



Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives

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A Review by Ms. Chrystol Thomas*

In October 2003, the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) in collaboration with Interarts in Barcelona hosted a meeting that was attended by 25 cultural tourism experts. The meeting reflected on the existing quantitative contributions to the literature on cultural tourism from a global perspective. Two reasons were pinpointed for this discussion: the expansion of the ATLAS group itself, and the increasing integration and convergence of issues in cultural tourism globally.

The proceedings from this conference were published in a book entitled “Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives.” The book comprises sixteen chapters, written by over twenty authors, and edited by Greg Richards. The text generally discussed the importance and progression of cultural tourism and how global flows of tourists affect local economies. Additionally, it provided policy recommendations that may be useful in improving the marketability and standings of destinations. The volume is divided into four major parts: tourism, globalisation, and authenticity; cultural tourism development in a globalising world; sensitizing tourists and communities; and cultural events and festivalisation.

Global Trends in Cultural Tourism

Within the introduction, Richards defined cultural tourism as “the holy grail of quality tourism that cares for the culture it consumes while culturing the consumer.” Cultural tourism’s importance is accepted and emphasised by global institutions and nations due to its economic and cultural contributions. In this chapter, Richards highlighted the global trends in tourism. Because of globalisation, new avenues have been sought after resulting in the evolution of cultural tourism from “shining prizes”

to an expansion in heritage, popular culture and living cultural attractions. Therefore, the growth of cultural tourism is important as it: helps destinations avoid the drawbacks of traditional tourism; provides a means for development of cultural destinations; satisfies the increased demand for cultural facilities; influences growth and development; and, unifies society as people learn about new histories and local identities. Consequently, cultural tourism was labelled a “global common currency” and has been integrated within the new technological age, as information of all sorts can be found via the World Wide Web.

Part 1 - Tourism, Globalisation, and Authenticity

In the paper, *Cultural Tourism: Between Authenticity and Globalisation*, written by Frans Schouten, the author debated whether authenticity is essential for cultural expressions and if it helps shape cultural identities. A discussion on both the positive and negative attributes of tourism for local cultures was undertaken and the authenticity of culture was presented from the perspectives of the guest and the host. The author posited that visitors were contented with what they believed were true representations of the host’s culture and not necessarily what is reality. This was argued to be good for the hosts as their private lives were “safeguarded”. Mason (1994), as quoted by Schouten, found that to encourage high visitation, the tourism product should be able to “mystify the mundane, to amplify the exotic, minimize the misery, rationalize the disquietude, and romanticize the strange”.

In chapters 3 and 4, two case studies were presented on South Africa in relation to the advantages and disadvantages of “township tourism” and the possibility of developing cultural tourism. Pranhill Ramchander adopted Mabogane and Callaghan (2002) and Ramchander’s (2004)

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concepts and identified 'township tourism' as "travelling for the purpose of observing the cultural expression and lifestyles of black South Africans". As such, the socio-cultural impact of township tourism on the host population in Soweto was investigated. The literature illustrated that township tourism was a mixed blessing, as some residents disliked the intrusion by tourists while others gained financially and culturally. Overall, however, it was discovered that residents were generally displeased about the representation of their culture since they have been continually excluded from mainstream tourism activities. The study therefore, mentioned the need to attain sustainable tourism by finding the balance between consumption and conservation, and to also achieve proper planning and management by ensuring that stakeholders are working together through consultations and negotiations.

Briedenhann and Wickens in their paper entitled *Developing Cultural Tourism in South Africa: Potential and Pitfalls* noted that tourism development would be successful if approached from a business perspective instead of a social one. Due to the competitive nature of tourism, they posited that projects should have a "reliable, deliverable product that offers value for money."

Part II - Cultural Tourism Development in a Globalising World

In her presentation on *Space, Place, and Placelessness in the Culturally Regenerated City*, Melanie Smith investigated how cultural regeneration can transform urban spaces into areas of mass consumption. The paper concentrated on the 'spatial transformation of cities', by looking at themed tourist spaces, waterfront developments, shopping malls, and cultural quarters. The study showed that cultural development, by means of gentrification and other barriers

to access, tended to exclude local communities. Smith also highlighted that 'space', 'place' and 'placelessness' were interrelated: space, through structured planning, can result in places for entertainment, leisure, or recreation while placelessness exist when 'place' starts to look the same because of a lack of planning, regulation and control. The author asserted that there is the need for government to put greater emphasis on 'place' in their agendas as 'place' could be the cause for the 'death or life' of a city.

From the paper, quite a few recommendations were suggested. Policymakers were advised to consider the needs of local people and global tourists when undertaking spatial reconfiguration. Smith further added that urban planning might not be viable if there are local and global tensions. Therefore, to ensure a competitive advantage, cultural diversity, distinct heritage and place identities were essential factors.

Robert Maitland, in discussing *Cultural Tourism and the Development of New Tourism Areas in London*, focused on the results of two surveys, International Passenger Survey (IPS) and Survey of Overseas Visitors to London (SOVL), that investigated the necessity of local distinctiveness in London. Information on visitors' characteristics, what attracted them to specific areas in London, and what they valued most about the host's place and culture were obtained. The study found that visitors assigned greater weight to place or 'placefulness' with distinctive qualities. The paper identified the need for further research and the importance of such analyses in planning and public policy implications to ensure uniqueness and 'placefulness'.

Trailing Goethe, Humbert, and Ulysses: Cultural Routes in Tourism by Laszlo Puczko and Tamara Ratz highlighted the popularity of theme-based tourist attractions such as Legoland and Disneyland. Themed-routes were

defined as ‘tourism products that associate a selected theme with natural and created attractions that can be reached by a variety of means of transport’ (Puczko and Ratz, 2000). The implementation of themes was found to attract different types of tourists. The authors pointed out that cultural or themed routes were important in bringing together cultures and cooperation of different sectors. A themed-route was seen to achieve several objectives:

- Improve transparency, that is, getting familiar with the territory;
- Avoid crowded centres as alternative routes are devised;
- Repackage existing attractions which assists in targeting new groups;
- Improve cooperation between the participants;
- Designing new routes and penetrating new markets; and
- Cost-efficient as little effort is needed to manage tourists.

The paper also suggested ways of creating and operating cultural routes by using Budapest as an example. The following stages were identified as necessary in order to develop themed-routes:

- Initialization – where the idea came from?
- Trademark protection name;
- Concept fine tuning;
- Visual design: maps, text writing, layout and web page design; and
- Market research – interview route members and visitors for their opinions on the routes.

Fernandez et al. conducted a comparative analysis of international tourists in inland cultural destinations between Castile and Leon in Spain. The dimensions considered for

cultural attraction were: artistic, historical and heritage sites; human activity of cultural interest; economic activities of cultural interest; and landscapes and nature. They examined the relationship between types of tourists and cultural backgrounds, and the motives and behaviour of tourists in inland destinations. The study found that ‘artistic, historical and heritage sites’ and ‘landscapes and nature’ were the most important motivations throughout the period of investigation.

Part III - Sensitising Tourists and Communities

Jaume Franquesa and Marc Morell wrote on *Transversal Indicators and Qualitative Observatories of Heritage Tourism*. The main aim of the paper was to evaluate the tools and indicators used in the development of products assigned to heritage. The authors sought to show the importance of tools for monitoring sustainability and quality so that appropriate tourism products are maintained and to determine a suitable criterion for developing these tools. Franquesa and Morell provided a background of what indicators are and formulated a model that can be used for tourism. The authors noted that indicators were categorised under general (for tourism destination, people and activities; such as, labour market, distribution of wealth, production of waste, access of housing, and demographic data) and environmental (for example, pattern of land use, percentage of urbanized space, volume of water/energy/concrete per person, recycling data). Some of the problems they identified with indicators were the availability of data, different measurement of data, and omitted variable bias. Seasonality, tourist pressure and socio-cultural impact were some of the indicators assigned to tourist destination.

Xerardo Perez’s paper, *Ecomuseums, Cultural Heritage, Development, and Cultural Tourism in the North*

of Portugal, looked at the many stages of progress that followed World War II. Perez focused on tourism development, and the eras of imperialism and colonialism that preceded it throughout the world. He pointed out that the role of museums has changed from being places of conservation to representations of new requirements and cultural politics. Thus, the term “ecomuseum” was developed. The “Ecomuseu do Barroso” project was considered in detail to show how ecomuseums were used as political, social, and economical instruments so that community participation was revived. The author used the project to display some of the problems encountered in cross-border development and how cultural tourism was used by the Portuguese to reduce emigration from the countryside. He showed that ecomuseums could be used as a means of intercultural communication between the urban world and the rural world. Furthermore, Perez made the point that cultural tourism can be used responsibly to make a tourist product that neither destroys local cultures nor puts people in ‘zoos’ because it consists of the ‘actual’ cultural experience.

Religious Tourism in Northern Portugal, written by Greg Richards and Carlos Fernandes, presents an in-depth analysis of the link between tourism and religion. Richards and Fernandes made the point that religious sites and festivals have long been an established and important part of tourism since people travelled all over the world to visit cathedrals or monasteries because of the historical value to their religion. These sites were in some cases not only an important source of tourism but also the primary source of tourism for certain cities. The growth of spirituality has led to new forms of religion replacing the traditional ones. Hence, there has been an expansion in the number of tourists to pilgrimage sites and shrines over the last few years. There was also a very detailed analysis of religious tourism

in Northern Portugal in which the supply and demand of religious attractions were explored, and proposals made for the development of certain tourist attractions in order to increase demand at a more regional and global level.

Patricia de Camargo’s contribution to the meeting was *Using Tourist Resources as Tools for Teaching and Creating Awareness of Heritage in a Local Community*. She looked at two different pieces of research, one in Brazil and the other in Spain. The first piece of research focused on testing the efficiency of guided cultural routes as tools for teaching high school students to value their heritage while the second study looked at how intangible heritage could be used as a tool in school and museums to make the local community revalue its identity. Both studies were based on several theories and concepts, which included the theories of multiple intelligence and culture of satisfaction, and the concept of citizenship related to the consumption.

Through a survey conducted in eight countries, the paper noted the importance of culture in the travel experience of young people. The findings indicated that approximately 80% of the participants showed appreciation for other cultures while about 50% suggested increased understanding of their own culture. Camargo concluded that both the host destinations and the generating countries could benefit from tourism education, as the quality and the satisfaction of the experience would both increase. He also made the point that the construction of a collective identity would help protect common areas where interaction is possible.

Part IV - Cultural Events and Festivalisation

In Chapter 13, Greg Richards looked at the use of cultural events as a tool for image building, employment creation, and economic ‘boosterism’. In his paper entitled *The Festivalization of Society or the Socialization of Festi-*

vals? The Case of Catalunya, he argued that local places and culture were tourist products, as they attracted thousands of people and made a name for countries worldwide. Catalunya was used as an example due to its success in the 1992 Olympics. Richards made the point that though certain events may have been added to create more spectacles, the majority of festivals in Catalunya remained mostly ritualistic. He further added that promotion of events is increasingly aimed at social, rather than economic goals.

Erik Hitters examined the designation of European City or Capital of Culture. He noted that ‘declining’ cities were increasingly using culture as a means of city marketing and that these cities based success on the number of visitors arriving or the amount of money spent rather than the cultural content or long-term image effects of the event. The focus was placed mainly on the Rotterdam and Porto Cultural Capital events in 2001. With respect to ‘festivalisation’, both cities used the event for broad urban development or economic and social objectives. The programme in Rotterdam was very inclusive of popular culture and entertainment while the programme in Porto was more elitist. In both cases, festivalisation was a visible trend in cultural policy, as the festivals were used to generate change in the city - physical change in Porto and social and cultural change in Rotterdam.

The paper, *Economic Impact and Social Performance of Cultural Macrofestivals*, outlined the economic effects of the transition from ‘working to live’ to ‘working for leisure’. Herrero et al. argued that increased leisure consumption resulted in higher job creation through sports and tourism. Culture has therefore, moved from ‘unusual leisure activity’ to a basic need for many citizens. Herrero et al. posited that culture plays a role in social cohesion as it combined individual creativity and self-development.

Therefore, cultural festivals helped attain economic and social goals as it attracted huge audiences, created urban images, stimulated creativity and built social cohesion. The paper undertook a study on the economic impact for Salamanca 2002, the last European Capital of Culture nominated in Spain. The results of this research indicated that cultural events constituted a remarkable source of wealth generation, according to the dimension of the overall economic impact of Salamanca 2002.

The final chapter of the book provided the conclusion and looked at the future of cultural tourism. Greg Richards concluded that there are great prospects for cultural tourism if more emphasis is placed on urban regeneration, cultural events and festivalization. A number of research opportunities were identified in the chapter that could aid in suggesting further implications and policy recommendations.

Conclusion

“Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives” demonstrates that with increasing global competition, there is little room for complacency, as destinations must work hard to create a unique identity. The book gives important suggestions as to the evolution of tourism and what modern day tourists are looking for in a destination. This can help countries prepare for the mentality of contemporary tourists. One limitation of the text is that the case studies focused mainly on the European countries.

Although there was no specific reference to the Caribbean region, the findings have much relevance for a country like Barbados since the economy relies heavily on tourism. Therefore, policymakers could draw numerous lessons from this publication. Two key lessons emerging from the text were the importance of place being more than

an aesthetic version of the tourist's gaze, and that cultural experiences should be authentic or non-homogenised. These findings are important for Barbados, as they suggest the need to ensure that sites targeted to tourists are constantly being upgraded so that they appear 'new' and 'interesting' thus, attracting first time as well as returning visitors. This helps secure a constant flow of global tourists and maintain the

stability of the contribution of these sites towards national income. It is recommended that greater research should be undertaken on cultural tourism in Barbados and the region. Thus, given the nature of this book, it is highly recommended for researchers, policymakers, and students with an interest in tourism.