

**THE POWER OF POMP AND CEREMONY FOR
TOURISM**

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MAKING A MOMENT OF IT

Pomp and ceremony. For many travellers around the world it is reason enough to make the trip. Just to have the chance to see it, to feel it, to be swallowed up by all of the fuss and festivity, and to be able to proudly say “*I was there!*” There is just nothing like it. And as the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton nears, an event promising not to disappoint in wonderfully elaborate show of classic British *pomp and ceremony*, there is no question that all the fuss is still very much in fashion.

‘Pomp and ceremony’, a term that has over the years evolved to be referred to as ‘pomp and circumstance’, has traditionally been an expression of excessively traditional show reserved for special events and ceremonies conducted exclusively by royal households. From grand coronations and military celebrations, to somber state funerals, occasions commanding pomp and ceremony have long held pride of place in the (historic and future) event calendars of royal households, creating national days of observation, celebration or thoughtful contemplation, whatever the occasion may command.

The concept, and creative scale, of pomp and ceremony has its roots in traditional monarchies. Monarchies around the world have for generations enjoyed occasions commanding of pomp and ceremony, seeing them as opportunities to showcase national unity, pride, roots and ritual, as well as the finest that the royal household had to show. Little expense was spared, immense attention to detail was undertaken. These moments simply must not pass unmarked.

Today there are forty-four countries governed by a monarchy of some shape or form. Most common today are *Constitutional monarchies* and *Absolute monarchies*. *Constitutional monarchies*, such as the sixteen nations of the Commonwealth ruled by Queen Elizabeth, possess a head of state with supreme power over the monarch, however are still bound by the constitution, and do not possess political power. This is in sharp contrast to the structure and operations of *Absolute monarchies*, such as Swaziland, Saudi Arabia, Vatican City and Brunei, which hold ultimate political authority and are not bound by the constitution.

While the approach to rule may differ by the classification of monarch, the principles of ceremony are the same: there must be pomp and ceremony.

THE VALUE OF THE THRONE

For decades the value, and ultimately relevance, of monarchies has been under debate. Particularly in the case of Constitutional Monarchies, what real

contribution does it make to society, considering the cost which it puts on its taxpaying subjects? Is it worth it?

Today in these modern, tech-driven times of financial crisis, 'friends' and fights for freedom from ruling systems, the reason and R.O.I. of monarchies can be strongly argued. Mostly against. Britain's Royal family, probably the world's most seen and publicly scrutinised monarchy, has come under severe pressure for their cost versus value to Britain. Sadly, the past decade in particular has been particularly damning for, and about the royal family. As time has passed, they have become more tolerated than celebrated.

And then the announcement came. In November of 2010, Clarence House officially announced that Prince William and Kate Middleton were to be married. The words spread across the world like white doves. There was to be a royal wedding in 2011, with all of the pomp and ceremony! Excitement about the engagement by the people of Britain was to be expected. This is their royal couple. This was their home grown royal fairy tale. Bucklebury's girl was marrying Britain's prince.

Yet, taking into account awareness and attitudes towards monarchies beyond the shores of Britain, why did the rest of the world not just take interest in the announcement, but celebrate it? And with such worldwide expression of excitement?

The breadth and depth of impact of the royal engagement is really quite extraordinary. Why is this happening? And, it appears, across the globe? Why is the royal couple now a regular feature on national news and entertainment networks, with frequent wedding logistics updates and wedding dress predictions, when Americans have for years been critical of all of the fuss and financial burden brought on by royal families? Why are travel companies creating special Royal Wedding tours for travellers from across the country, region and world visiting the UK this year? Why are rustic mountain cabins in Kenya, local pubs in the quiet English town of Bucklebury, and 'Sallies' in Scotland's St Andrews University, being turned into tourist attractions? Why are replicas of a blue Daniella Issa designer engagement dress selling out online in a matter of hours? And why are the world's media readying to descend on London for over a week of wedding coverage, climaxing with a global audience of over 2.5 billion people on the actual wedding day?

Has the whole world fallen in love? Yes. And that is a very, very good thing.

The global fascination with the royal wedding is especially good for the tourism sector. Research conducted by a retail research firm estimated that the incremental 300,000 tourists expected to travel to Britain during 2011, looking to be swept away by the royal wedding spirit, will be purchasing over US\$ 41 million worth of royal wedding related merchandise, ultimately yielding an estimated US\$

340million in economic earnings. The more pomp and ceremony, the more the appeal of the destination.

THE TOURISM PULL OF PAGEANTRY

The royal wedding has caused a wave of global excitement for a number of reasons, all of which are reflective of our times, and our state of mind at this time. There are, however, four primary reasons for the worldwide interest and elation.

Firstly, the world needs a break from bad economy headlines.

As expressed by the LA Times on news of the engagement, *"It was a grateful nation that received the news, happy for any distraction from depressing headlines about government cutbacks and painful retrenchment."* While referring to the UK's sense of relief in finally hearing good news, the breath of fresh air which the engagement announcement created was in fact felt across the globe – a world anxious to push away the dark clouds that have hung over global economies and societies for the past three years. Finally, at long last, there is something to celebrate – the pure joy of promise for the future.

Secondly, and linked to the above, the world has needed something to get their hearts excited about, something special to get dressed up for, and be a part of, even if only voyeuristically. The past three to four years have all been about caution. With caution comes control of emotion, limitation of hope and restraint of dreams. And dressing down. The excitement unlocked by the engagement opened a door for the world to become a part in all of the pre-wedding planning, all of the debating of divine detail, and all of the preparations for pomp and ceremony. Our 21st Century reality TV world has turned global populations into massive, inquisitive audiences. Access can feel unlimited. The royal wedding has made it possible for us to not only watch Cinderella try on her glass slipper, but debate its design, height of heel, and her ability to walk in it.

Thirdly, in an age where terms of affection are turned to short text symbols and sent through pieces of technology carried in our pockets or cluttered purses, there is something to be said for good, old fashioned romance. The scent of a bouquet of deep red roses simply cannot be copied in an app (not yet, at least). Nor can the jump of one's heart when two hands touch. And no amount of innovation could ever replace the intensity of feeling created by the sight of the late Lady Diana's sapphire engagement ring on the hand of Prince William's soon-to-be bride. It was as though a sapphire blue bookmark had been lifted out from between the heart sore pages of William and Harry's lives. Life is moving on. Marry all of this emotion with pomp and ceremony as magically created by a royal family celebrating a wedding, and suddenly a destination transforms. With that transformation comes millions of viewers, hundreds of thousands of tourists,

unprecedented showcase, and invaluable destination competitiveness. As expressed by a long-time London cab driver, *"tourists like all that pomp and ceremony. It's what we Brits do best."*

THE NEED TO LEVERAGE THE LENS

Any event of ceremony has the potential to become a powerful tourism attraction, and therefore stimulant for the tourism economy. For tourism organisations, this requires a calling together of stakeholders to ensure that the moment is leveraged, appropriately, for the better of the destination and all of its individual role players.

It must be actively, holistically and strategically mobilized, at all levels, as far in advance as possible, and with the highest levels of support.

Sentiment aside, there is no question that the UK, a nation facing ongoing debt challenges, realized the blessing of the royal engagement and all that it means for Britain, the people of Britain, and the economy of Britain. The significance of the engagement was immediately grasped by British Prime Minister David Cameron, who passed on the congratulations of the whole House of Commons during his weekly question time the day after the royal announcement. *"This is wonderful news,"* he exclaimed. *"We look forward to the wedding itself with excitement and anticipation."* With emotion and economy in balance, the day of the royal wedding, April 29th, was swiftly pronounced a national holiday, inviting all Britons to get up, dress up, and celebrate.

As for Visit Britain, the UK's tourism authority already immersed in preparations for the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympics being hosted in London, could there be a sweeter appetizer? The lens of the travel world will be shifting to London in April 2011, providing a powerful preview of the host nation in 2012. The importance of the preview is clearly understood by Christopher Rodrigues, Chairman of Visit Britain, who emphasizes that the royal wedding is indeed *"a tourism attraction, and there will probably be a million people in Britain, in London on the day. For us at VisitBritain, it's not selling tickets for the event, it's using the event to showcase Britain. So, yes, it will be a big tourism event, but that's one day in 2011 – my job is 365, 24/7/365."*

This full-circle leverage of events requires ensuring that all of the emotion of the moment, all that entices travellers from around the corner or around the world to go the distance to be a part of the pomp and ceremony, is woven into the destination's offering – honourably, earnestly and authentically.

Romance matters. Pomp and ceremony matters. *"I was there"* matters. It has a pull that captures interest and creates a desire to know more see more and feel

more. As stated by Britain's *Telegraph*: "*Pomp and circumstance that is done for a purpose, as an act of constitutional renewal, the stubborn resistance of tradition in the teeth of relentless pressure for modernity, still has a role today. The country would be an infinitely poorer place without it.*"

For nations holding ceremony as a part of who they are, and as milestones of their living history, these events should be celebrated as not just internal occasions, but global invitations. Ceremonies are opportunities for nations to show the world all that a nation holds dear in tradition, in meaning, in celebration. In doing this, the nation brings to life a compelling part of its identity and competitive opportunity, thereby strengthening its tourism economy.

As fast, tech-driven and touch starved as our world becomes, it is good to know that people are still wanting, and willing, to travel to places where emotion is the main attraction. It keeps them coming back. Because the moment was just too important to let pass.

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