

## The Bushman Brand in Southern African Tourism : An Indigenous Modernity in a Neoliberal Political Economy

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## **The Bushman Brand in Southern African Tourism: An Indigenous Modernity in a Neoliberal Political Economy**

Stasja Koot

*Wageningen University*

[T]he time has come for the San community to “market ourselves”.

Elsarien Katiti<sup>1)</sup>

Otherness tends to lose all its asperity. Tourism, for example, usually amounts to no more than a journey on the spot, with the same redundancies of images and behaviour.

Félix Guattari (1989: 19)

### **ABSTRACT**

Many scholars have explained that the primordial image of Bushmen, in which they are represented as the ‘authentic’ indigenous people of nature, is a significant construct that contributes to their contemporary marginalised status. This image continues in the post-independence and post-apartheid contexts of South African and Namibian tourism. In this industry, the Bushman image tends to be fortified in the context of a broader neoliberal political economy. This fortification has consequently created a setting in which images are commodified more than ever before, although this is of course the result of a longer historical process. This chapter explores how the image of the Bushmen has changed throughout history, where it stands today in tourism, and what the consequences of this are. The Bushman image is demonstrated to have become a brand, the ‘Bushman brand’, suited mostly to Western ideas about who these people are. Today, Bushmen show a strong dependence upon market forces if they wish to work in tourism, where they are compelled to invent and reinvent their traditions based on tourists’ expectations. This process creates an uncomfortable contradiction for those working in or supporting tourism: using the Bushman brand to adapt to the demands of tourism simultaneously makes this a product, which is generally considered ‘inauthentic’. However, although at first this might sound like an exploitative situation in which the Bushmen are victims of more powerful forces in the market, the author argues that in some cases the Bushman brand can provide for their agency, to be used strategically as a so-called indigenous

modernity, in which ‘modern’ phenomena, e.g. the Bushman brand, are used to reassert and even fortify their identity as the authentic indigenous people.

## INTRODUCTION

The Bushmen have two contradictory images, neither of which captures today’s realities. In some cases, they represent the image of ‘pristine’ hunter-gatherers, leading an ‘authentic’ life as humanity’s ancestors, in tune with nature. In other cases, they are regarded as marginalised victims because of southern Africa’s past apartheid regime and current forces of worldwide capitalism (Hitchcock et al. 2006: 1). In tourism, the former image dominates. Throughout the years, much has been written about this image of the ‘indigenous’ peoples of southern Africa as ‘authentic’ people of nature (Carrier and West 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Schenck 2008; Sylvain 2014; Tomaselli 2012a).<sup>2)</sup> This image, also called the ‘Bushman myth’ (Gordon and Douglas 2000), is mostly based on the idea of the male hunter; women’s gathering activities are rarely depicted in touristic imagery. Such imagery of indigenous people as people of nature or as ‘natural ecologists’ is not restricted to the Bushmen of southern Africa; actually, it has a long history and follows a global pattern. Although this phenomenon is often associated with exploitation, such is not always the case. For example, native Americans performing at Euro-Disney at a ‘Wild West Show’ do not view tourist performances as perpetuating the image of a ‘native savage’. Such performances can create a sense of taking back ownership of native representation through their participation, providing them a chance for cultural exchange, education, cultural pride, and accomplishment (Scarangella 2005: 17). Furthermore, for Bushmen, tourism is a potential strategy for generating income and regaining control over the production, reproduction, and packaging of their own image (Suzman 2001: 135). Nevertheless, in the case of the Bushmen it is often assumed that they ‘do not participate in visual discourse, they are always represented as different and other: a silent minority who show no resistance to the identity which has been historically created for them’ (Bester and Buntman 1999: 58).

In this chapter, the author presents various cases in which the Bushmen *do* show agency in relation to their image in tourism. The author aims both to investigate the marketing of this touristic image by positioning it in the contemporary neoliberal capitalist political economy and to show some of the Bushmen’s responses to this marketing. The image itself has now become a financial asset in tourism. It therefore can be considered a brand: the ‘Bushman brand’. In the end, from an anthropological perspective, a brand can be regarded as ‘a process of attaching an idea to a product’ (cf. McCracken 2006; Walker 2006), which is exactly what the Bushman myth has turned into: a product with ideas attached to it. Seen as such, static representations of indigenous cultures are like brands in the contemporary neoliberal political economy, in which, according to Harvey, ‘[n]eoliberalization has meant...the financialization of everything’

(2005: 33). In tourism, indigenous people's image is commodified within the free market system: a particular product is shown, which gains financial value. In this way, it becomes an asset based on the many ideas attached to it.

Various scholars such as Gordon and Douglas (2000) and Sylvain (2014) have explained that the primordial image of Bushmen as hunter-gatherers is a construct that contributes to their contemporary marginalised status. Nevertheless, this image persists in the post-independence and post-apartheid contexts of Namibia, South Africa, and Botswana, not least in the tourism industry, a key driver of neoliberal capitalism, spreading its ideas and values to the remotest areas (Duffy 2013). Using Marshal Sahlins' (1999b: vi-vii) ideas of 'indigenous modernities', the author argues not only that this brand has made the Bushmen victims of such powerful forces in the contemporary global political economy, but also that they are sometimes in a position to use their agency to bend this brand to their advantage.

One can hardly deny that Bushmen often find themselves in a marginalised position in relation to more powerful forces that are shaping their environment, such as capitalism and modern technology, but one can also add empirical examples demonstrating that, in some cases, Bushmen can be agents who are actively engaged in the contemporary environment of tourism. Sahlins (1999b) explained that the survival of indigenous peoples is dependent upon modern means of production, communication, and transportation, including rifles, radios, and motorized vehicles. They can acquire these products with money from public transfer payments, wage labour, and so on. This integration of industrial technologies and systems into indigenous cosmologies is what he designated as 'indigenous modernities'. Whereas Sahlins' idea concentrated on the material world, here the Bushman brand is examined as an 'indigenous modernity', thereby expanding its meaning into the immaterial and symbolic milieu.

Indigenous people's first response to the encroachment of the capitalist world is not necessarily to imitate a Western lifestyle, but to use the available modernities to become 'more indigenous' by strategically engaging with new or modern commodities. In this process, people can selectively transform the usage of these commodities for themselves. Therefore, they often have not merely entered the capitalist world economy as passive objects of exploitation; they are also active agents continually engaging in their environment (Sahlins 1992). The modern, or 'inauthentic', does not necessarily lead indigenous groups to seek first to become 'like us'. They can also use modern products to strengthen their own identity, to become *more* 'authentic'. These processes arise not only in the material environment, where modern products (such as rifles, cars, and cell phones) have been introduced. In the immaterial environment, modern values such as democracy, human rights, national law, profit maximisation, and corporatism have also been introduced into the processes of encapsulation and commercialisation. Despite the capitalist effects of economic exploitation, production, and dependency, indigenous people have demonstrated themselves to be willing and

capable of active appropriation and creative reinvention of such modernities to fulfil their material and cultural needs with development resources (Robins 2003: 269–271).

The findings of this paper are based on research for larger case studies of Bushmen in tourism, for which the author conducted Ph.D. fieldwork in 2010 (Koot 2013). Although data on the #Khomani in South Africa and the Ju/'hoansi in Namibia are based mainly on that research, material related to the Hai//om is also partly based on the author's longer-term engagement with them since 1999. The author's MA thesis about the resettlement farm of Tsintsabis in northern Namibia led to involvement – along with some of the people of Tsintsabis – in the introduction of the Treesleeper Camp, a community-based tourism initiative. The author lived in Tsintsabis and worked for the Treesleeper project between 2002 and 2007 (Hüncke and Koot 2012; Koot 2012, 2015, 2016a, 2016b).

The following first introduces the idea of the brand as an indigenous modernity, with subsequent elaboration of the Bushman brand: the author's interpretation, its relation to authenticity, and its essential contradiction as a neoliberal capitalist phenomenon. Later, the author presents empirical data from one case study in South Africa and two in Namibia.

## THE BRAND AS AN AUTHENTIC INVENTED TRADITION

According to Urry (2002: 13–14), tourists' basic motivation is to experience things in reality that they have already experienced in their imagination, based on advertising and other messages from the media. In this vein, cultural tourism experiences can be regarded as predecessors of so-called 'curated experiences', which are a contemporary type of marketing in which people keep looking for '[s]omething that turns their mundane day-to-day into something magical' (Aliquo, cited in Holly 2013). Thus, tourism expectations of other, 'authentic' people are often based on what individuals have already experienced at home, with these experiences being generated in various settings throughout history. For example, between 1870 and 1940 there were circuses, world exhibitions, markets, and zoos in Europe showing various groups of people from the colonial countries who were considered special because of their skin colour, looks, and habits. By far the most famous case from southern Africa is that of a Nama woman, Saartje Baartman, who was exhibited in England and France starting in 1810. The body of this 'Hottentot Venus' was finally returned to South Africa in 2002 (Allegaert, Cailliau, and Scharloo 2009: 5; Sliggers 2009: 9–18). In the 1950s, Bushmen from Namibia were displayed at the Van Riebeeck Festival. Even in the 1990s, the Kruiper family from Kagga Kamma were displayed traditionally at various places such as shopping centres or at the Cape Town tourism indaba (Gordon, Rassool, and Witz 1996). Today, television programs such as 'Greetings from the Bush' (*Groeten uit de Rimboe*) in the Netherlands and 'Toast Cannibal' (*Toast Kannibaal*) in Belgium show a strong interest in indigenous people. In these television series, Western

families are visiting 'authentic' people elsewhere and live with them for a while, after which the 'authentic' families come over to Europe and stay with the Western people. Cultural differences tend to be extremely magnified and dramatized as culture shocks, leading to misunderstandings and tragedies (Allegaert, Cailliau, and Scharloo 2009: 6; Arnaut 2009: 162–163; Draper, Spierenburg, and Wels 2007: 222). In the end, the drama and misunderstanding produced by or produced for these cultural encounters create a television spectacle (Debord 1967).

In western anthropological accounts and other literature, hunter-gatherers were stereotypically portrayed as savages, surviving examples of the 'natural' state of man, who 'live like animals' or 'live little better than animals' (Ingold 2000: 61–62). In this vein, when it comes to tourism, the Bushmen are often still considered part and parcel of nature, an image that can be viewed in the wider context of romanticism about Africa. The tourist sector in southern Africa has typical branding strategies that tap into this image of a wild Africa and portray the continent as spectacular, thriving with wildlife, and sparsely populated by some western explorers and exotic people (Ellis 1994: 54). Indigenous people are often characterised as the authentic 'natural ecologists' or the wise protectors of the land. As such, they can function as an example for non-indigenous people who can begin to live in harmony with nature just like them (Fennell 2008). In marketing campaigns, such people are often 'naturalised' for tourist consumption and are shown in photographs, for example, in traditional dress with the local flora and fauna (Chambers 2000: 79–80). In the case of the Bushmen, the male hunter seems to exemplify this 'natural ecologist' tourism image.

The touristic specifically examines the Bushmen's traditional lifestyle, as part of nature. This is what Eric Hobsbawm calls a constructed and formally instituted 'invented tradition':

[Invented traditions] attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past [and are] responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition (Hobsbawm 1983: 1–2).

When rapid transformation occurs in a society and old traditions are less likely to function effectively, inventions of traditions tend to occur more frequently because the social patterns on which the old traditions were based lose value (Hobsbawm 1983: 4–5). Particularly because tourism is an important driver in the growth of capitalism, such inventions seem 'to be banking on a return to the past, however artificial, and on a reconstitution of ways of being that were familiar to our ancestors' (Guattari 1989: 31).

Therefore, invented traditions, however much they might initially appear to be a simplification of traditional cultures, are important cultural responses to the encroachment of the western capitalist system. They are invented in the specific

terms of the people who construct them as an indigenisation of modernity, to acquire their own cultural space in the global scheme of things (Sahlins 1999a). Using their 'authentic culture' to their own benefit in this way means that indigenous people use the ideas about their cultures as indigenous modernities, in which they have adapted their behaviour to the tourists' expectations of authenticity (Tomaselli 1996: 102). An isolated existence and life in harmony with nature are parts of the wider Bushman image. They are thus constructed as authentic. Therefore, the fascination for tourists is the (ascribed) identity of the Bushmen as primitive others, marketed as a scarce resource, off the beaten track, almost extinct, and so on (Garland and Gordon 1999: 271; Guenther 2002: 51–52).

Westerners, including tourists, see the progress of modernity as a state that depends on modernity's own *inauthenticity*, which creates the belief that reality and authenticity are always elsewhere: in the past or in the simpler, purer cultures that exist far away (MacCannell 1976: 3). Driven by consumer culture, 'the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an age that hungers for anything that *feels* authentic' (Banet-Weiser 2012: 3). Today, branding reflects our cultural and social relations. Marketers acknowledge the power of authenticity as an essential aspect of branding. This is an area where we, 'the inauthentic', search for genuine affects, ideas, and emotions in our consumer culture (Banet-Weiser 2012: 4–5). In this, curated experiences can be very helpful (Holly 2013) and can be found in many indigenous tourism activities.

## THE CONTRADICTION OF THE PRODUCT

Indigenous societies are neither traditional ('authentic') nor modern ('inauthentic'), but hybrid. However, NGO and donor agendas are at the heart of a dual mandate, as they attempt both to promote the cultural survival of indigenous people (for example, by undertaking language projects) and to help them become 'modern citizens' (for example, by implementing democratic decision-making processes). Whereas NGOs tend to follow hybrid strategies, advocates of modernisation and traditionalism on both sides seem to share a discomfort with the hybrid (Robins 2001: 841–843). This struggle can also be found in Bushman tourism, which is also often set up by, or with the assistance of, NGOs.

Consequently, indigenous tourism creates a contradiction in which Western ideals about nature and the people living there are enacted through the free market, creating products based on the tourists' consumptive needs. In this way, tourists spread 'inauthentic' capitalist values and the market system, instead of supporting authentic indigenous practices (Carrier and West 2004). In fact, ethnic commodities are contradictory in the sense that, seen from the conventional assumptions about value and price, the appeal of such commodities lies in the idea that they resist the rationality of ordinary economics. However, this does not mean that those who commodify their identities will always remain victims of market



forces, although it might appear this way at first. Numerous examples can be cited in which indigenous groups set up their own entrepreneurial activities based on their authentic ethnicity. In this, there is a good level of tactical and critical consciousness (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 20–27).

Without denying the importance of the social relationship between tourists and indigenous people or the symbolism and meanings behind their exchanges of commodities (MacCarthy 2015), the presence of tourists ultimately means that they automatically impose neoliberal capitalist values on to the local cultures that are thereby commodified. In this process, marketing functions to isolate the mysterious indigenous cultures in the tourists' minds, as if the indigenous people are excluded from the problems of the 'modern' world (Fletcher and Neves 2012: 65–66). Therefore, the commercialisation of ethnological performances by 'ex-primitives' in tourism is potentially a long-term economic adaptation in which the marketing specifically focuses on an experience with the imagined inhabitants (MacCannell 1992: 18–19). The examples that follow illustrate how some groups have embraced the Bushman brand to be able to share the fruits of neoliberal capitalism.

## THE #KHOMANI, SOUTH AFRICA

The #Khomani Bushmen are a social group of people who are made up of smaller groups with sometimes very different ethnic backgrounds, to increase their chances of success in a land claim (Koot 2013; Robins 2001; Schenck 2008). The authentic Bushman identity, in this case as 'authentic' #Khomani, was used before and after the land claim. It has played an important role in the process of acquiring land (Ellis 2014: 181).

During South Africa's land reform process in the 1990s, the traditionally dressed Kruiper family, who had been working at the Kagga Kamma tourist lodge, attracted a great deal of national and international attention from CNN, *Time*, and *National Geographic* (Robins 2000: 57–58). By behaving 'traditionally', they continued to show the world (and particularly in the media, by working with various filmmakers and through tourism) that they are 'real' Bushmen or #Khomani who belong to this land. In fact, at Kagga Kamma, the leader Dawid Kruiper had explained, 'I am an animal of nature. I want people to see me and know who I am' (cited in White 1995: 17). In this case, 'seeing' is fully adapted to market demand. They lived at a simulated hunter-gatherer camp and were urged by the owner of Kagga Kamma to dress traditionally for tourists and to display their crafts (for sale). After the usual cultural performances, tourists would return to their luxury chalets, and the Bushmen would exchange their loin cloths for western rags and move to a shanty settlement. It is precisely by removing the traditional traces they enacted for tourists that they ended up not just as beggars in ordinary clothes, however marginalised their lives might have been. Yet, by being seen, they became a people with a culture ('tradition and mode of life') and in



turn could *see* themselves this way (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 10–11), thereby internalising the Bushman brand by adding the image to their own identity.

Nevertheless, they were not merely passive victims of exploitation. They also showed agency. For more than a decade they obtained an income from tourism, participated in a successful land claim, and made their own decision to leave Kaggga Kamma. Therefore, Bushman imagery based on primitivist and tribal discourse is not always imposed from above by the West on powerless victims; it is often reshaped and rearticulated from below (Robins 2000). The Bushmen at Kaggga Kamma were not ‘untouched’ hunter-gatherers, nor were they isolated from modernisation and the industrialised world. They produced crafts and performed services for tourists, which shows that they actively participated in the global cash economy (White 1995: 25). They continue to use the Bushman brand for this participation, which is arguably their most precious contemporary asset.

Today, various #Khomani attempt to perpetuate the use of this Bushman brand. For example, the first thing that catches one’s eye when arriving in their reclaimed land are the craft makers along the road side. The road stalls, or *stalletjies* in Afrikaans, are found in various places along the roads near Andriesvale, where local #Khomani sell their products to tourists (Figure 1). The crafters have learned to adapt their products to tourists’ wishes, for example by making necklaces and bracelets a bit larger (as tourists generally are larger than the Bushmen) and by making bows and arrows that can fit into a suitcase. Thus,



Figure 1 Typical view at a *stalletjie* (Photograph by the author).

the crafts sold here are not always the same as the ‘authentic’ artefacts and simulacra that were used long ago, but the people know what will sell (Tomaselli 2005: 46).

The Bushman brand also informs the website and promotional materials of !Xaus Lodge inside the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (cf. Finlay and Barnabas 2012). #Khomani who work at, or have worked at, this ‘cooperation lodge’ are well aware of this: a former Bushman employee would explain that ‘we are the advertisements for !Xaus’. Moreover, according to the African Safari Lodge Foundation NGO (‘the ASLF’), another #Khomani lodge would be a welcome asset inside the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park to support the further economic development of the #Khomani. Along these lines, and underscoring the importance of adapting the Bushmen’s authenticity to market demand, the #Khomani culture could even get included on the UNESCO World Heritage List<sup>3)</sup>, which may then increase the marketing and branding potential of the area (Massyn et al. 2010: 90). The ASLF also believes that the #Khomani need their ‘own brand identity’ to be able to survive in today’s competitive tourism industry (ASLF 2011: 3). In fact, a socially responsible marketing company called GRID Branding & Design has supported the #Khomani in acquiring (free of charge) their own website, to which the #Khomani added a ‘beautiful logo’. Moreover, GRID supported the #Khomani in developing ‘their new identity’, although it remains unclear what exactly they mean by this.<sup>4)</sup>

Becoming a #Khomani brand means that the Bushmen are becoming part of the neoliberal capitalist system as *a brand*, and not as ‘authentic’ hunter-gatherers. To a large portion of the #Khomani this is not problematic at all. As Schenck (2008: 102) noted, ‘[i]n the case of the #Khomani it is not the search for the unique in their culture which determines their relationship to ethno-business, it is rather the survival of remnants of a culture as a result of what has been marketable over the past eighty years’. The new identity for the #Khomani is developed to attract more tourists to participate in Bushman experiences. This idea is based on the Bushman brand, in which the #Khomani are regarded as a homogeneous community. This raises some important issues because,

[w]hile the translation of the *Bushman myth* into a *Bushman brand* may benefit the community as marketing strategy guaranteeing income generation, the accompanying immobility of an “authentic” #Khomani identity [...] hinders the realisation of the potential for material sovereignty and development the ownership of land has brought about (Schenck 2008: 89–90).

One Kruiper family member explained that many of the #Khomani ‘do advertisements, we do movies, we do everything. But the development of tourism is weak on our [traditionalist] side’. Today, it seems as if the Kruiper family is being branded more than any other #Khomani group. For outsiders, they have become the essence of the traditional #Khomani, and to survive, cultures, ‘like

brands, must essentialise.... [S]uccessful and sustainable cultures are those which brand best' (Chanok 2000: 24–26, cited in Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 18). Tomaselli (2012b: 170–171) even speaks of the 'Kruiper currency', based on the 'Kruiper brand', in which 'names become brands with a value'. In fact, the Kruipers are among the best-known Bushmen in the world. This idea of bringing together branding, marketing, identity, and culture is not new. It seems as if fantasies sometimes work better than reality. In the reproduction of 'authentic' cultures, contemporary advertising techniques are instructing the masses to objectify culture for the market (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 18).

[Today] it seems as if the process of branding has shaped the community's understanding of their culture over time. After nearly a century on the ethnic-market, are #Khomani still selling a product inspired by their culture or has the product become their culture? (Schenck 2008: 102).

Therefore, although the power in this branding is apparently mostly with outsiders, some Bushmen embrace it and engage in it, using their agency to invent (and reinvent) their tradition continually (Hobsbawm 1983).

## THE JU/'HOANSI OF NYAE NYAE, NAMIBIA

If one considers the #Khomani the quintessential icons of the Bushman brand in South Africa, then the Ju/'hoansi of Namibia and Botswana can be regarded as their equivalent in the northern parts of the Kalahari. However, despite various similarities between these groups, their histories differ substantially. Most importantly, in contrast to the #Khomani, the Ju/'hoansi are relatively homogeneous.

Also, for the Nyae Nyae Conservancy of Namibia, a Tourism Development Plan has been written, to prepare for Millennium Challenge Account ('MCA') funding (Humphrey and Wassenaar 2009). The plan describes the Bushmen as either 'authentic' or 'not authentic' and in this way supports the perpetuation of the Bushman myth, describing Nyae Nyae as containing

the area's indigenous San people, whom [sic] are universally known to be ancestors of "the world's first people" and continue to live in harmony with the environment [...] It is recommended that the above message be provided to visitors entering the area through the design and construction of regional gateway points (Humphrey and Wassenaar 2009: 88).

This recommendation combines with the Bushman brand to resemble an amusement park for tourists, something that has been described by the famous Ju/'hoansi filmmaker and activist John Marshall as a 'plastic Stone Age' (1984), in which tourists enter a geographical area where one can gaze at wildlife *and*

Bushmen. The Ju/'hoansi, as mythical 'others', are expected to be ready for the tourists. In the Tourism Development Plan, authentic Bushman culture is regarded as the major attraction (Humphrey and Wassenaar 2009: 23). For example, the Ju/'hoansi of Djokwe and Makuri within the Conservancy both own a community-based campsite that they would like to upgrade. However, according to the consultants who wrote the advisory plan, these should stay 'wild', with 'authentic culture'. The advice is to keep them basic and market them as such because '[t]he rationale for this operation lies in the demand for *wilderness*, bush camping, as well as *authentic* and accessible cultural tourism activities' (Humphrey and Wassenaar 2009: 76, emphases by Koot). Such benefits of 'authenticity' were also



Figure 2 Logo of the Tsumkwe Country Lodge (NCL 2011, reproduced with permission).



Figure 3 Road sign to Mountain Post (Photograph by the author).

expressed to the author by an employee of an NGO that operates in Nyae Nyae:

Within the Conservancy [Ju/'hoansi] people think every tourist that comes, they should make money out of it. They're starting to make their culture become like a whole business thing [...] If anybody wants to take a picture it's money, money, money, money.

This statement demonstrates exactly the contradiction that Steven Robins also explained (2001, 2003): once Bushmen start to adapt to neoliberal capitalism, the values and ideas on which this is built make the people 'inauthentic'. On the one hand, the capitalist value of profit maximisation is promoted in tourism, based on the economic idea that individuals want to gain financial benefits. On the other hand, this can '*make their culture become like a whole business thing*', based on the idea that they should stay authentic and not hanker for money.

Elsewhere in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, at //Xa/oba, the Living Hunters' Museum has been created with the assistance of the Living Culture Foundation Namibia ('LCFN').<sup>5</sup> As the founder of the LCFN explained, the Living Hunters' Museum is a living *museum* in which they show their past and their traditional clothing to make some money and to preserve their culture. Income from the activities is distributed partly to the performers and partly to general village necessities, such as school fees for the children. When the author visited the museum for the second time in August 2010, the people of //Xa/oba had started to believe in the potential success of the project because the number of tourists was growing (which could also be explained partly by the fact that the high season had just begun). Nevertheless, the people in //Xa/oba wanted to see their project grow and attract more camping guests so that they could make more money, based on their image, the Bushman brand, to which they were willing to succumb.

In the area, non-Bushmen have also been using the Bushman brand for years, for example at the now defunct Tsumkwe Lodge (Figure 2). The Ju/'hoansi themselves also want to benefit from this precious indigenous modernity, as the logo of the lodge and a road sign near the settlement of Mountain Post show.

It is particularly interesting that the Ju/'hoansi's own sign at Mountain Post is not focussed specifically on the image of the male hunter, as is so often the case (Figure 3).

## THE HAI//OM, TREESLEEPER CAMP, NAMIBIA

Just as for the #Khomani and the Ju/'hoansi, the mythification of the Bushman image has become a commodity that the Hai//om people of north-central Namibia want to build on, despite their historical status as 'unpure' (Dieckmann 2007). This 'impurity' can be explained at least partly by the fact that most of the Hai//om have lived and worked on farms since the second half of the twentieth century. As with other 'farm Bushmen' (for those in Botswana, see Guenther



Figure 4 First Treesleeper logo.



Figure 5 The Treesleeper logo today (//Khumûb 2010, reproduced with permission).

2005), their culture was shaped by their landlessness and marginalisation, making them look very different compared to the ‘indigenous’ Ju/’hoansi of Nyae Nyae. Moreover, the Hai//om do not conform to the ideal type of Bushmen, as presented by various outsiders such as farmers and the media, most of whom use the Nyae

Nyae Ju/'hoansi as a standard (Sylvain 2002).

In the area around Etosha National Park, the main tourist hub of Namibia and former Hai//om territory, widely diverse upmarket tourist establishments are to be found. Some of these companies have vague connections with (Hai//om) Bushmen, or they simply use the Bushman image as traditional hunter-gatherers and natural ecologists as a marketing tool. Today, this also happens at the community-based Treesleeper Camp in Tsintsabis. In the mid-2000s, when working at Treesleeper, the author and other expatriate development fieldworkers organised the Treesleeper marketing. For the development of a logo for Treesleeper, they used a tree from the Etosha National Park as a symbol to refer to the past eviction of the Hai//om from Etosha (Dieckmann 2007; Koot 2013) (Figure 4). During this time, the author felt as if they should not specifically focus on the Bushman brand too strongly. However, one year after the author had left the project in 2007, the Hai//om manager created a new logo, in which two typical male hunting figures and the word 'Bushman' were added as specific depictions of traditional Bushman life (Figure 5). The Bushman brand, it seems, is something that they had added, using it for their own purposes.

At Treesleeper, a clear example of a curated experience is the most popular activity, called the bushwalk. Its emphasis is on hunting and gathering methods and tools, such as tracking, bushfood, various traps, different hunting bows and arrows, and digging sticks. One day the author asked the bushwalk guides (who were all male) how they wanted to be dressed when doing the bushwalk because a tour operator had asked if they could do the tour wearing traditional clothing. The guides decided that this was fine, but after a while, one of them stopped dressing traditionally and explained that the people in Tsintsabis had seen him and laughed at him and that even children in his own family were calling him names to make fun of him. Moreover, he felt ashamed when there were young women of about his age among the tourists because he was walking around half-dressed.

In the end, the issue was solved by the performers themselves, and a balance was found between market demands (based on tourists' expectations of authenticity) and the performers' own emotional and cultural boundaries. They decided only to wear traditional clothing at the end of the bushwalk and turned this into a joke with the tourists: at the start of the bushwalk, a guide explains that they will meet his twin brother later. When the group arrives at traditional huts at the end of the tour, the guide goes into the hut quickly to get some traditional artefacts and also changes into traditional clothes, something the tourists do not notice because it happens inside. He then comes out calling himself the 'twin brother' of the tour guide (Hüncke 2010: 112–113), which the tourists generally seem to enjoy. In this creative response, the tour guides personify the Bushman brand to meet market demand. Thus, although often associated with exploitation, wearing traditional clothes is not necessarily a performative discourse and therefore a negative self-perception. In contrast, it could mean that they are active stakeholders who themselves have decided to use their symbolic capital to



generate income while maintaining pride in their customs and origins (Hüncke 2010: 122). In this, the Bushman brand is a crucial indigenous modernity.

## CONCLUSION

Bushmen who work in tourism make use of ideas that exist about them as a product: the Bushman brand. This brand has been embraced by some Bushman groups who use their agency in tourism to create and commodify their image as natural ecologists, thereby enabling themselves to benefit from this precious asset. The image itself is not new, but as a brand, it can be regarded as an invented tradition based on what is generally considered ‘authentic’ about the Bushmen. It is a response to the changes in society as the neoliberal capitalist political economy spreads to the remotest corners of the globe. Consequently, the Bushman myth is perpetuated as the Bushman brand; it survives as a product to which ideas are attached in places where it creates financial value. However, Bushman groups’ usage of this brand is also severely limited to the image that was created historically – mostly by outsiders – which is mainly built upon the image of the male hunter, thereby largely ignoring the important role that women have always played in hunter-gatherer societies. Sahlin saw the integration of industrial technologies and systems into indigenous cosmologies as indigenous modernities (cf. Robins 2003; Sahlin 1999b), by which indigenous people do not necessarily conform to capitalist encapsulation, but find their own ways to become more ‘authentic’. This integration is also what the Bushman brand is: an indigenous modernity, albeit an indigenous modernity that is immaterial, based on the ideas that are attached to a product. Consequently, indigenous people are not simply victims of outside pressures from the neoliberal capitalist system; through indigenous modernities, they can also take the values and ideas generated by this system and use them to their own benefit.

## NOTES

- 1) Source: <http://www.travelnewsnamibia.com/featured-stories/namibia-san/>, accessed 12 November 2015.
- 2) The author is aware of the contentious character of the word ‘indigenous’, but it goes beyond the scope of this chapter to address that debate (e.g., Bétéille 1998; Asch et al. 2004; Kuper 2003; Barnard 2006; Saugestad 2001).
- 3) See <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1910/>, accessed 21 August 2015. (*Editor’s note:* World Heritage status was achieved for the #Khomani cultural landscape in the summer of 2017.)
- 4) See <http://www.khomanisan.com/foks/>, accessed 21 August 2015.
- 5) The LCFN is an NGO that has started various ‘historic living museums’ where local people expose themselves traditionally to tourists. The LCFN’s initiator explained that they try to bring in tourists and help with marketing if the local people themselves can set up a living museum (dressing up traditionally and demonstrating traditional activities to tourists).

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