaps anyone” (Lowenthal 1985, xix). Both Davis and Lowenthal hint at a question surrounding a
characteristic of nostalgia - whether feeling nostalgic, or yearning for the past, is limited to lived experiences. Davis explains this question more clearly when he provides this example:

One may, for example, feel a powerful identification with the American Revolution, be extremely knowledgeable regarding it, and even entertain a strong wish to have lived then rather than now. But can one feel nostalgia for it? Of course, there are those who insist that this is precisely what they feel, going so far as to claim that their yearning for the period of Washington and Jefferson is every bit as vivid and intimate as another’s is for the songs and friends of his youth. Who are we to dispute the claim? (Davis 1979, 8)

And so, the debate begins whether the term nostalgia can transcend to experiences that are not necessarily lived experiences. Davis believes that “nostalgia will in time acquire connotations that extend its meaning to any sort of positive feeling toward any sort of past” (Davis 1979, 8), regardless of its remote or historical context in relation to the person feeling nostalgic. So, Davis agrees that a person can be nostalgic for something that they have not necessarily experienced first-hand.

Nostalgic experiences are also filtered and selective, as though one is looking at their past through “rose-coloured glasses” (Stern 1992 in Hamilton and Wagner 2014, 815). And yet although nostalgia as an emotion is predominately positive, it may also be tinted with sadness and despair. Svetlana Boym (2001) describes modern nostalgia as a mourning for something that will never return, or for something that never existed in the first place. Boym’s views on nostalgia pull from Jean Baudrillard’s (1994) concept of ‘hyperreality’ where, in his view, there are no originals or any real references, and the boundaries between what is real and what is not are blurred.
I believe that Boym perfectly encapsulates the complexities that Davis and Lowenthal were hinting at above, as nostalgia transcends far beyond personal or individual experiences. To Boym, not only can nostalgia be a collective experience, but people might feel nostalgic for something that never actually happened or did not happen the same way that someone remembers it. She says that “such a sense of loss does not necessarily suggest that what is lost is properly remembered and that one still knows where to look for it” (Boym 2001, n.p.). In other words, nostalgia becomes “an obsession with the simulacra of the past” (Hines 2007 in Hamilton and Wagner 2014, 815). Boym ultimately argues that nostalgia is thus not merely an expression of longing, but a result of understanding that time and space cannot move backward. The only option is to look backwards and yearn.

Boym also points out a paradox that exists within the realm of understanding nostalgia: “the stronger the loss, the more it is overcompensated with commemorations, the starker the distance from the past, and the more it is prone to idealizations” (2001, n.p.). In other words, if something from the past seems far away and was a hard loss to come back from, it is more likely that the present confronts this loss through commemoration and idealization. This theory is evident in present-day museums and exhibitions that highlight a specific time period or individual. It can also extend to areas in our everyday life such as the food we eat, the architecture of buildings we pass by or walk through, and even the activities in which we take part. Sometimes our commemoration or idealization for the past happen without us ever realizing it.

Despite how we commemorate or idealize the past in the present day, scholars Lasaleta, Sedikides, and Vohs (2014) assert that the concept of nostalgia is separate from
a concept as simplistic as “positive memories” (2014, 714). While positive memories are personal and are comprised only of the past event, nostalgia can combine a past event (often constructed, as described), with the event’s relevance to the present experience (Lasaleta et al. 2014, 714). To feel ‘nostalgic’ then, is to see something in the present that then reminds you of the past. Scholars are clear to distinguish nostalgia from other words and terms that reference the past, such as ‘retro’. Art and Design historian Elizabeth Guffey (2006) explains the difference between the two terms, stating, “where nostalgia is linked to a romantic sensibility that resonates with ideas of exile and longing, retro tempers these associations with a heavy dose of cynicism or detachment; although retro looks back to earlier periods, perhaps its most enduring quality is its ironic stance” (2006, 20).

While academics such as Davis, Lowenthal, and Boym problematize nostalgia and unpack its meaning, some historians only consider nostalgia within the confines of its contemporary ‘catch-all’, ‘rose-coloured glasses’ understanding. As such, they believe that researching nostalgia in this way presents a lopsided view of history where the past becomes better and simpler than the present (Tosh 2010 qtd. in Becker 2018, 237). Moreover, nostalgia historian Tobias Becker (2018) criticizes the overgeneralizing use of the term nostalgia in contemporary public discourse, arguing that nostalgia has been turned into a catch-all word describing any form of engagement with the past.

Although Becker views the overgeneralization of nostalgia in public discourse as problematic, it is the term’s contemporary usage in public discourse that makes it such an important term to unpack. If nostalgia can mean so many different things to so many people, does that not make it worthwhile research? Unlike Becker, German historian and
professor Landwehr (2018) argues that interrogating nostalgia and its common parlance, despite its wide-ranging usage, is essential to understanding what is responsible for triggering nostalgic feelings in people. Although Landwehr’s research on nostalgia is mainly focused on the relationship between nostalgia and its temporal setting (or its meaning from past to present), his belief in the importance of researching the topic is clear. Landwehr contends that the most important characteristic of nostalgia is that with the appropriate amount of time, “what was once responsible for negative emotions” or sorrow can be transformed into an “object of longing” (Landwehr 2018, 252). That is what makes nostalgia worth researching.

While Landwehr is interested in the “phenomenon of nostalgia” and “its ability to produce temporal contact zones” (Landwehr 2018, 268), otherwise known as its ability to exist in different forms and parlances, he points out that nostalgia is not limited to this category of understanding. Nostalgia is indeed associated with producing a longing for the past or an idealistic past, but he is interested in understanding this longing within the context of a capitalist society. Landwehr understands that the concept of nostalgia has been infused into the business world as well - “nostalgia makes money” (Landwehr 2018, 253). As such, nostalgia is not just a concept to describe an emotion, but is also a commodity that can be bought and sold for business interests.

2.3.3. Nostalgia as a Commodity

A brief overview of the discourse surrounding nostalgia makes it clear that the meaning of the term has extended far beyond its dictionary definition. Nostalgia has expanded from a clinical disease, to a yearning or even obsession with the past and, eventually, has become a definition to describe “almost anything that has to do with the
past and any form of engaging with it” (Becker 2018, 244). But while nostalgia is a term engrained in popular discourse as a longing for the past, it is also a term used increasingly in popular culture and in the marketing sector of business. Nostalgia is not simply associated with objects, places, people, experiences, and ideas from the past. Nostalgia can also be viewed as a commodity to be purchased.

Companies turned to ‘nostalgia marketing’ as early as the 1970s (Aytekin 2018, 872) as a tactic to promote their product. Whether its creating a product that has historical roots, tapping into positive cultural memories from previous decades, or bringing back a successful advertising campaign that had positive reviews, using nostalgic marketing is a simplistic way for “brands to leverage the optimistic feelings that often accompany walks down memory lane” (Friedman 2016). Benjamin Halligan (2011) states that nostalgia as a marketing tactic is so popular amongst brands that it has become its own commercial category in the marketing sector. As a result, nostalgia is “readily subject to a consumer culture that capitalizes on the promises of delivering happiness” (2011, 3). For brands, the use of nostalgic marketing can have a positive influence on consumer behaviours and economic value because it increases brand loyalty and boosts the urge to spend (Michon, Chebat, and Turley 2008 qtd. in Hamilton and Wagner 2014, 814). Nostalgia “elicited by ads increases a consumer’s bond with the brand because such nostalgic feelings are directly tied to the self” (Holak, Mateev, & Havlena 2007 qtd. in Youn & Jin 2017, 567). Moreover, for the consumer, the nostalgic properties of the item being sold speaks to one’s memories and emotions, resulting in feelings of happiness and a longing for the past. These feelings can increase purchasing potential and, in the eyes of the marketer, the use of nostalgia marketing is an opportunity for capitalization.
Halligan also notes that advances in visual technology allow marketers to curate an idealistic past with greater sophistication. In other words, advertisements can be touched up or filtered in a way that gives the image a “faux-antiquated aesthetic” (Halligan 2011, 3) that generates a nostalgic feeling in consumers. Further, Halligan highlights that the emergence of social media has “enabled and finessed reunification with old school friends or old friends in general” (Halligan 2011, 3). While Halligan notes that social media might merely offer the chance to “live in a state of nostalgia” (Halligan 2011, 3), it is nonetheless an example that reiterates the way that nostalgia has transformed from a human feeling to an opportunity for brands to capitalize on that feeling.

In a similar vein, Hamilton and Wagner (2014) assert that “warm memories that evoke nostalgic emotions are exploitable assets in today’s marketplace” (816). Consumers are increasingly presented with products that aim to fill an apparent void in their past, but it is experiential consumption - the consumption of a nostalgic experience - that is becoming most attractive to consumers because they do not have to choose between the past and the present; all desires are united in one complete experience (Outka 2009 qtd. in Hamilton and Wagner 2014, 825-826). It is apparent, then, that not only is nostalgia used to market a product, but it is also utilized to enhance experiential activities such as those taking place within the tourism sector. As a salient case in point, Hamilton and Wagner’s research on tearooms filled with vintage items and retro icons found that the concept of nostalgia as a marketing tactic can be used to transform an otherwise mundane activity into a unique experience. By employing nostalgia cues through products, ritual, and aesthetics, the brand or business can transform an ordinary activity to
an experiential event that invites the participant to consume (Hamilton and Wagner 2014, 820). Apart from increasing the desire to purchase and consume, nostalgia marketing also encourages consumers to return to that particular place or experience. Nostalgia marketing is therefore not just successful in increasing purchasing power; it is also an essential tactic that contributes to the success of postmodern tourism.

Christou et al. expands on this claim, ranking ‘nostalgia marketing’ as one of the most successful tactics for postmodern tourism because it “enhances marketing potentials of tourism organizations, adds value to the tourists’ overall experience, and impacts favourably upon destinations because it leads to future visit intentions” (2018). Nostalgia marketing in tourism can also satisfy consumer needs “in an aesthetic and hedonic sense” (Christou et al. 2018, 42), which means that consumers are often looking for nostalgic triggers while vacationing in order to fulfill a certain longing for the past. While Christou et al.’s research is interested in linking nostalgic elements to rural settings such as farmland or spaces with a lot of land in general, a number of other researchers have focused their efforts on unpacking spectacular themed environments that are socially constructed, consumer-driven, and embody aspects of nostalgia (Borghini et al. 2009; Maclaran and Brown 2005; Carson 2005).

Perhaps the most famous example of a socially constructed tourist experience capitalizing on the creation of nostalgia is the Disney franchise. The theme park experience is filled with elements and experiences that connect the tourist to famous Disney movies. Part of Disney’s success stems from their ability to speak to “elements of

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6 Postmodern tourism can be defined as tourism that blurs the lines between everyday life and tourist experiences. In other words, “experiences that were once confined to tourism” are “currently accessible in various contexts of everyday life” (Lash and Urry 1994 qtd. in Uriely 2005).
children’s lived experiences, while providing adults with opportunities for nostalgic fantasies about their own past” (Buckingham 1997 qtd. in Carson 2004, 229). Such nostalgic narratives that are woven throughout the Disney theme parks are indicative of the role nostalgia marketing can play in a socially constructed environment and tourist attraction.

Notwithstanding the obvious tangible differences between selling an experience and selling a product, the role of nostalgia as a marketing tactic remains the same. In the marketing world, nostalgia acts as an exploitable asset that aims to induce emotions and encourages the consumer to participate, to spend, and, within the tourist sector, to revisit. Ultimately though, marketing nostalgia aims to induce specific emotions in humans. The marketing of nostalgia does not care what emotions are induced, as long as they result in the consumer buying into the experience and/or physically buying the product.

It is clear that the term nostalgia cannot be reduced to a singular definition, as its meaning is constantly being altered and utilized for different interests. From a diagnosis to a human emotion to a marketing tactic used for the manufacturing and tourism sector, nostalgia permeates consumer culture in numerous ways. Landwehr sums up the major takeaways of defining nostalgia when he says the following:

Nostalgia cannot be reduced to a melancholic longing for better times and a lost golden age. Nostalgia is part and parcel of a turbulence of times that is constantly brought forth by cultures. Insofar as it is a human characteristic, not only caught in the present, but also able to refer to times that no longer exist or do not yet exist, a temporal confusion is produced – which is all the more confusing the closer you look at it. Then it is no longer a question whether we live in a supposedly homogeneous, unilinear, and evenly clocked time. And it is no longer just the fact that we tell each other stories of a past of which we know at least one thing: that we will never know exactly what happened in this past. (Landwehr 2018, 267)

Film scholar Lauren Rosewarne highlights that because “nostalgia is a sentiment especially fixated on time: and time – and also time in the moments sense – past time(s),
idealized time(s) and time(s) reimagined”, each are “central in the portrayal of Christmas” (2018, 93). Thus, an overview of the literature on nostalgia as an emotion and nostalgia as a commodity reveals that nostalgic tropes are evident within the TCM’s design. I examine the relationship between nostalgia and the TCM further in Chapter 4. Giving context to the term nostalgia brings with it a lot of uncertainty, as nostalgia is both personal and collective, and what is deemed nostalgic to some may not be nostalgic to others. The only certainty there is about nostalgia is that it is present, within the present. Nostalgia is therefore worth investigating further as it is intrinsically tied to Christmas, and therefore is constructed and promoted within the TCM.

Nostalgia and tradition are often used synonymously in public discourse, as both terms require people to look back to the past. However, there are also differences between the two terms. While nostalgia can describe an emotion, or longing for the past, as discussed above, a tradition describes an act or object that has a historical context, or a sense of continuity. If the TCM is built in a space regarded as a national historic site, and the TCM itself is modeled after a European ritual of attending a CM in wintertime, the concept of tradition must be explored further. In the next section I discuss the origins of tradition and unpack the discourse surrounding the term, followed by a comparison between tradition and nostalgia. In Chapter 4, I use the discourse on both terms to provide context for critiquing the TCM in relation to the tropes of tradition and nostalgia that exist within the Distillery District.

2.4. TRADITION

Conceptualizations of the past not only serve as a catalyst to feelings of nostalgia but are often commemorated or celebrated by a tradition. Like nostalgia, the term
tradition embodies a number of different meanings, but tradition separates itself from nostalgia because it does not describe a particular feeling. Rather, a tradition describes an act or object that is bound in history, ritual, and the past. While tradition is a term most popularly used in public discourse, comparisons of ‘tradition’ and ‘invented tradition’ are evident in an array of academic literature (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983, Watson 1997, Anttonen 2005). The differences between these two terms – tradition and invented tradition – become increasingly blurred when exploring tradition’s role in contemporary consumer culture. The following section defines both ‘tradition’ and ‘invented tradition’ and explores the relationship between the two terms. The section also examines ‘invented tradition’ as it relates to contemporary consumer culture. Further, as stated above, I use the discourse on ‘invented tradition’ to critique the design of the TCM and the way it is constructed to promote the trope of tradition.

2.4.1. Tradition as Ritual

Defining tradition and tracing its origins is a difficult task, as the term is both “wide ranging and fluid” (McDowell 2011, 2) across multiple disciplines. From a cultural studies perspective, a tradition commonly refers to “a set of practices or values, largely of a symbolic nature, that are passed on by generations through repetition (and often ceremony), thus inferring a sense of continuity and identity” (McDowell 2011, 2). Edward Shils’ (1981) research on tradition is considered the first extensive study on the subject (Jacobs 2007, n.p.). Shils defines tradition as such:

It is anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present. It makes no statement about what is handed down or in what particular combination or whether it is a physical object or a cultural construction; it says nothing about how long it has been handed down or in what manner, whether orally or in written form. The degree of rational deliberation which has entered into its creation, presentation, and reception likewise has nothing to do with whether it is a tradition.
The conception of tradition as here understood is silent about whether there is acceptable evidence for the truth of the tradition or whether the tradition is accepted without its validity having been established; the anonymity of its authors or creators or its attribution to named and identified persons likewise makes no difference as to whether it is a tradition. The decisive criterion is that, having been created through human actions, through thought and imagination, it is handed down from one generation to the next. (Shils 1981, 12)

Apart from being anything transmitted or handed down from the past to the present, Shils defines the concept of tradition further by posing a question of how long a pattern must go on before being regarded as a tradition. He attempts to answer this by expressing what a tradition is not. According to Shils, a “belief which is forsaken immediately after its conception and which has no recipients when its inventor or exponent presents or embodies it, is not a tradition” (Shils 1981, 15). A tradition is also not something that may appear to ‘catch on’ but in fact only continues on for a short time. These two components suggest that tradition is something that a) must last, and b) must last for a specific length of time. Shils settles on a tradition as being something that lasts over “at least three generations” – however long or short these may be (1981, 15). He also chooses the word ‘generations’ because the term encompasses many different variations of transmissions in time.

Ultimately, Shils claims that in the many usages of the term ‘tradition’ there is an implicit understanding that traditions are transmitted when reenacted:

An experienced sentiment is not a tradition. It is a state of sensation at a given moment. A visual perception is not a tradition; it is an image taken into the retina and transferred to the brain. The performance of a ritual action, whether it is an act of communion or the celebration of an anniversary or loyal toast to a monarch, is not a tradition; it is a set of words and physical movements expressive of a state of sentiment and belief. None of these ideas is a tradition. None of them in itself is a tradition. But all of them can in various ways be transmitted as a tradition. They nearly always occur in forms affected or determined in varying degrees by tradition. They recur because they are carried as traditions which are reenacted. The
reenactment is not the tradition; the tradition is the pattern which guides the
reenactment. (Shils 1981, 31)

Shils theory of tradition is thus multifaceted and predicated on the process of
transmission.

Expanding on Shils definition of tradition, Sociologist Hangsheng Zheng (2012)
explores how modernity has changed the process and definition of tradition. Zheng
contends that the term has different meanings when conceptualized in an ontological and
methodological sense. Ontologically, tradition can be defined similarly to Shils’
definition, which is “to pass on and continue” (Zheng 2012, 106). Therefore, the meaning
of tradition is “the unified thing passed on from generation to generation” (Zheng 2012,
106). Methodologically, tradition’s meaning takes on a relative sense, where tradition can
be summarized as an “invented culture” or can be defined as the “opposite of modernity
within the frame of the duality of tradition and modernity” (2012, 106). Zheng then
combines these two meanings of tradition to form a more holistic definition of the term,
and ultimately defines the concept of tradition as “the past that is preserved in modern
people’s memories, words, and actions, so it is the past functioning in today’s world”
(2012, 107). In this sense, tradition acts somewhat as a broken telephone where, although
a message can get passed along and be absorbed, it also creates space for depletion and
deletion to occur. Zheng’s research on the relationship between tradition and modernity
ultimately argues that something gets lost in translation when a tradition moves from
generation to generation.

While Shils regards tradition has something that has ‘authentic’ or ‘indigenous’
roots, and Zheng believes that rediscovering tradition will “resolve the problems that
modernity brings” (2012, 113), other scholars argue that traditions are in fact social
fabrications that have been established by humans to serve a specific (and often capitalistic) function. This form of tradition is known as the ‘invented tradition’.

2.4.2. Invented Tradition

The term ‘inventing tradition’ was coined by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) to describe socially constructed practices that are tough to trace because they are established within a matter of a few years, and then continue to grow at a rapid pace. Invented traditions are “normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual of a symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 1). While invented traditions often stem from a place or object that has historical context, Hobsbawm and Ranger note that the uncanny part of invented traditions is that they are artificial or factitious. In other words, the process of ‘inventing’ a tradition is a response “to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 2). Therefore, invented traditions separate themselves from indigenous or ‘authentic’ traditions, as referenced above, because “invented traditions are social fabrications that are enacted or established to construct some sort of lineage with the past that is not necessarily there” (McDowell 2011, 2). In other words, invented traditions are manufactured and often aim to benefit contemporary consumer culture. A tangible example of an invented tradition given by Hobsbawm and Ranger is the deliberate choice of Gothic style architecture for a rebuilding of the nineteenth-century British Parliament after a fire ruined the building in 1834 (Parliament, n.d.). In this case, the act of rebuilding the British Parliament, combined with the choice to rebuild using Gothic style,
is an invented tradition that both replaces and overshadows the original building. It is the blurring of the past and the present architecture that makes such an act, an act of an invented tradition.

Apart from coining the term, Hobsbawm and Ranger note that there is a distinction that must be made between an ‘invented tradition’ and ideas of convention or routine. They argue that “any social practice that is carried out efficiently and effectively often develops a sense of repetitiveness” (1983, 3). This is especially prevalent following the industrial revolution and its associated standardized tactics, and especially the scientific management or Taylorist tactics that marked the early twentieth century. However, Hobsbawm and Ranger argue that such “networks of convention and routine are not ‘invented traditions’ since their functions, and therefore their justification, are technical rather than ideological” (1983, 3). In other words, a convention or routine is easily abandoned or modified in the interest of progress or efficiency, whereas an invented tradition is less flexible to accepting alterations. Invented traditions are therefore predicated on the process of “formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 4).

An example to substantiate this claim would be the convention of checking emails before arriving to work. While the act of checking emails upon arrival is a routine because it is a repetitive act, it is not an invented tradition because not only is its purpose technical and not ideological, but the routine can be easily modified in the interest of progress. Checking emails can take place the second you wake up, or while in transit to your work location. The point is, a convention or routine is not synonymous with an invented tradition.
While Hobsbawm and Ranger view ‘invented tradition’ as oppositional to conceptualizations of an ‘original’ or ‘authentic’ tradition, Handler & Linnekin state that “to do something because it is traditional is already to reinterpret, and hence to change it” (1984, 281). Through time, an ‘original’ tradition and an ‘invented’ tradition become increasingly blurred or romanticized “until it is no longer possible to differentiate between the original and invented tradition” (McDowell 2011, 2). The (re)invention of Christmas and its associated markets is just one example that demonstrates the complexities and blurring of tradition and invented tradition. What is often deemed an ‘authentic’ yearly tradition reliant on Christianity and togetherness is also a holiday that relies on consumption, giving, and inventions such as Santa Claus. Not only that, but Christmas rituals are constantly being altered or modified depending on the country of origin and time period. It could be argued, then, that there is no such thing as an ‘original’ tradition to begin with. Tradition is thus as much a model of the past as it is inseparable from the interpretation of tradition in the present (Anttonen 2005, 35).

The very concept of an invented tradition is therefore subject to critique and criticism. Shida (1999) argues that everything originates from an invention, and over time “these inventions evolve into traditions as people grow to ignore its origin, inventor, and purpose” (Shida 1999 in McDowell 2011, 5). McDowell ultimately critiques the entire concept of tradition for being trivialized, or turned into a commodity. She argues that as humans, “we continuously shop around and look to the past for some sort of tradition that best suits our sense of self at that particular moment” (McDowell 2011, 5). McDowell’s claim segues well into contemporary understandings of ‘tradition’, and the ways in which tradition is used as a marketing tactic.
2.4.3. Tradition as a Commodity

McDowell (2011) argues that Hobsbawm and Ranger’s idea of the invention of tradition has become an integral part of contemporary consumer culture. Scholars have utilized the term to not only critique consumer patterns of consumption, but also to reveal the way that brands use the term in their advertising to encourage consumption (Castello 2000, Assmann 2008, Lee et al. 2015, Chee-Beng, Tan and Ding Yuling 2010). By idealizing the term tradition and transforming it into something that can be consumed, brands and tourist destinations are able to capitalize.

As highlighted above, both tradition and nostalgia are terms that have transitioned from their ‘original’ definition or meaning, to a term that has been used in advertising and promotional discourse as a tactic to encourage consumption. It is clear that tradition and nostalgia are not synonymous, as tradition describes an object or act with historical context that has been passed down through generations, whereas nostalgia describes an emotion or longing for the past, or for something that never existed in the first place. As such, although the terms tradition and nostalgia are different, they are both present and play a pivotal role within the construction and execution of the TCM.

2.5. NOSTALGIA AND TRADITION

Given all that we know about the origin and literature of tradition and invented tradition, it is clear that the TCM is a worthwhile research subject because its design and construction uses the tropes of nostalgia and tradition to create what they claim to be a “Toronto Holiday Tradition”. Apart from blatantly using the tropes of tradition in their print advertising to entice visitors and courage them to visit, the TCM is also situated on
a historic site, which complicates the TCM’s self-proclamation as a traditional space, or more specifically, a traditional CM. Unpacking the TCM’s milieu by physically visiting the place will provide a more thorough understanding of how the design of the TCM reflects and promotes the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. In the next chapter, I will delve into the research methods I used to explore the TCM’s virtual and physical space, and describe what happened when I applied the methodology to the TCM’s print advertisements and physical space.
CHAPTER 3
FROM THEORY TO APPLICATION

Chapter 3 explains the research methods used in this study, and applies the methodology to my exploration of the TCM. First, this chapter outlines the research questions that guided this study. Second, it describes the research design used to examine the research questions. Third, it explains the data collection process and strategies used to code the data. And fourth, it reveals a description of what I found when I applied the research methods from the methodology to the TCM. An analysis and discussion of the results obtained from the methodology is detailed in Chapter 4.

3.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was guided by three interconnected research questions: (1) What constitutes a ‘traditional’ Christmas Market, and in what ways, if at all, can the TCM be considered a ‘traditional’ Christmas Market? (2) How is the physical design of the TCM constructed to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia? (3) How are the tropes of tradition and nostalgia embedded in the TCM’s milieu, and what purpose(s) do they serve? The above research questions were described in further detail in Chapter 1 (see section 1.4, pp. 9 and 10).

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1. Multi-Method Qualitative Approach

The research questions outlined above were examined using a multi-method qualitative approach consisting of a discourse analysis and a microethnography. A multi-method approach was suitable for this project for several reasons. First, there are no
existing studies or scholarly research on the execution of a Canadian Christmas Market, so performing a qualitative study fills this research gap. Second, a multi-method approach allows for a more holistic exploration of both the physical TCM and its promotional texts, given that the purpose of a multi-method approach is to employ more than one method to collect data (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010, 10). Taking into account the lack of scholarly research on CMs in the field of media studies, providing a more well-rounded or holistic view of the TCM was ideal for this study. Additionally, a combination of a discourse analysis and microethnography allowed me to achieve research depth and breadth, and offset the weaknesses that would have been present if only one approach was used (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010, 10).

3.2.2. Discourse Analysis

I first conducted a discourse analysis of the TCM’s print advertising in order to unpack the media texts it distributed in 2018. Discourse analysis refers to the way “spoken and written language ratifies social and cultural perspectives and identities” (Gee 1999, i). More specifically, discourse analysis is concerned with the ways in which discourse and social power interact, and how discourse reflects and reinforces dominant power structures and ideologies (Dijk 2011). This mode of analysis relates to Hall’s (1997) model of encoding and decoding, which suggests that social reality is comprehensible through a construction of representations, and then feeds back into future representations.

While there are various approaches to conducting discourse analysis, this thesis extends Gee’s (2005) language-in-use approach to discourse analysis, as described in An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method, to deconstruct the strategies and
tactics used in the TCM’s promotional materials. More specifically, this study unpacks the discourse within the TCM’s 2018 print advertisement as it appears in a December 15th copy of the Toronto Star newspaper. The Toronto Star is Canada’s largest local daily newspaper (Toronto Star Media Kit 2018) and was selected for this particular study because the daily newspaper is a media sponsor of the TCM and therefore the only newspaper to carry the TCM’s print ad. Additionally, a 2018 Toronto Star Media Kit study shows that the newspaper has one of the largest readerships in the country, with 3,186,000 weekly print readers, and 7,519,000 monthly readers on desktop, mobile, or tablets (Toronto Star Media Kit 2018). Such statistics demonstrate the reach capabilities of the TCM’s advertisement.

While the advertisement appeared in the Toronto Star six times in November and December (see Appendix B), and the size of the advertisement often changed (see Appendix C, D, and E), the content of the TCM’s advertisement remained the same. I will thus use discourse analysis to problematize the language and narratives depicted in the TCM’s December 15, 2018 print advertisement as it compares to the on-the-ground execution of the TCM. The observations obtained from the discourse analysis aimed to address research question 2 – that is, to determine the ways in which the TCM was constructed to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. The analysis section of the discourse analysis was designed to grapple with research question 3 – that is, to gain an understanding of how such tropes were embedded in the TCM’s milieu, and what purpose(s) they served.

Gee’s (2005) approach to discourse analysis was most suitable for this study because it uses “building tasks” (2005, 11) as a tool of inquiry to contextualize the way
language is used to construct or construe meaning. This approach fits my project because I am interrogating the promotional materials disseminated by the TCM and critiquing the discourse. Gee contends that “language has meaning only in and through social practices” (2005, 8), which also parallels my research because it is interested in examining the TCM’s promotional materials as they relate to the aesthetics and physical layout of the TCM.

However, a discourse analysis is not without limitations. Since discourse analysis is based on the details of speech or writing, what to include or exclude in a transcript are ultimately the researcher’s judgement, which can result in difficulties with reliability and replicability. More specific to this particular research, conducting a discourse analysis solely on the TCM’s print advertisement leaves out any discussion regarding the TCM’s social media platforms or their website. Within the confines of a Master’s thesis, it is difficult to analyze every platform through which the TCM advertises, and for this reason certain platforms were omitted.

3.2.3. Microethnographic Approach

I performed a microethnography to examine the Distillery District space during the 2017 and 2018 holiday season. A microethnography is a specific form of ethnography referring to studies of a shorter duration (Merrigan and Huston 2015, 304). Originating in cultural anthropology and sociology, an ethnography is both a fieldwork method and an approach to writing (Campbell and Eric 2014, 1) that values understanding, description, and interpretation of a particular space or place. Ethnographic research is grounded in first-hand experience and is defined as an “exploration of a particular social or cultural setting” (Atkinson et al. 2001, 4-5). While observation and participation are often the
characteristic features of ethnographic research, the purpose of this particular microethnography was to observe the physical layout of the TCM and the experiences offered within the place. Additionally, this research analyzed the reasoning behind the execution of the TCM in a larger context – namely interrogating its purpose or meaning within social culture. The observational aspects of the microethnography aimed to answer research question 2 – that is, to determine how the physical design of the TCM is constructed to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. The interpretative and analytical aspects of the microethnography were designed to answer research question 3 – that is, to gain an understanding of how such tropes are embedded in the TCM’s milieu, and what purpose(s) they serve.

I chose a microethnographic approach to examine the TCM because it provides a greater understanding of the physical layout of a place and the experiences that occur within that particular place (Merrigan and Huston 2015, 304). The most significant benefit of a microethnographic study is the context it provides. By visiting the physical location of the Distillery District while it hosted the TCM, I would be able to visualize the events and experiences first-hand as they occur. A microethnography also captures moments of exchange by allowing the visitor and the subject(s) of study to interact without interruption. This is particularly important because my thesis is not concerned with the way visitors think or feel when attending TCM, but rather the design or layout of the TCM and how tradition and nostalgia are constructed and promoted. Since the focus of my research is on the physical layout and execution of the TCM and not human feelings or opinions towards the TCM, an ethnographic approach was more suitable than a methodology that included interviews or surveys.
As noted in Chapter 1 (see section 1.3, pp. 5), the TCM is only open for six weeks in November and December each year. For this reason, the microethnography was conducted in two separate phases: three times during the 2017 market and four times during the 2018 market. In December 2017, I completed a pilot project of my research design. For this small-scale preliminary study, I attended the TCM on three occasions: a weekday, weekend, and a weekday evening, and kept an informal log of my observations. The purpose of the pilot project was to gain a general understanding of what I would encounter prior to conducting my second phase of the microethnography in 2018. It also allowed for greater sophistication in my data collection processes during the second phase of the microethnography.

Similar to a discourse analysis, a microethnographic approach has its own set of limitations. One disadvantage of ethnographic research is the subjectivity that comes with conducting fieldwork and analyzing the data. Since all data sets were both collected and coded by myself, a single researcher, it is idiosyncratic and subjective to my particular interpretations. In a similar vein, fieldnotes never provide a complete record of what occurred (Atkinson in Atkinson et al. 2001, 353) which results in issues of validity. Achieving reliability may be considered another drawback of ethnographic research as this type of research is difficult to replicate due to the events and interactions taking place in a natural setting.

Despite these potential limitations, a microethnography was the most suitable methodological approach because of the context it provides and first-hand moments it captures. As outlined in Appendix A, I attended the 2018 TCM on four separate
occasions\textsuperscript{7}. During these visits, I observed and reflected on the physical layout of the TCM and how tropes of tradition and nostalgia are constructed and promoted within it. This process was not limited to viewing the TCM’s milieu, but also included taking thick-description fieldnotes of my observations and reflections. While fieldnotes are often described as written accounts of events, experiences, and interactions that the researcher can recount (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw in Atkinson et al. 2001, 359), my written fieldnotes for this project were instead made up of voice recordings I later transcribed. Utilizing voice recordings instead of written fieldnotes was best suited for this study given the snowy weather conditions during my exploration of the TCM.

The transcribing process occurred directly after exiting the TCM. I listened to the detailed voice recordings attained on site, and typed complete, detailed notes of the subsequent observations after each individual exploration of the TCM. Transcription allowed me to reference my notes later on and provided me with a more descriptive account of the activations and events that took place in the market. The fieldnotes were treated as a data set to reflect on the physical layout of the TCM, and later helped to uncover how tropes of tradition and nostalgia were formulated and promoted within the market. In addition to voice recordings as fieldnotes, I took photos of the TCM to supplement my understanding of the physical site. Permission to take photos of the TCM’s physical site was granted by the TCM’s Director of Marketing and Festival Relations. As a result, the photos acted as secondary fieldnotes and serve as appendices in section 3.4.

\textsuperscript{7} I attended the TCM on November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, December 9\textsuperscript{th}, December 13\textsuperscript{th}, and December 16\textsuperscript{th} of 2018 at various time frames to account for any changes or inconsistencies that may take place within the TCM.
3.3. APPLICATION – DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

3.3.1. General Overview

The following section details a description of the results obtained from applying the discourse analysis portion of the research design. The results from the study were based upon an analysis of the text (i.e. the TCM’s newspaper advertisement). As stated, this study uses Gee’s (2005) approach to discourse analysis in order to uncover how the TCM’s print advertisement was constructed to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. While the following section provides only a description of the results obtained from the discourse analysis of the TCM, Chapter 4 reveals an in-depth analysis of the results.

3.3.2. TCM Newspaper Advertisement

The TCM’s print advertisements (see Appendix C, D, and E) appeared in the Toronto Star on multiple occasions while the 2018 market was open. The TCM purchased three sizes of advertisements in the Toronto Star. There was a half-page advertisement spread which appeared on November 23, 2018; landscape quarter-page spreads which appeared on November 30, December 6, and December 15, 2018; and two portrait quarter-page advertisement spreads which appeared on November 28 and December 3, 2018. Although the size of the advertisement changed, the look of the advertisement itself remained consistent regardless of the date it appeared in the Toronto Star.

Visually, the print advertisement was split into two sections. The upper half of the advertisement featured imagery, while the lower half displayed text. The imagery in the upper half of the advertisement was what drew the eyes in first, as the bright red and
yellow colours were visually appealing and different from the typical black-and-white text in a newspaper. A large, graphic design image of a red Christmas ornament hung from the top left of the advertisement. The ornament was overlaid in front of the other imagery to stand out from the image and text. Inside the ornament sat the TCM logo, which let the reader know that this print advertisement was promoting the TCM. The TCM logo was composed of an all-white vector image of the CN Tower, a Christmas tree, a Distillery Historic District building, and a Victorian-era lamp post. The TCM logo also featured text which read ‘TORONTO CHRISTMAS MARKET’, with the word ‘CHRISTMAS’ being slightly larger in text size than the other words. The enlargement of text size in the TCM logo indicated its importance within the advertisement.

To the right of the ornament and TCM logo was a photographic image of a man and women hugging each other, with their faces close together and noses touching. The man and women, or the assumed couple, looked to be between 20-30 years old based on their facial features. Both individuals were smiling, and both wore winter hats and jackets. This would lead to the assumption that they were outdoors, and it was cold, but they were happy with their choice to be where they are. Beyond or behind the man and women, the image also showed a faint visual of string lights, followed by a black background. The combination of the ornament logo and the image signify that the couple was at the TCM at night, and that the bright string lights were what allowed them to see the market around them. Yellow text below the image of the couple read, ‘A TORONTO HOLIDAY TRADITION’, followed by the dates that the TCM opened and closed in white text. The visual placement of the text, in addition to the choice of colour indicated that the phrase, “A TORONTO HOLIDAY TRADITION’, was a significant feature
within the advertisement.

The Distillery District logo divided the image on the top half, and the text on the lower half. The logo featured a black and white graphic design image of some of the Distillery buildings. Below the logo, the text on the bottom half of the ad read:

Last year, over half a million people rediscovered the magic of Christmas. The magic continues this November 15th to December 23rd. Ranked one of the best Christmas Markets in the world by Fodor’s Travel, USA Today, and Mashable among many others, the Toronto Christmas Market features hundreds of unique and locally handcrafted products, family friendly entertainment, outdoor hospitality lounges, Santa and the elves, and an atmosphere so charming you can’t help but fall in love with the holiday season all over again. (Toronto Star 2018)

The words ‘Toronto Christmas Market’ was bolded, and the TCM website link was showcased in larger text directly below the paragraph of text. The word ‘Christmas’ again stood out, as it was in red text while the rest of the copy for the website link was in black type. Below the website link, red text indicated the street address to the TCM. Directly below the location information the text read, “free admission on weekdays. $6.00 admission (incl. HST) on weekends starting at 5pm on Fridays” (Toronto Star 2018). At the very bottom of the TCM print advertisement were eight logos: Toronto Star, Branded Cities, Province of Ontario, Indigo, Municipal Parking, The Distillery Restaurants Corp., Jack Daniel’s, and Crystal Head Vodka. It can be assumed that these logos represent sponsors of the TCM.

In sum, providing a description of what I found while conducting a discourse analysis of the TCM’s print advertisement is important because it allows me to not only compare the print advertisement to the physical TCM, but also to understand how this particular text was constructed to promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. An
analysis of the results obtained from the discourse analysis can be found in Chapter 4.

3.4. APPLICATION – MICROETHNOGRAPHY

3.4.1. General Overview

The section below details a description of the results obtained from the microethnography of the TCM’s physical location. Results gathered from the microethnography were based upon an analysis of fieldwork, fieldnotes, and photographs. Similar to the results from the discourse analysis, Chapter 4 reveals an in-depth analysis of the results obtained from the microethnography.

3.4.2. Setting the Scene

Gaining access to the TCM was an act done with intention. The perimeter of the pedestrian-only site was distinctly outlined by red-bricked Victorian-era buildings, and short, metal fencing surrounded each entrance to control anticipated line-ups and crowds. There were four ways to enter the TCM. Each access point was located on a major roadway that, together, made up the perimeter of the TCM: Mill Street, Cherry Street, Distillery Lane, and Parliament Street. While all entrances were marked by similar ‘Enter’, ‘Express’, and ‘Exit’ signs, illuminated holiday signs stationed at each entrance displayed a different holiday message. From the name of the site, ‘Toronto Christmas Market’, to ‘Ho Ho Ho’, each illuminated sign let visitors know that they were entering into the enclosed space that made up the Christmas-themed market.

Also stationed at each entrance point were TCM employees. Some were dressed as elves and welcomed visitors to the market, while others were outfitted in red TCM-branded winter jackets and stood at the entrance to scan tickets for visitors to access the market. The aforementioned employees were only present at the entrances when the TCM
charged admission. Tickets were $6 and could be purchased on-site from a large white tent located just north of the TCM grounds. Visitors also had the option to purchase an ‘Express Pass’ for $20, allowing the ticketholder to bypass the General Admission lineup.

3.4.3. Entering the TCM

Stepping onto the TCM grounds was different from the modern entertainment district that defines the city of Toronto. The pedestrian-only walkways were made up of uneven cobblestone, and Distillery District buildings lined the perimeter to shape and enclose the market. The buildings came in an array of sizes, but their red brick exterior with green trimming and windows remained the same throughout the market. Retailer signs attached to the buildings signaled the Distillery District’s retail occupants, and Christmas wreaths lined the building entrances as a nod to the seasonal market.

Looking up, thousands of string lights hung overhead as they stretched from one side of the cobblestone street to the other. During the day, the effect of the string lights seemed faint. In the evening, the lights shone bright, making the TCM a well-lit market even in the darkest of evenings. To the left, white icicle-style lights were suspended up and down the walls of one of the Distillery District buildings, covering its exterior. To the right, another illuminated sign was stationed in-between two buildings. In red, white, and green lighting, the sign read ‘Countdown to Christmas’ and, like a scoreboard at a sports game, the sign illuminated the number of days until Christmas Day. As mentioned, the

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8 As noted on page 5, the TCM requires visitors to purchase a ticket for the TCM on weekends beginning at 5pm on Fridays to enter the market.
9 Result descriptions are based on entering the TCM from the Mill and Trinity Street Entrance. This entrance was chosen because it is closest to the ticket sales tent, which lead me to assume that this entrance is most popular amongst visitors.
Figure 1: The TCM upon entering the Distillery District.

(Source: Photo taken by Lydia Gibson)
Victorian-era buildings that enclosed the TCM hosted the Distillery Historic District’s permanent retailers (see Figure 1). As denoted by signs on the exterior, the interior of each building held the shops, restaurants, and art galleries. Each of these buildings had its own hours of operation that were separate from the TCM. Since the Distillery Historic District’s retailers are permanent, and their hours of operation were separate from the TCM’s hours of operation, only the visual exterior of the Distillery Historic Buildings will be included in my results. Put simply, the interior design of each Distillery Historic District building will not be included as it is not part of the design or execution of the TCM.

A small wooden cabin with an illuminated ‘Info’ sign was set up directly to the left of the market entrance. Inside the ‘Info’ booth, a single TCM employee answered questions related to the TCM and Distillery District. The employee also handed out small, foldable, glossy brochures with a list of the TCM’s vendors, sponsors, and a map of the area. The ‘Info’ booth cabin also had a stack of brochures with general information about the Distillery Historic District, including a list of the permanent tenants that were open during the TCM. The ‘Info’ booth also acted as the starting point for visitors who wanted to sign up and participate in walking tours that chronicle the history of the Distillery Historic District. The tours did not talk about the TCM but focused solely on the Distillery Historic District and its transformation from a whiskey distillery to a demolition site and, finally, to an arts and culture centre. Next to the ‘Info’ sign was a tall sign post with directions pointing to different areas of interest within the TCM. The sign post was decorated in a way that simulated a Christmas candy-cane, decorated with red and white stripes from the base of the post up to the tip. There were a number of sign
posts that appeared in different areas throughout the market to ensure that visitors knew
where they were going.

Along the cobblestone streets further into the TCM were eight small wooden cabins,
lined in a row in front of the Distillery Historic District buildings (see Figure 2). With a
brown wood frame, slanted gable roof, and white trimming to look like snow, these
cabins looked similar in shape and style to a gingerbread house. Just below the lights, the
front of each wooden cabin was open. Inside sat a merchant selling handmade or one-of-
a-kind items, and food vendors. French-Canadian poutine, cozy knitted mittens,
Christmas ornaments and décor were just a few of the items offered by the vendors.
While some of the vendors displayed their company name on the top of the wooden
cabin, visible to the public, others remained nameless. Though the wooden cabins were a
temporary installation specifically stationed for the TCM, visitors could purchase the
items using Interac® debit or credit, as cash was not accepted at many of the wooden
cabins.

While the right side of the cobblestone streets were lined with small wooden cabins,
the left side featured lines of Victorian lamp posts. The design of the lamp post included a
black horizontal bar with a tall lightbulb encased in glass. The lamp post was not an
installation placed specifically for the TCM, but rather a permanent feature of the
Distillery District. It was, however, decorated for the TCM as there was a red and green
wreath hanging over the bulb holder. Just past the wooden cabins and lamp posts stood
the TCM’s 50-foot Christmas tree. The base of the massive evergreen was enclosed in
red-painted wood, and the branches were decorated with red ornaments larger than a
Figure 2: European-inspired wooden.

(Source: Photo taken by Lydia Gibson)
human head. Lights and gold ribbon wrapped the tree’s circumference, and a silver star was placed on the tree’s tip. The Christmas tree was one of the tallest pieces within the market and, due to its size, acted as the central hub of the TCM. On the base of the Christmas tree stood a small wooden post that looked similar to a music stand. The text on the post revealed that the Christmas tree was donated by Forests Ontario and Ontario Wood. Both company logos appeared on the post.

Directly to the right of the Christmas tree was an outdoor stage. The stage looked similar in shape to the small cabins with a wooden exterior and slanted gable roof, however the stage was much bigger in size than the wooden cabins. Facing the stage were approximately 50 white chairs, inviting visitors to sit, watch, and listen. The acts on stage were constantly changing. From choir singers to children’s storytellers, the types of performances that took place on stage varied. One thing that all performances had in common, though, was that they were all in line with the theme of Christmas. The choir sang Christmas songs, and the children’s story was Christmas-themed. Every performer on stage weaved the theme of Christmas into their act.

While the acts on stage were eye-catching, the activities located directly behind the stage were also striking. A multi-coloured Ferris Wheel and Carousel spun round to signal its availability to visitors, and employees in black jackets operated the system. Short metal fencing surrounded both the Ferris Wheel and Carousel, and was decorated with a red and green garland. The Carousel showed no sign of branding, but the Ferris Wheel had a large print of the TCM’s logo in the centre of the wheel. The Ferris Wheel and Carousel charged additional admission for visitors to participate. Just beneath the Ferris Wheel was one of the many food vendors present during the TCM. The Belgian-
inspired ‘Wafel Bar’ vendor was housed under a small wooden cabin similar to the eight wooden cabins in a row selling handcrafted items. Also selling food nearby was the ‘Weiner Haus’, cooking up a selection of meat on a barbecue.

Another illuminated sign similar to the ‘Info’ sign was placed high against one of the Distillery Historic District buildings. This one read ‘Love’, and visitors lined up to take photos underneath the sign. Moving further into the market, there were other illuminated signs with different messages, including Joy, Family, Peace, Coffee, Shop, and of course, Toronto Christmas Market. Other signs evident throughout the market were different Christmas symbols (such as Santa’s hat or a Christmas tree) with #TCM18 written in white letters on the inside of the sign. The signs encouraged visitors to post photos on their social media platform and to use that hashtag on their photo.

3.4.4. Eating and Drinking

As briefly mentioned above, there was no shortage of food or food selection within the TCM. The eight wooden cabins stationed at the TCM entrance were not the only vendors available. There were actually 42 street vendors situated throughout the TCM, and 18 of those vendors sold food. From Artisan Grilled Cheese and Truffle Frites, to Boku Noodle Bar and Schnitzel Haus, there were food selections to reflect every type of cuisine.

While the 42 street vendors took up a lot of space within the TCM, much of the grounds was taken over by outdoor beer gardens and terraces that were set up specifically for the TCM. There were six beer garden areas, each offering a unique experience in terms of the physical surroundings and drink menus. The Mill Street Brewery Beer Garden was stationed in front of Mill Street BrewPub, a permanent retailer. The outdoor
beer garden had standing tables and heaters throughout the space, which encouraged visitors to stay, drink, and keep warm. A large illuminated sign reading ‘Naughty or Nice’ lit up the area, and visitors paused to snap a photo before purchasing a beverage. Other beer gardens within the TCM also offered European beers to emulate what it would be like to attend a European Christmas Market. Apart from beer gardens, there were also liquor gardens or terraces for visitors to experience. For example, Grey Goose hosted a small, outdoor spirits terrace where visitors could purchase and enjoy an alcoholic beverage under a tunnel of lights (see Figure 3). The small size of the tunnel of lights combined with the heaters to keep visitors warm encouraged a sense of closeness and community. The outdoor terrace also offered a contest where visitors could take a photo sitting on a blue Grey Goose bench, and post the photo on social media for the chance to win a prize. Grey Goose is one of many sponsorship experiences that hosted an activation and activity within the market.

3.4.5. Sponsorship Opportunities

Hanging from one of the Distillery Historic District’s buildings was a large signage board that showcased all of the TCM’s sponsors by logo (see Figure 4). The board categorized each sponsor according to whether they were a Premium Sponsor, Event Sponsor, Beer Garden and Hospitality Lounge Sponsor, or Media Sponsor. Although the board did not mention the definition of each category (i.e. what defines a Premium Sponsor as such), it can be assumed that Premium Sponsors contributed the most financially to the TCM. In addition to sponsorships, the board named each of the three charities that the TCM supported: The Toronto Star Santa Claus Fund, Plan
Figure 3: The Grey Goose Tunnel of Lights Spirits Garden

(Source: Photo taken by Lydia Gibson)
Figure 4: Board revealing the TCM’s sponsors for the 2018 market.

(Source: Photo taken by Lydia Gibson)
International, and the Daily Bread Food Bank. Evidence of the TCM’s sponsors could be seen throughout the market in the form of activities and experiences. Indigo, a Premium Sponsor, had its own indoor pop-up shop in an empty retailer store within the Distillery. The windows on the outside of the Indigo pop-up was decaled like a Christmas present. Inside, the pop-up shop was filled with Indigo products, including books and other items that could act as stocking stuffer-gifts. It should also be noted that none of the products in the Indigo pop-up had price tags, as nothing could be purchased on-site. The pop-up store was simply there for visitors to browse, and to stimulate Christmas gift shopping ideas. This concept will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Another premium sponsor evident throughout the TCM was Interac®. Similar to other photo-taking installations within the TCM, Interac® created a photo backdrop for visitors to take photos (see Figure 5). In the bottom-right corner of the photo spot was the Interac® logo to let visitors know who provided the installation. Interac® was also the preferred method of payment throughout the TCM. Almost all of the vendors in the wooden cabin took Interac® as a payment method, including the small food vendors.

There were 12 event sponsors of the 2018 market, and all played a different role within the TCM. Like Interac®, many of the TCM’s event sponsors provided some sort of Christmas-themed installation that invited visitors to take photos. Ziploc® and Glade® teamed up to provide two life-sized toy soldier statues in the TCM, each with one company’s logo placed at the base where the soldier stood. Similarly, the chocolate company merci installed a red sleigh resembling Santa’s sleigh next to their wooden cabin where they sold chocolates. The sleigh installation was large enough for children
Figure 5: Installation provided by Interac®.

(Source: Photo taken by Lydia Gibson)
and adults alike to sit and take photos on, and behind the sleigh was a backdrop of a winter scene to reiterate that visitors should be taking photos. The red sleigh was branded on the front with gold lettering that said #mercisanta, and ‘SC’ to indicate merci’s parent company Storck Canada. Similar to merci, Werther’s Original had a wooden cabin installation exactly like the other vendors of the TCM but was giving out samples in addition to selling Werther’s candies in a variety of flavours.

Gay Lea also had an installation within the TCM that looked like a blown-up advent calendar. The base of the advent calendar was similar to the wooden cabins throughout the TCM, but much larger in size, and employees were handing out free Gay Lea cookies. Gay Lea also had a contest for visitors who entered, with the winning prize being a Gay Lea cookie basket. Pantene took a similar approach to their sponsorship by placing a large white wooden cabin with a brown roof in the TCM. Inside the cabin, an employee dressed in all-white to resemble a ‘snow queen’, and sat on a black couch with a white blanket. She was surrounded by gold and white gifts and other decorations, creating a Christmas living-room scene for visitors to enter and take photos. Pantene also took their sponsorship opportunity a step further by having employees surround the installation to hand out free Pantene product samples to visitors.

Paragon Security was one event sponsor that did not have any installation but was still present throughout the market. The company provided security guards that roamed the market to proactively secure the environment and Distillery Historic District property. There were also events taking place within in the TCM that did not indicate whether it was sponsored by a business, or whether the installation was provided by the TCM. An example of this was Santa’s House – an outdoor installation quite similar to Santa in a
shopping centre, where families could have their photo taken with Santa and his elves. The TCM also provided bathrooms for visitors, however no mention of a sponsor or business was present on the trailer that held the facilities. Sponsors of the TCM are discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.4.6. Nods to a Historic Past

Nods to the Distillery District’s past were also evident throughout the TCM. A large printed sign reading ‘Gooderham & Worts Limited’ hung overhead between two Victorian-era buildings near the 50-foot Christmas tree. The sign reminded viewers of the Distillery District’s historic past as a whiskey distillery, and its current designation as a national historic site. In addition to the Gooderham and Worts sign, another more faded sign with the same ‘Gooderham and Worts Limited’ text hung overhead near the entrance on Parliament Street (see Figure 6), giving the impression that the faded sign is much older and more authentic than the other sign, which is modern and new. A permanent art installation called ‘Still Dancing’ stood just behind the 50-foot Christmas tree and, while the abstract piece is supposed to look like a couple dancing, it also resembles a whiskey still – another nod to the history of the District. The installation was placed in the Distillery Historic District in 2010 (Pereira 2016) and is similar in size to the Christmas tree, but was easy to overlook due to the other experiences surrounding the installation. Whiskey barrels were also present throughout the TCM. Some were decorated with Christmas garlands, while others were repurposed as standing tables near the beer gardens for visitors to rest their beverages.

In sum, providing a description of what I found while conducting a microethnography of the TCM’s physical site is necessary in order to analyze how this
Figure 6: The faded Gooderham & Worts Limited Sign in the Distillery District.

(Source: Photo taken by Lydia Gibson)
particular site is constructed to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. Taken together, a discourse analysis of the TCM’s print advertisement combined with a microethnography of the TCM’s physical space leaves room for discussion and analysis surrounding the accuracy of the TCM’s advertising, the presence of ‘tradition’ and ‘nostalgia’, and their purpose within a physical space. As such, Chapter 4 analyzes the descriptive results gathered from this chapter to further understand how the design and execution of the TCM serves to articulate the tropes of tradition and nostalgia.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION & FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The previous chapter has presented a description of what I found when doing a discourse analysis of the TCM’s print advertisement, and a microethnography of the TCM’s physical space. This chapter analyzes the results obtained from the research design, and further contextualizes the analysis by discussing the TCM as a space that uses nostalgia to create an invented tradition. I will begin by analyzing the tropes of tradition and nostalgia as they appear in the TCM’s print advertisement and in its physical space. Next, I will combine the results gathered with academic literature in the field to contextualize whether the TCM can be considered a ‘traditional’ CM as described in their print advertising, even though the TCM first opened in 2010. Third, I will consider how the TCM utilizes tropes of tradition and nostalgia in their advertising and physical design, and what this uncovers in a larger social context. This chapter concludes by explaining the limitations of the study and recommending avenues for future research on this topic.

4.1. ANALYSIS – DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

4.1.1. General Overview

The following section analyzes the results obtained from the discourse analysis of the TCM’s print advertisement, and examines the way it is constructed to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. Ultimately, this section discusses how the TCM aims to appear as a tradition in the print advertisement when, in fact, it uses the trope of nostalgia as a marketing tactic to garner attention and evoke warm memories amongst its readers, thus creating and recreating an invented tradition. This section also
considers the accuracy of the TCM’s print advertisement in comparison to the TCM’s physical space as described in Chapter 3.

4.1.2. TCM Newspaper Advertisement

Results obtained from analyzing the TCM’s print advertisement reveal that the language combined with the visual execution found within the advertisement use the tropes of tradition and nostalgia to create and recreate an invented tradition. I will begin by articulating how the trope of nostalgia is constructed in the advertisement through the use of written language and imagery, and follow up with an explanation of how the trope of tradition is presented within the advertisement in a similar manner.

In my second chapter, I discussed ‘nostalgia’ and traced its definition from being defined as a disease, to an emotion, and finally, to a commodity used for marketing and promotional purposes. One of the primary questions I sought to answer in my analysis of the TCM’s print advertisement is how the trope of nostalgia is embedded into the TCM’s milieu, and its purpose in a larger social context. After analyzing the advertisement, I found that the TCM uses nostalgia marketing tactics in the form of carefully selected language and imagery that aims for its readers to yearn for happier times, and thus encourages them to attend the TCM in an attempt to fill that void. As stated in Chapter 2, the use of nostalgia as a marketing tactic allows brands to capitalize on the promise of “delivering happiness” (Halligan 2011, 3) to the consumer. The TCM therefore uses imagery and language that allows its readers to become obsessed with the “simulacra of the past” (Hines 2007 in Hamilton and Wagner 2014, 815), and forces them to look backwards and yearn for ‘happier times’. By describing itself as “an atmosphere so charming you can’t help but fall in love with the holiday season all over again”, the TCM
is letting its potential visitors know that attending the TCM will not only cure feelings of loss that are often associated with the holiday season, but will also promise to deliver feelings of love, joy, and happiness.

The advertisement also offers a short explanation of the events and experiences offered within the TCM that make it so ‘charming’. By listing the “hundreds of unique and locally handcrafted products, family friendly entertainment, outdoor hospitality lounges”, along with Santa and the elves (as seen in Appendix C), the advertisement does not just tell its visitors that it has an atmosphere worth visiting, but actually gives them a taste of what they will find once they arrive. By providing such a list of events within the TCM, we can assert that the TCM is using nostalgia marketing in hopes that one of the items from the list speaks to the potential visitors’ memories and emotions, resulting in feelings of happiness and a longing for the past. It is clear in Chapter 2 that warm memories “evoke nostalgic emotions” (Hamilton and Wagner 2014, 816), and, as a result, the TCM is using selective language like family, charming, love, and holiday, to induce nostalgic emotions in its readers.

The TCM also uses curated images in an attempt to entice potential visitors and encourage them to visit. The imagery of the young couple embracing (as discussed in Chapter 3, Appendix C) may serve as a reminder to the viewer of a relationship they have, once had, or desire to have. Additionally, the couples’ choice in clothing stimulate feelings of warmth, coziness, or hygge10. The closeness of their embrace, paired with their smiles at one another substantiates Halligan’s notion that nostalgia capitalizes on the

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10 Hygee is a Danish and Norwegian word to describe a mood of coziness combined with feelings of wellness and contentment (Bille 2015).
promise to deliver happiness. The viewers are intended to believe that they will feel this same kind of warmth and happiness seen in the image if they attend the TCM.

The print advertisements’ promise to deliver happiness is not limited to the image of the couple, but is also apparent in the imagery that surrounds the couple. The warm light from the string lights hanging above, and the darkness as depicted from the black background, all of these choices are signifiers that the space that the couple is situated in is a space that is exciting, yet perhaps familiar. The text on the bottom half of the advertisement also tells its viewers that the TCM was “ranked one of the best Christmas Markets in the world by Fodor’s Travel, USA Today, and Mashable”. Such statements let the person viewing the advertisement know that the TCM is not just promising that it will make you happy if you attend, but that the TCM is the best – as solidified by this variety of companies. The text in the TCM’s print advertisement even goes as far as to say that its visitors fall in love with the TCM, and that the atmosphere is so charming that you just “can’t help” it. Such a statement connects to Hamilton and Wagner’s assertion that the use of nostalgia as a marketing tactic can transform mundane activities into unique experiences. The print advertisement implies that going to the TCM is no longer an ordinary activity, but an activity so extraordinary that you just cannot help but participate.

The trope of nostalgia is also evident in the advertisements’ visual presentation of Christmas. Visual artifacts such as twinkling lights, Christmas ornaments, Christmas trees, and the colour red all contribute to the romanticized, fantasized holiday season that is Christmas. Such artifacts reiterate film theorist Lauren Rosewarne’s belief that the season of Christmas “has an intimate connection with nostalgia” (2018, 95) that is constantly being recreated in not just cinema, but in all aspects of social life. Film theorist
Christine Sprengler highlights that nostalgia in film is often achieved through aesthetics, soundtrack, and storyline (Sprengler in Rosewarne 2018, 95). Similarly, then, nostalgia in the TCM’s print advertisement is often achieved through the use of aesthetics, imagery, and language-in-use.

The trope of tradition is also present within the TCM’s print advertisement. Perhaps the most obvious example is the largest text in the print advertisement, which calls the TCM “a Toronto Holiday Tradition”. Subsequently, another question I sought to answer in my analysis of the TCM’s print advertisement is whether the TCM’s identification and self-promotion as a ‘Toronto Holiday Tradition’ is accurate, that is, can the TCM be an accurate reflection of a ‘traditional’ CM. After analyzing the advertisement, I found that although the TCM advertises itself as a ‘Toronto Holiday Tradition’, the text and imagery within the advertisement fits with Hobsbawm and Ranger’s (1983) definition of an ‘invented tradition’ because it is intentionally manufactured or socially fabricated to serve a capitalistic function.

Hobsbawm and Ranger’s definition of an ‘invented tradition’ seems a more accurate definition of the TCM. As stated in Chapter 2, invented traditions can be described as socially constructed practices that aim to “reference old situations”, or “establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 1). The TCM’s print advertisement is an invented tradition because it fits both classifications: that is, it references the old, while simultaneously creating and recreating its own past through repetition. Allow me to explain further. The TCM references its historical past by incorporating the Distillery District’s logo as a central feature in its advertisement. The addition of the Distillery District logo in the advertisement not only
gives the TCM a sense of ‘roots’ or past, but it also feeds into consumerist culture by promoting the permanent retailers within the Distillery District. By placing the Distillery District logo in the centre of the advertisement, the TCM is letting potential visitors know that the Distillery District is not just a location that hosts the TCM but is a historic site that is blended and incorporated into the TCM’s milieu. This example feeds into Hobsbawm and Ranger’s claim that the invention of tradition has become an integral part of contemporary consumer culture. The trope of tradition is therefore reinforced in the print advertisement by referencing old situations or spaces that used to control the Distillery District site.

At the same time, the TCM creates and recreates its own past by incorporating language that references the TCM as an event that has happened for multiple years in a row. For example, a paragraph of text within the TCM’s advertisement says that “last year, over half a million people rediscovered the magic of Christmas”. The use of the word “rediscovered” initiates a sense of continuity or repetition that is often synonymous with tradition, while the word “rediscovered” tells potential visitors that they have not experienced a magical Christmas ‘like the one they used to know’ until they have visited the TCM. The text in the print advertisement is therefore asking its readers to “rediscover” a space that was once a Distillery District, but has been recreated into a new ‘tradition’ – the TCM.

Similarly, the text at the end of the paragraph says that the atmosphere of the TCM is so charming that you “can’t help but fall in love with the holiday season all over again”. The use of “again”, also implies feelings of repetition. Taken together, the discourse presented in the TCM’s advertisement such as the terms “rediscover”, “again”,...
and “tradition” imply that the TCM should be considered a tradition because the market is a pattern of reoccurrence. And while Shils defines tradition as something that lasts over at least three generations (see Chapter 2.4.1.), Hobsbawm and Ranger’s theory of an ‘invented tradition’ ultimately describes the essence of the TCM: a social fabrication that has been established by humans to serve a specific, often capitalistic function. The TCM’s print advertisement is therefore exemplary of an invented tradition because it aims to construct a sort of “lineage with the past that is not necessarily there” (McDowell 2011, 2), and essentially establishes its own past by 1) creating an invented tradition, and 2) recreating this invented tradition year after year.

Based on the results gathered from a discourse analysis of the TCM’s print advertisement, I would argue that the advertisement is not necessarily inaccurate or false, but rather that the TCM is inventing its own tradition and recreates or reinvents that tradition each year by incorporating nostalgic tropes in its print advertisement. By utilizing images and text that signify warmth, togetherness, history, ritualization, and Christmas, the advertisement effectively reflects tropes of tradition and nostalgia, and promotes such tropes to the potential visitor who consumes the advertisement. The next section undertakes an analysis of the microethnography of the TCM site.

4.2. ANALYSIS – MICROETHNOGRAPHY

4.2.1. General Overview

The following section analyzes the results obtained from the microethnography of the TCM’s physical location, and discusses how the site is constructed to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. Results obtained from analyzing the physical TCM as a text reveal that the many juxtapositions within a space that is both
Historic and contemporary results in complexities surrounding what makes the TCM ‘nostalgic’, and what makes a space a place of ‘tradition’. Ultimately, this section discusses how the physical TCM aims to appear as a tradition through the use of its physical location and ‘historic-looking’ aesthetics when, in fact, it is creating and recreating an invented tradition through the use of nostalgia marketing.

4.2.2. The Physical TCM

As stated in Chapter 3, the TCM grounds are notably different from the modern architecture that usually defines the city of Toronto. Asphalt walkways typical of the city are replaced with cobblestone sidewalks, and skyscrapers are exchanged for Victorian-era buildings. Within the first few steps into the TCM, the atmosphere immediately becomes more complex, as the Distillery District buildings are secondary to the small wooden cabins that line the cobblestone walkways. This juxtaposition between the Distillery District buildings and wooden cabins creates immediate tension. When I say ‘tension’ I do not mean to define the term in a negative sense; but rather, I am using the term ‘tension’ to describe the competing priorities that are evident within the design of the TCM. In the paragraphs below, I continue to analyze the TCM’s physical design by describing the various tensions present within space. Analyzing these tensions serve to illustrate the TCM’s tactic to create and recreate an invented tradition through the use of nostalgic tropes.

As briefly mentioned above, there is a noticeable, visual tension between the Distillery District’s permanent buildings and the TCM’s temporarily installed wooden cabin (see Chapter 3, Figure 2). The juxtaposition between these two types of buildings is worthwhile to unpack because it adds complexity to the TCM’s promotional language
claiming to be a ‘Toronto Holiday Tradition’. In other words, the differences between these buildings both visually and historically create a contrast that complicates whether the TCM can be considered a traditional CM. Visually, the small, temporarily installed wooden cabins contrast against the large, brick-laid, permanent Distillery District buildings. This physical distinction illuminates the contradiction between “old” and “new”, “temporary” and “permanent”, and even brings up questions regarding the accuracy of each buildings’ construction. Apart from these visual tensions, historic tensions are also present when comparing the Distillery District buildings to the wooden cabins because both buildings are not the ‘original’ but have been reconstructed to mimic something else. Some of the Distillery District buildings were refurbished to emulate the original Distillery buildings that housed the whiskey distillery for Gooderham & Worts Limited, whereas the wooden cabins were constructed in a way that nods to early CMs from Europe in the Late Middle Ages.

Chapters 1 and 2 respectively provided a history of the Distillery District and chronicled CMs as they grew within and beyond Europe to the rest of the world. While providing this context has illustrated that the Distillery District and the CM have a historical past, it also exemplifies that having such a past could have helped to construct the narrative of the TCM being called a “Toronto Holiday Tradition”. The Distillery District buildings are a reminder that the Canadian Gooderham & Worts company was once the largest distillery in the world. The wooden cabins placed around the Distillery District during the TCM are a reminder that early versions of CMs emerged in Europe during the Late Middle Ages. As such, both the Distillery District buildings and the temporary wooden cabins have an important history that, in a way, deems them to be
‘traditional’. The trope of tradition is thus present at the TCM because of the visual and historic construction of these unique buildings.

However, both the Distillery District buildings and the TCM’s wooden cabins are, in a way, factitious. The Distillery District site and the buildings within the site are not the same as they were when the site was a whiskey distillery, but rather, are a combination of traditional cityscapes, permanent retailers, and housing units that were refurbished or rebuilt by the current Distillery District owners, Cityscape Holdings (as detailed in Chapter 1) to simulate the original buildings from the past. In a similar vein, the TCM’s wooden cabins are not ‘original’ wood cabins but were built to resemble something that could be deemed ‘authentic’ based on their aesthetics. Thus, the rebuilding of both the Distillery District buildings and the TCM’s temporary wooden cabins juxtapose the way we conceptualize tradition, because although both have a unique, separate, but nonetheless celebrated history, both sets of buildings were also manufactured. And not only were these buildings manufactured, but the wooden cabins were manufactured for the purpose of recreating a kind of ‘European tradition’ or, in this case, an invented tradition. The juxtaposition between the permanent architecture and pop-up milieu therefore signals the (re)imagination and gentrification of the TCM propagated on the trope of tradition.

Other contributions to the TCM’s (re)creation of tradition and nostalgia include the market’s use of repurposed whiskey barrels as standing tables or for decoration, and the constant flow of alcohol from one of their many beer, wine, and/or spirits gardens. With each sip of an alcoholic beverage, the visitor is supposed to be reminded that the site where they are drinking was once a whiskey distillery and such examples, yet again,
are nods to the Distillery District’s past. Moreover, such examples contribute to the (re)imagination of the site as a TCM propagated on the trope of tradition and nostalgia.

The trope of nostalgia also permeates through and within both the Distillery District and the wooden cabins, as the (re)construction of such buildings aims to induce longings for the past. As referenced in Chapter 2, “nostalgia is part and parcel of a turbulence of times that is constantly brought forth by cultures” (Landwehr 2018, 267). The TCM creators’ decision to place the market in the Distillery District, and their decision to build European-style wooden cabins are just some of the ways that the market uses nostalgic elements to create this trope of tradition, or of an invented tradition.

Tensions within the TCM are not only evident in terms of the traditional cityscape that makes up the Distillery District and the European-inspired wooden cabins. There are also visual tensions that exist when juxtaposing the Distillery District historic site with the new and phantasmagoric items that the TCM places within the space to create excitement amongst visitors. The addition of a Ferris Wheel, Carousel, and even a visit with Santa within the TCM transform what could be a simple CM into an extraordinary amusement park. Additions such as fencing at the entrances, security on site, and the purchasing of tickets for entry all contribute to this ‘amusement park-esque’ atmosphere, and blur the lines between what is ‘new’ and what is ‘traditional’. Cultural theorist John Storey cautions that “the invention of Christmas was driven by a utopian nostalgia; an attempt to recreate an imagined past” (Storey in Rosewarne 2018, 94). Thus, the TCM creators use phantasmagoric items and activities that reflect the trope of nostalgia because they are activities that aim to remind visitors of an idealized past or childhood that references fantasy, amusement, and play. Nostalgic appeals are therefore made through
clichés that reference a rose-tinted past that may be completely artificial. These additions to the TCM in contrast to the Distillery District as a historic site also expose the fractures between tradition and change in a society increasingly dominated by mass culture (Perry 2010, 143).

It cannot be disregarded that the TCM has been at the Distillery District every holiday season since 2010, and it is through this ritualization that such “norms become hegemonic” (Horsley and Tracy 2001, 57), so much so that the TCM distinguishes itself not just as a tradition, but as a holiday tradition. The physical design of the TCM and its nods to the Christmas season are endless, and such aesthetics contribute to the nostalgic tropes present within the TCM. From subtleties such as Christmas music playing in the background and twinkly lights hanging overhead, to obvious nods to Christmas like the 40-foot tree and “Countdown to Christmas” sign, the celebration of the holiday season as constructed throughout the TCM, is what drives the trope of nostalgia. And as discussed in Chapter 2, nostalgia acts as an exploitable asset that encourages consumers to participate, spend, and revisit the TCM year after year.

Sponsorships and their associated activities play a large role within the TCM, as the activations they provide make up a large part of the market. As discussed in Chapter 3, almost all of the Premium Sponsors incorporate the holiday season, and specifically Christmas, into their activations, whether it be Gay Lea’s interactive advent calendar, Ziploc and Glade’s photo-friendly life-sized toy soldiers, or Indigo’s Christmas-themed pop-up shop. Similar to the way the TCM decorated the Distillery District with Christmas-themed adornments, the celebration of the Christmas season itself that was present in almost all of the sponsors were woven throughout the TCM, and this is
reflective of the trope of nostalgia because it signals or references an idealized past.

Some sponsors went as far as to having their own European-style wood cabin in the TCM that resembled the ones for local merchants. In this way, the bigger corporation took on the ‘local, handcrafted, traditional’ aesthetic or trope that reflected and promoted nostalgia. Werther’s was one company that utilized this tactic. In their own small wooden cabin, the company gave away samples of their newest caramel. On either side of Werther’s were smaller local companies, and yet Werther’s decision to stand amongst these local companies was intentional to appear as ‘authentic’ and ‘traditional’. Even Cacao 70, a permanent location within the Distillery District, had their own wooden cabin outside of their shop in hopes of captivating the visitors’ attention and increasing purchase potential.

Interestingly, what the TCM did effectively was design the market in a way that had the potential to induce feelings of nostalgia for many diverse groups of people to experience. In other words, the trope of nostalgia was a fluid concept within the TCM, and was constantly being altered and utilized to serve different interests and purposes. An example to substantiate this argument was the varied cuisine provided for visitors in the market. Apart from the permanent restaurants available at the Distillery District, the diverse array of eateries in wooden cabins within the TCM made it a site where people from all walks of life could come to dine and experience food from their place of origin. From German Bratwurst and Canadian Poutine to an Asian-inspired noodle bar, the TCM reflects and promotes the tropes of nostalgia and tradition by providing cuisine that reminds visitors of their favourite comfort food from a specific place in time, or from home – wherever home is for them. The TCM therefore uses food as a means to bring out
nostalgic tropes surrounding traditional values around food, cooking, and the like.

This sense of diversity is also translated to the handcrafted items made by merchants in the wooden cabins. While the merchants were typically Toronto-based, and many did not have an ‘official’ name, the merchants themselves and the trinkets sold reflected an array of backgrounds and interests. The Dutch Shop, Canadiana, El Tambache knitwear, and Eastern European Gifts were just some of the store shops available within the TCM.

Diversity within the TCM also translates to the lack of visuals or aesthetics relating to religion. There was no nativity scene, no reference to Christianity, and no construction whatsoever to indicate that the TCM was a religious event. The lack of religious-ness in the TCM reiterates the fact that the TCM is for everyone to attend, and welcomes visitors from any background or ethnicity. This is especially significant given the diversity prevalent in the city of Toronto. According to the 2016 Census, 46.1% of the population in Toronto is composed of immigrants, while 49.2% of the racial composition of Toronto self-identifies as a visible minority (Statistics Canada 2016). It is clear then, that the lack of religious visuals was an intentional decision made by the TCM’s creators to encourage visitors from any background, faith, or ethnicity to attend.

Ultimately, a microethnography of the TCM reveals that no matter the time or date of attendance, the physical design of the site presents many tensions that contribute to the TCM’s tactic to create and recreate an invented tradition through the use of nostalgic tropes. From the aesthetics of the permanent and temporary buildings, the consumerist activities available, the Christmas decorations, and finally, the experiential
activities present within the market, the execution of the physical design of the TCM aims to achieve a Christmas ‘just like the one we used to know’, while simultaneously employing phantasmagoric activities to achieve a Christmas like never before.

4.3. DISCUSSION

Love. Joy. Family. Coffee. Peace. Shop. The light-up signs discussed in Chapter 3.5.3. literally illuminate what the TCM values most, or what they want visitors to value most – to consume, but also to be consumed by the nostalgic tropes constructed in the TCM’s milieu. The TCM’s promotional advertisement also encapsulates this sentiment by utilizing words such as ‘locally handcrafted’, ‘family’, ‘love’, and ‘atmosphere so charming’ in their advertising spot to describe the TCM. It is evident then, that in both the promotional advertisement and physical space, the TCM is not only encouraging consumerism but, perhaps more importantly, is aiming to encourage people to feel a particular kind of emotion when seeing these signs or reading this advertisement. This is the trope of nostalgia at play. And it is this very trope of nostalgia that feeds into the consumerist culture that the TCM embodies. The cycle is continuously perpetuated, where consumers feel nostalgic while visiting the TCM and consume, and then the very act of consumption increases feelings of nostalgia.

As highlighted in Chapter 2.3.3., the use of nostalgia as a marketing tool or as a means to encourage consumption is not a novel concept. Joe Perry (2010) encapsulates the concept of nostalgia and consumerism within the context of a CM when he states the following:

The history of the Christmas market belies this nostalgic view of collective holiday harmony. The arrival of industrial consumer society deeply marked these supposedly timeless, indigenous markets, as the bourgeoisie struggled to restrain
and reinvent the time and space of popular festivity. Transformed by the late nineteenth-century industrialization and urbanization, the turn-of-the-century Christmas market became a contact zone where a diverse range of actors negotiated competing social and economic interests and established positions of inequality and coexistence. (Perry 2010, 157)

The tropes of tradition and nostalgia are therefore deeply embedded into the TCM’s milieu because they serve the ultimate goal of the market: to make money.

Although there was little existing academic literature on the topic of tradition and nostalgia in relation to a CM, much of the results gathered from this discourse analysis and microethnography were unsurprising based on previous research of nostalgia marketing tactics. However, while the goal of any capitalistic organization is to gain more capital, the results from analyzing the TCM revealed that the physical site is much more complex than it appears at face value.

The purpose or reason behind the creation of the TCM is not solely a self-fulfilling prophecy focused on increasing tourism and profits when we know that there are 1) local merchants selling their handmade goods for personal profit, 2) the TCM gives a portion of their admission sales to three local charities, and 3) some of the attractions offered by the TCM make visitors smile at no associated cost\(^{11}\). And yet, the TCM still generates capitalistic tension a number of ways. The TCM encloses their local merchants in a small cabin while the Distillery District’s permanent retailers line the perimeter, and forces the two entities to compete with one another. The TCM also fails to publicly disclose the percentage of their profits that go to each local charity they claim to support, and allows corporate sponsors to overshadow their local merchants by deeming the

\(^{11}\) Assuming one attends the TCM on a weekday and did not pay for admission.
payment conglomerate company Interac® to be the primary way for visitors to pay for their crafted item.

Nonetheless, the TCM is also unique from any other CM that uses nostalgia as a marketing tool to create an invented tradition because of its placement within the Distillery District, and the historical context that this particular site provides. By combining the European-inspired Christmas milieu with its placement in a Canadian historic landscape, the TCM is using tropes of nostalgia to (re)create an invented tradition. The TCM therefore relies on these tropes in their promotional material and in their physical site as a way to capitalize on people’s romantic longing for the past – whatever their past may entail.

This discussion has highlighted implications regarding the way that the physical design of the TCM is constructed to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. Below, I list a few recommendations for the TCM to improve their execution, while still allowing the market to reflect and promote the tropes of tradition and nostalgia that make it the market that it is:

1. **Reveal the percentage of profits that goes to the TCM’s 3 charities.**

   The TCM claims to be a charming and romantic atmosphere in their print advertising. Letting its visitors know where their admission money is going increases transparency, which will make attending this “holiday tradition” even more worthwhile.

2. **Allow the smaller companies to accept cash as a method of payment.**

   If the TCM allows small, local companies to sell their handcrafted items at the
market for the purpose of constructing nostalgia, they should allow all companies to accept cash when a visitor purchases their item. Not only is this method of payment better for the individual company, but paying in cash has ‘retro’ roots, as discussed in Chapter 2, and this will tap into positive cultural memories for the visitor, increasing nostalgic tropes and thus increasing the potential to consume.

3. Let visitors know about the Distillery District’s cultural history.

Beer gardens and whiskey barrels are small touches, but they are not enough to contextualize the history that defines the Distillery District. Create nostalgia within an invented tradition by incorporating more historical context in the TCM. Whether it is getting the TCM to offer Distillery District tours that combine a history of both the TCM and the Distillery District, or simply providing more information on the Distillery District on the outskirts of the TCM, let visitors know why the TCM is truly a ‘tradition’, and why it is a space worth visiting. After all, the most important part of the TCM, is the “experience of the visit itself” (Perry 2010) and the way people feel when they attend the market.

4.4. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This study had methodological limitations due to my research design. First, because I chose a qualitative research design consisting of a discourse analysis and a microethnography, the results of the study were limited to my personal thoughts and interpretations. Second, the research design omitted any human interaction. Again, this study relied on me as the researcher to interpret the results based on my own findings, which limits the interpretability of the results. To address these methodological limitations, future research could include semi-structured interviews with either TCM
visitors, vendors, or the team that designs the TCM. This would ensure that diverse opinions are contributing to my research, which would increase the validity of my results.

As well, conducting semi-structured interviews with the TCM’s design team could reveal more in-depth information about the TCM that I would not have known about otherwise. Such information provided by the design team could substantiate my arguments and give context to my analysis and overall discussion of the TCM. For example, I would ask questions regarding the design team’s decision to model the TCM after European markets, and ask how their design reflects that decision. I would also ask the creators of the TCM why they believe that the TCM is considered a ‘traditional’ CM as stated in their print advertising, and inquire as to what percentage of admission profits go to charity. Ultimately, involving humans in some aspect of my research, whether that be through semi-structured interviews or through participants observation, would offer a unique perspective that could further inform my research questions.

Apart from the limitations of my research design, there are also limitations that arise from my choice to study the TCM’s physical design. As mentioned in section 2.3., the TCM has multiple signs, samples, and activities that encourage participants to take photos of the market and post those photos to social media using the hashtag #TCM18. Such examples include the Interac® photo backdrop, the merci sleigh with a photo backdrop, and the Christmas signs throughout the TCM that have the hashtag #TCM18. The TCM is also active on social media, with running accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Since the TCM has a large online and social presence, it would have been interesting to incorporate their social media platforms into my research. Doing this could have given insight as to how the TCM constructs its self-image online, how this
compares to the physical market, and whether its online presence also reflects and promotes the tropes of tradition and nostalgia. While omitting the TCM’s online presence from my research is limiting, it would be too expansive to analyze every platform through which the TCM advertises within the confines of a Master’s thesis. For this reason, the TCM’s online platforms were excluded from my research.

To move this research forward, it would be valuable to examine the relationship that visitors have with the TCM. While the results showed that the TCM aims to initiate feelings of nostalgia in all its visitors by incorporating different cultural nods in its cuisine, consumption, and overall aesthetics, it would be interesting to investigate how diverse groups react to the physical design of the TCM. More specifically, then, future research could focus on sampling TCM visitors from different religious backgrounds to interrogate how different people relate to the TCM and how tradition and nostalgia relate to their identity or sense of self. It would be worthwhile to conduct structured or semi-structured interviews with these visitors to learn more about their hometown, birth town, and religious history, the visitors’ motivations for attending the TCM, what their expectations of the market were, and their feelings towards the market after visiting in relation to tradition and nostalgia. Ultimately, incorporating the visitor voice would be a direction I would like to see my research take when considering future studies of Canadian CMs such as the TCM.
Bibliography


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Appendices

Appendix A: List of dates and times I attended the Toronto Christmas Market.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Attended</th>
<th>Time Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, December 15th, 2017</td>
<td>3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, December 17th, 2017</td>
<td>1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, December 20th, 2017</td>
<td>7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, November 22nd, 2018</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, December 9th, 2018</td>
<td>1:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 13th, 2018</td>
<td>7:00 p.m. – 9:15 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, December 16th, 2018</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: List of Toronto Christmas Market Print Advertisement Appearances in *The Toronto Star*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Size of Advertisement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, November 23rd, 2018</td>
<td>½ spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, November 28th, 2018</td>
<td>¼ spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, November 30th, 2018</td>
<td>¼ spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, December 3rd, 2018</td>
<td>¼ spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 6th, 2018</td>
<td>¼ spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, December 15th, 2018</td>
<td>¼ spread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Toronto Christmas Market Print Advertisement (half-spread)
Appendix D: Toronto Christmas Market Print Advertisement (quarter-spread)
Appendix E: Toronto Christmas Market Print Advertisement (quarter spread)
Curriculum Vitae

Name: Lydia Joy Gibson

Post-Secondary Education and Degrees:
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2013 – 2017, B.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2017 – 2019, M.A.

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2017

Related Work Experience:
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