



CULTURAL TOURISM

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ANNOTATION: *This review article traces the development of cultural tourism as a field of research over the past decade, identifying major trends and research areas. Cultural tourism has recently been re-affirmed by the UNWTO as a major element of international tourism consumption, accounting for over 39% of tourism arrivals. Cultural tourism research has also grown rapidly, particularly in fields such as cultural consumption, cultural motivations, heritage conservation, cultural tourism economics, anthropology and the relationship with the creative economy.*

Keywords: Cultural tourism, tangible heritage, intangible heritage, indigenous tourism, cultural consumption.

Cultural tourism has a long history, and with its roots in the Grand Tour is arguably the original form of tourism. It is also one of the forms of tourism that most policy makers seem to be betting on for the future. The World Tourism Organization, for example, asserted that cultural tourism accounted for 37% of global tourism, and forecast that it would grow at a rate of 15% per year. Such figures are often quoted in studies of the cultural tourism market (e.g. Bywater, 1993), but are rarely backed up with empirical research.

A recent study of the cultural consumption habits of Europeans (European Commission 2002) indicated that people visited museums and galleries abroad almost as frequently as they did at home. This underlines the growing importance of cultural tourism as a source of cultural consumption. The generalization of cultural consumption on holiday, however, points to one of the main problems of defining cultural tourism. What is the difference between cultural visits on holiday (cultural tourism) and cultural visits undertaken during leisure time at home? Much of the research undertaken by the Association for Leisure and Tourism Education (ATLAS) on the international cultural tourism market (Richards 1996;



2001) has in fact underlined the high degree of continuity between consumption of culture at home and on holiday.

In spite of these problems, policy makers, tourist boards and cultural attraction managers around the world continue to view cultural tourism as an important potential source of tourism growth. There is a general perception that cultural tourism is 'good' tourism that attracts high spending visitors and does little damage to the environment or local culture while contributing a great deal to the economy and support of culture. Other commentators, however, have suggested that cultural tourism may do more harm than good, allowing the cultural tourist to penetrate sensitive cultural environments as the advance guard of the mass tourist.

It is difficult to assess whether an optimistic or a pessimistic view of cultural tourism is correct, simply because we know remarkably little about it. Who are the cultural tourists? What are their motivations? Where do they go? These essential questions are still very difficult to answer, which indicates that the market is still not very well understood. One of the key reasons for the lack of information on the cultural tourism market is the fact that a consistent definition of cultural tourism does not exist. Individual studies adopt differing definitions, which makes them difficult to compare. Discussions of the definition of cultural tourism may seem academic, but the question of definition can be crucial. Unless we know who the cultural tourists are, or how many there are, how can we market cultural tourism effectively or plan for the management of cultural tourism?

This paper outlines the discussion surrounding the definition of cultural tourism and also asks the question whether the term 'cultural tourism' is still appropriate to cover the wide variety of activities that now tend to be included under this broad umbrella. The growth of culture is one reason for the colorful assortment of terms that have arisen in the literature and in policy statements in recent years. Cultural tourism, heritage tourism, arts tourism, ethnic tourism and a host of other terms seem to be almost interchangeable in their usage, but it is rarely clear whether people are talking about the same thing. The broad nature of the cultural tourism phenomenon has also tended to generate a wide range of different



definitions. Most of these definitions have been formulated for a specific purpose, and therefore tend to address only one major aspect of cultural tourism. In their review of definitions, McKercher and Du Cros identified four different types of cultural tourism definitions: tourism derived definitions, motivational definitions, experiential or aspirational definitions and operational definitions.

The operational definitions concentrate on identifying cultural tourists, usually in order to measure the scale or scope of cultural tourism activity. The first definitional axis could therefore be termed the measurement-meaning axis. The tourism derived definitions essentially look at cultural tourism from the perspective of the tourism industry or the tourism system. Cultural tourism is simply one more market segment that utilizes the infrastructure of the tourist industry. In contrast, motivational definitions usually begin Cultural tourism was also one of the types of tourism that received a new operational definition from the UNWTO at the 22nd Session of the General Assembly held in Chengdu, China (UNWTO, 2017: 18): Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions. This new definition confirms the much broader nature of contemporary cultural tourism, which relates not just to sites and monuments, but to ways of life, creativity and everyday culture.

In very simple terms, these different approaches can be placed at opposite ends of two axes. The experiential definitions say something about the nature of the cultural tourism experience, and essentially they are trying to understand the nature of cultural tourism in conceptual with the tourists themselves and their reasons for travel.

Cultural tourism has long had an important economic dimension, particularly because the income derived from tourism is argued to help support the preservation of cultural heritage.



In many cases, however, debates have emerged about the extent to which income streams derived from tourism have reached the cultural amenities that help to attract tourists (Richards, 2001, Russo, 2002). Many discussions of cultural tourism, particularly in emerging economies, also revolve around the need to spread tourism geographically (e.g. Ivanovic & Saayman, 2013). Growing interest in the relationship between cultural tourism and economics is marked by a recent special issue of the *Journal of Cultural Economics* (2017). This includes a number of papers reflecting on issues such as the spending habits of cultural tourists in Amsterdam (Rouwendal & van Loon, 2017) and the impact of cultural participation in destinations in attracting cultural tourists (Guccio, Lisi, Martorana & Mignosa, 2017). In their introduction to the special issue on —The Economics of Cultural Tourism|| Noonan and Rizzo (2017) admit that little theoretical advancement has been made. The editors identify new areas of application, such as drug tourism, language tourism, and film festivals, as well as the potential for work in new areas—such as online ‘crowdsourcing’ and cultural conventions. At its heart, the distinction between cultural tourism and tourism generally may be a false distinction.... Moving in the direction of developing more distinctly cultural economic theories of tourism presents an important challenge to the field . The availability of time-series data is now making it possible to start estimating the economic effects of cultural tourism more accurately in some destinations. Spain is a leading example, as the surveys carried out consistently with domestic and international tourists now provide a wealth of data to be mined. Artal-Tur, Briones-Peñalver and Villena-Navarro (2018) show the leading role that cultural activities play in attracting long-haul and first time visitors to Spain. These cultural tourists also tend to spend more than other international tourists, and play a major role in supporting Spanish Museums (Ponferrada, 2015). Cisneros-Martínez and Fernández-Morales (2015) also demonstrate the role of cultural tourism in reducing seasonality in Andalucía. In Italy, Guccio, Lisi, Mignosa and Rizzo (2018) assess the impact of the monetary value of cultural heritage on tourism. They find that a million euros worth of cultural heritage generates about 1000 more cultural visitors, which underlines the strong relationship between the regional performance of the tourism sector and cultural visitors. Di Lascio, Giannerini, Scorcu and Candela (2011) also looked at the attractiveness of art exhibitions for tourists in Italy. They found a positive 1-year lagged effect of modern art exhibitions on tourism and a positive mild effect of



contemporary art exhibitions on tourist flows. They conclude that “temporary art exhibitions contribute to increase tourist flows if they are part of a structural characteristic of a destination”.

The dynamism of cultural tourism also makes it likely that many new research avenues will open up in future. One of the biggest challenges will be to chart the rapidly changing meanings and interpretations of the term ‘culture’, which in turn has significant implications for the definition of cultural tourism. The increasing application of technology in cultural tourism and the resulting overlaps between real world and virtual experiences will no doubt be one important area of investigation. But at a much more fundamental level there are significant challenges in understanding how broader social changes, such as the increasing mixing and mobility of different cultural and social groups, will impact on the production and consumption of culture by tourists.

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