

Abstract

Over the past 30-35 years, Prague has witnessed significant changes in its government, economics, and social policies. Following the 1989 revolutions, vast swaths of Westerners were allowed to visit the Czech capital for the first time. It quickly developed into one of Europe's most visited cities, boasting millions of tourists each year. This master's thesis is a case study that aims to use English language, Western published guidebooks to determine how Prague is presented to Westerners and how that affects Western perceptions into the city. Perception is not determined by a single factor and is influenced by numerous variables. This study seeks to highlight how guidebooks contribute towards the West's perception of Prague. It analyzes 17 guidebooks published from 1994 to 2019 and uses the various descriptive elements of each. The focus is on the narratives they offer and how those narratives change over time through the use of discourse analysis. The main question of this research is to answer how Prague's presentation in guidebook has changed over time, and how this affects Western perception of the city. What do Westerners think about the city? Is Prague a quirky place that is only notable for its architecture, or is there something else alluring about the Czech capital? How does Prague fit in with debates surrounding what is considered culturally "Eastern", "Central", or "Western" Europe? The study concludes that guidebooks change their presentation of Prague from a beautiful, relatively unknown city that is full of mystery, yet lacking modern amenities and services, to a city that re-establishes Central Europe into the consciousness of the West, with amenities on par with any other Western city.