

CRITICAL REVIEW

INCREASING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF PLACES THROUGH CULTURAL RESOURCES

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Culture and tourism have a symbiotic relationship that has the potential to make places more attractive and competitive. This review of the OECD report on *The Impact of Culture on Tourism* analyzes the ways in which culture and tourism can act as drivers of attractiveness, paying particular attention to the role of potential policy interventions to strengthen this process, including the development of partnerships, funding issues, product development, and marketing. A number of key future issues are identified, and evolving debates in the relationship between culture and tourism are outlined.

Key words: Culture; Cultural tourism; Tourism policy; Creativity; Attractiveness; Distinctiveness; Diversity

Introduction

Culture and tourism have a mutually beneficial relationship that can strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of places, regions, and countries. Culture is increasingly an important element of the tourism product, which also creates distinctiveness in a crowded global marketplace. At the same time, tourism provides an important means of valorizing culture and creating income which can support and strengthen cultural heritage, cultural production and creativity.

A recent report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2009) argues that by developing the relationship

between tourism and culture places can become more attractive as well as increasing their competitiveness as locations to live, to visit, to work, and invest in. The report reviews the experiences of places where cultural resources drive overall attractiveness and identifies the critical success factors in the development of these resources for tourism. The OECD study particularly seeks to identify those key factors and policy interventions that can maximize the attractiveness of places as tourism destinations, places to live and for inward investment. Based on case studies from Australia, Austria, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Turkey, the report draws together a wide range of in-

formation on the relationship between tourism and culture.

This summary of the OECD report presents the main findings and relates these to some of the current debates on tourism and culture.

The Developing Relationship Between Culture and Tourism

Culture and tourism have become inextricably linked as the role of cultural assets in attracting tourists and distinguishing destinations from one another has been realized. The growing articulation between culture and tourism was stimulated by a number of factors (Richards, 2007). In terms of demand, globalization has strengthened the role of culture as a source of local identity while rising education levels and aging populations have increased interest in culture and heritage. Postmodern forms of consumption and a desire for new experiences have also driven growth. On the supply side, cultural tourism has become a source of jobs and income, a stimulus for regional development, and a means of creating an image in an increasingly competitive tourism market. The fact that cultural tourism is seen as a “good” form of tourism has also helped its widespread adoption by governments around the world (Richards, 2001).

The combination of tourism and culture has become an extremely potent economic engine. According to Europa Nostra (2005) “more than 50% of tourist activity in Europe is driven by cultural heritage and cultural tourism is expected to grow the most in the tourism sector.” Similarly, the UNWTO estimates that cultural tourism accounts for 40% of international tourism (Richards, 2007). The ATLAS (2008) research also indicates that the proportion of cultural visitors with a specific cultural tourism motivation has grown steadily, rising from 17% in 1997 to over 30% in 2008.

Cultural tourism policies have therefore become evident worldwide at continental, national, and regional levels. In Europe, for example, the European Commission promotes cultural tourism as a means of underpinning the “unity in diversity” of the EU population. Traveling to experience the culture of others allows tourists and hosts to appreciate cultural difference as well as underlying cultural ties. In Australia and Canada culture and tourism have been linked in the development

of economic opportunities for indigenous peoples. In Africa, Latin America, and Asia cultural tourism is often seen as a means of supporting heritage conservation as well as raising local incomes (Richards, 2007).

In many urban areas cultural institutions have been used to spearhead the regeneration of run-down areas, rejuvenating local economies and increasing property values. In rural areas tourism is used to support traditional livelihoods and crafts and sustain communities threatened with out-migration. For example, visitors to summer festivals held in Gaelic speaking areas of the Highlands of Scotland not only bring much needed money to remote areas, but also help to sustain the local language and traditions (McLean, 2006). Cultural tourism can be particularly important for rural areas, because often there are few alternative sources of income.

The closer links between tourism and culture are also reflected in governance structures at national and regional levels. At least 25 countries have combined administrative structures for culture and tourism. There has also been a move away from product-based to process-based or “way of life” definitions of culture. Tourists increasingly visit places to experience the lifestyles, everyday culture, and customs of the people they visit.

In many places and countries, the “creative industries” or the “cultural industries” have also been identified as having an important relationship with tourism. As tourism increasingly shifts away from its previous preoccupation with landscapes and natural resources (sun, sea, and sand, for example), so tourists become more involved in symbolic and sensory consumption of the images and ideas associated with particular places.

Culture and Tourism as Drivers of Regional Attractiveness and Competitiveness

Regional attractiveness and competitiveness are directly linked. Countries and regions increasingly have to compete to attract residents, visitors and inward investment. What different places have to offer depends not just on economic factors such as standards of living or locational factors such as accessibility, but also on intangible factors such as the “atmosphere” of a place or its general quality of life.

As Dwyer and Kim (2003) argue, tourism competitiveness is determined by available resources (natural resources, cultural assets, and heritage items), created resources (tourism infrastructure, the activities on offer etc.), supporting factors (infrastructure in general, the quality of service, access to the destination, etc.), and destination management factors. Competitiveness therefore relies on assets that are inherited or created and the way in which these assets are organized and deployed in the market. Essentially, it seems, comparative advantage for destinations is derived largely from endowed resources (including cultural heritage) while competitive advantage relies more on resource deployment (management and marketing). The ability of destinations to compete for tourists or investment therefore lies in the ability to transform basic inherited factors into created assets with a higher symbolic or sign value, which attract higher market values as well.

Places therefore need to organize their resources to produce competitive advantage in the tourist market (Fig. 1). Viewed from this perspective, “productive efficiency of a territory to produce tourist flows can be viewed as a proxy for

destination competitiveness” (Cracolicia, Nijkamp, & Rietveld, 2006, p. 6). This underlines the fact that tourism attractiveness is usually viewed from a consumer perspective—the assumption is that more tourists will visit more attractive destinations. Viewed from a regional perspective, however, one may have an intrinsically attractive region, but for various reasons (lack of promotion, problems of accessibility, political unrest) it is visited by fewer tourists than it “should” be.

The most successful places are those that can create a positive synergy between culture and tourism. But this synergy does not happen automatically: it has to be created, developed, and managed. Greffe (2005) identifies a number of criteria that are important in developing a positive relationship between tourism and culture:

- The permanence of cultural activities.
- The degree of participation by local people in addition to tourists.
- The territory’s capacity to produce all the goods and services demanded on this occasion—in other words, the local context is paramount.
- Interdependence of these activities to foster “clustering” effects.

It is also clear that the organizational capacity of a place (or the “orgware”) is an important factor. Effective management of tourism and culture has allowed a number of places to develop a new “cultural” image as a means of stimulating economic development (such as Glasgow and Bilbao).

However, integrating culture and tourism policy can be difficult. Governments do not actually control many aspects of culture or tourism, underlining the need for partnership and networking. The more intangible factors of the relationship between tourism and culture (quality of life issues, sustainability) are usually not taken into account in planning. Smaller regions and cities often lack the skills and/or resources to administer regional cooperation. Creating effective collaboration is also a challenge because the tourism and cultural sectors often seem to be speaking a different language. This is largely to do with the culture of the two sectors, because the tourism sector is largely commercial, whereas the cultural sector often has a nonprofit ethos.

The problems of collaboration are compounded by the fact that the cultural sector often finds it

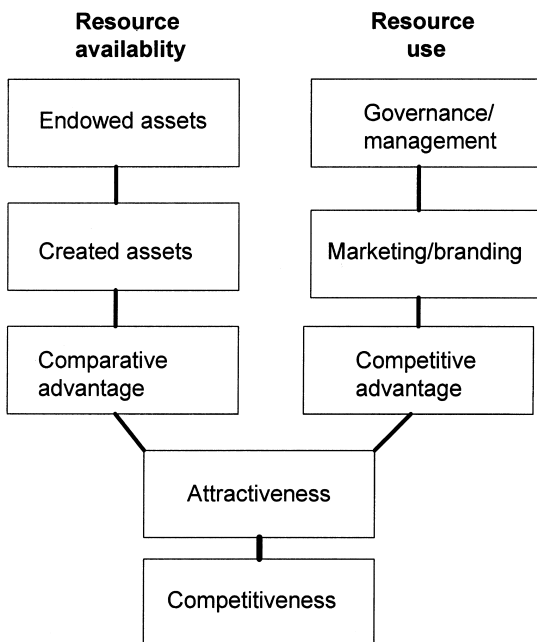


Figure 1. A model of culture, tourism, attractiveness, and competitiveness.

hard to identify direct benefits from developing tourism. As the public service ethos usually relates to serving the needs of residents or citizens, the rationale for serving nonresident tourists is usually framed in economic terms. However, the reality is that many cultural institutions currently derive relatively little direct economic benefit from tourists compared with tourism suppliers (Richards, 2001).

Another barrier that may be emerging for some places in mobilizing their cultural assets for tourism is the fact that intangible assets are becoming increasingly important in destination competition. Where countries used to concentrate on getting their national monuments on the UNESCO World Heritage List, they now seem to be jostling to have their intangible assets listed on the new UNESCO Intangible Heritage register. This is just one important sign that competition in the cultural arena is no longer just about culture, but also creativity.

Tourism and Creativity

Creativity has become a more important element in regional development strategies because (Richards & Wilson, 2007):

- The rise of the symbolic economy privileged creativity over cultural products.
- Regions and cities have increasingly used culture as a form of valorization and therefore need to find new cultural products to create distinction in an increasingly crowded marketplace.
- Places that lack a rich built heritage need to find new means of competing with those that do.

Many countries, regions and cities are now profiling themselves as “creative.” Richard Florida (2002) argues that the basis of economic advantage has shifted away from basic factors of production, such as raw materials or cheap labor, towards human creativity. Places therefore have to develop, attract, and retain creative people who can stimulate innovation and develop the technology-intensive industries that power economic growth. These creative people collectively make up the “creative class.” Importantly, Florida also emphasizes that what is important to the creative class is the “quality of place,” which combines factors such as openness, diversity, atmosphere,

street culture, and environmental quality. Although there has been much criticism of Florida’s ideas, creativity is increasingly being utilized as a tool for regional and urban development (Richards & Wilson, 2007).

Cultural tourism strategies have therefore been supplemented by creative tourism products in many places, emphasizing intangible and symbolic elements of regional culture, such as the “buzz” of particular places, the local art “scene,” nightlife, ethnic quarters, and local gastronomy (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

Policies for Culture and Tourism

As the economic and social challenges facing regions have increased in recent decades, so policies with respect to tourism and culture have tended to become more instrumental. The justification for conserving cultural heritage, for example, is now often framed in economic terms, such as creating employment or helping to create an attractive image which will attract visitors and inward investment. This is particularly evident in areas undergoing economic restructuring.

The OECD case studies indicate that the main drivers for developing culture and tourism policies are:

- Valorizing and preserving heritage
- Economic development and employment
- Physical and economic regeneration
- Strengthening and/or diversifying tourism
- Retaining population
- Developing cultural understanding

For many regions there is also a problem of physical accessibility. Even when a region has considerable potential to develop cultural assets for tourism, if these are not easily accessible to tourists they are difficult to integrate into the tourism product. For this reason, many of the case study regions emphasized infrastructure development as a priority. Many of the OECD case studies relate to predominantly rural areas or former industrial regions undergoing restructuring, rather than metropolitan or major urban areas. Although all these different types of regions are involved in the same competitive race to make themselves and attract investment, they have different capabilities

and therefore strategic options in the development of culture and tourism. In their review of *City Tourism and Culture*, the European Travel Commission (2005) underlined the differences between major metropolitan centers, smaller cities, and villages in terms of development options. Whereas large cities can use creative assets as means to develop “atmosphere” and difference as prescribed by Florida (2002), for example, smaller places are more reliant on heritage. For major cities, the issue of “image” may also be more important than in other places.

In all regions it is increasingly the case that culture and tourism policy is related to generating externalities that will benefit the local economy. The main objectives of the culture and tourism programs are therefore related to improving the economic, cultural, and social position of the target regions. In most cases, relatively general goals are set, usually in terms of increasing tourist numbers, or attracting particular types of tourists.

The main policy actions that can be identified from the case studies are:

- Infrastructure improvement
- Heritage preservation
- Enhance economic performance
- Develop regional identity and enhance region image
- Spreading tourism to new areas
- Improving the quality of tourism and tourism facilities

Culture and tourism are both seen as important drivers for the regional economy which also have a number of other desirable effects, such as providing employment, providing income to support cultural facilities, supporting regional distinctiveness, spreading tourism to new areas, and combating seasonality. The boost given to local culture also stimulates the local population to value and preserve their culture as well as giving them renewed pride in the locality. This is one of the factors causing a number of administrations to develop programs which enhance the cultural awareness and interest in heritage preservation among the local population. The development of schemes involving the local population is a feature of many cultural tourism programs, including those in Japan, Mexico, and Korea. All of these advantages

make cultural tourism a “good” form of tourism, which is often contrasted with other tourism products, particularly “sun and sand” tourism.

Developing cultural products for tourism also requires a diverse range of actors to work together effectively. Not only is culture very diverse, but the different policy contexts within which cultural and tourism actors operate also tends to complicate matters. In terms of policy implementation, therefore, the emphasis is very often on getting the tourism and cultural sectors to work together. As the scope of cultural policy widens to include more aspects of intangible culture, so government also needs to work with the commercial and voluntary sectors to act effectively in the cultural field.

Many of the OECD case studies are based on cultural routes, as these involve cooperation between the tourism and cultural sectors, different levels of government, and the private sector. A cultural route is “a themed route that has a cultural value or an element of cultural heritage as its focus and that assigns a key role to cultural attractions” (Puczko & Rätz, 2007, p. 133). The importance of major attractions as “nodes” within these routes that attract large numbers of visitors is also clear. This principle is being used in Greece to spread tourists to places that currently lack tourism development, using major cultural sites as anchor points from which to spread tourists further into inland areas.

This means that public–private partnership is becoming increasingly important in the relationship between tourism and culture. Bringing tourism and culture together inevitably involves working with a wide range of stakeholders and creating effective partnerships to develop and market the resulting products.

- The first major category (of partnership) consists of joint ventures in which a public sector plays the dominant role in developing new cultural tourism facilities.
- The second type of partnership is those in which the public sector engages in pump-priming to facilitate new cultural tourism development.
- The third category comprises situations where the public sector uses existing cultural resources owned exclusively by the private organization.

The public sector's contribution either entices the private sector to make their cultural resources available for public use, or improves the prospects of such facilities being attractive.

These three categories may be conceptualized as being on a continuum reflecting the magnitude of a public sector's cultural resource commitment and involvement; this increases if the public agency assists a development of cultural resources through pump-priming; and is maximized in joint developments with the private organizations.

Partnership networks can also be formed on a larger scale (e.g., involving interregional collaboration across a number of countries). This type of collaboration has been enhanced in recent years through European Union funding programs, many of which provide opportunities to link tourism and culture. In France, more thought is also being given to developing partnership between metropolitan regions and their hinterlands.

Funding and Investment

Much of the core funding for cultural tourism programs comes from the public sector, even though most subsidiary funding is provided by the private sector (e.g., in developing tourist services such as transport, accommodation, and catering). Because culture is usually seen as an area of public consumption (as opposed to tourism, which is seen as a productive sector), the cultural elements of such programs often depend on the public sector. One barrier to developing privately funded programs, or even mixed-funding models, is the relatively low rate of transfer of resources between the tourism sector and the cultural sector. As noted earlier, for example, the proportion of tourist spending that accrues to cultural institutions through entry charges or commercial activities such as catering or merchandising is in general small. For most cultural institutions, therefore, tourism is an additional funding stream rather than a main source of income.

Public funding may limit the freedom of action of cultural institutions and may create uncertainty about continuity of finance. A number of administrations are now trying to alleviate these problems by encouraging cultural institutions to develop other funding sources and by introducing multian-

nual funding programs. In many regions of Europe, European Union funding has also boosted the supply of cultural facilities for tourist use. Private investment has also been crucial in all of the regions studied. While the public sector may be able to develop key attractions or undertake destination marketing, it is the private sector that supplies the bulk of the tourism product. In many cases there is a direct link between public and private sector investment, as government support for cultural or tourism development will stimulate the private sector to invest as well.

Product Development

The main types of activities identified in the OECD case studies can be summarized as:

- Planning
- Market analysis
- Restoration
- Tourism product development
- Marketing and promotion

Planning the development of culture and tourism involves statutory planning authorities and procedures, but to be really effective it should also involve a wide range of stakeholders and coordinate the activities of different levels of administration.

Regional cultural tourism products are usually developed to create a focus for collaboration between the tourism and cultural sectors, to improve the image of the region, or to spread tourists across the region. The main strategies that have been utilized for these ends are the creation of cultural routes, creation of themed products, and cultural events, which can all provide narratives about place. In a globalizing world, it is increasingly important to develop narratives that can connect people to local cultures. Many visitors may not be familiar with the cultures they are visiting, and themes effectively act as a shorthand that enables the outsider to interpret a new culture. The development of the Labors of Hercules theme in Greece is a good example of how this can work. Most people will be familiar with the story of Hercules, and therefore have a connection with places that otherwise would mean nothing to them.

In many cases the theming of places is also

linked to specific cultural events, such as celebrations of anniversaries connected to famous places, people, or events. In the Netherlands, for example, the National Tourist Office has developed a system of theme years based around famous artists such as Van Gogh and Rembrandt or themed events such as the Floriade exhibition. Events can also be a useful catalyst for economic recovery. For example, in Louisiana (USA) a post-Hurricane Katrina “Main-to-Main” initiative was developed—a kind of moving festival that promotes Main Street arts, crafts, and other cultural attractions.

An increasingly important issue in product development is the involvement of the local community. Research has consistently shown that involvement with local communities is important as a visitor motivation and that it enhances visitor satisfaction. Local communities are therefore not just the hosts for tourism, but also a cultural attraction in themselves, helping to define the sense of place and atmosphere of regions.

Marketing

One of the most important ways in which public authorities can assist in the development of culture and tourism products is through marketing activities. Because of the complexity of the cultural product, very often there is a need to create marketing consortia and give regional products exposure in national and international markets. National Tourism Administrations are developing a wide range of marketing activities related to culture and tourism, including:

- Branding and image development
- Internet platforms, including accommodation and event booking functionality
- Joint promotions with tour operators
- Themed products (events, attractions, cultural routes)
- Theme years and events
- Cultural and creative clusters
- Encouraging filming in the region
- Discount cards

One of the problems that places face in marketing culture to tourists is that they often try and market their culture in general, offering a wide

range of products, when many “cultural tourists” are interested in much more specific experiences. There is a need to identify more specific niche markets that have an interest in specific products in the region. As the competition to attract cultural tourists increases, it is vital to give people a specific reason to visit YOUR region that relates to THEIR interests. In many cases this involves identifying niche products that can be sold to specific target segments.

Conclusions

The OECD analysis indicates that tourism and culture have the potential to act as drivers of attractiveness, providing there is cooperation between the two sectors. In addition, the most successful regions are those which recognize the wider implications of the relationship, particularly in the areas of attracting new residents and inward investment. At present these issues are rarely considered in programs of cultural and tourism development, because these sectors are individually associated with narrow sectoral development. However, there is growing evidence that culture and tourism may act as a powerful combination to attract people and investment.

The evidence from the OECD case studies indicates that the main factors linking tourism and culture to competitiveness and attractiveness include:

- The ability of culture to provide distinctiveness
- The ability of tourism to support tangible and intangible culture
- The role played by regional stakeholders
- The leadership qualities of public sector stakeholders
- Administrative arrangements for tourism and culture

The most successful cultural and tourism regions seem to be those that manage to lead inclusive groups of stakeholders from both public and private sectors in developing and marketing a wide range of cultural and creative resources for tourism. These resources also tend to be developed in such a way that they add to, rather than diminish, regional distinctiveness and underline the authentic culture and creative expressions of the region. Successful policies are also those that take a

wide approach to culture and tourism, seeing them as factors that can boost the attractiveness of regions not just to visit, but also as places to live, work, and invest.

The case of Barcelona is particularly instructive in this respect, as a city that has developed tourism from a cultural imperative, not vice versa (Dodd, 1999). Tourism rose dramatically after the 1992 Olympic Games, which helped to establish the Catalan capital as a distinctive cultural destination. The number of overnight stays grew from 3.7 million in 1990 to 13.6 million in 2007, with much of this growth coming from cultural visits. The 2006 European Cities Monitor considered Barcelona to be the European city offering the best quality of life for workers and half the visitors to Barcelona in 2004 said they could imagine living in the city. In 2006, 81% of Barcelona residents agreed that tourism supports the cultural institutions in the city and 92% were in favor of developing cultural tourism in future. These data underline the growing links between tourism, culture, and quality of life.

The growing scope of “culture” and the cultural and creative industries also means that regions need to adopt a broad approach to culture, which includes not just physical heritage, but also intangible heritage and contemporary creativity. The approach to partnership also needs to be broader as well, going beyond the bounds of traditional heritage tourism and embracing artistic creativity and the lifestyle and “atmosphere” of the destination. However, there is evidence that much cultural and tourism policy remains conservative and traditional, reflecting a trend towards copying and homogenization across the policy spectrum as a whole (Association of Regional Observatories, 2005; European Travel Commission, 2005). In their search for a “quick fix,” many regions also seem to be ignoring the growing evidence that effective cultural and tourism development is a long-term process. The case studies of Glasgow and Barcelona underline this point. Both of these cities began their cultural development programs in the early 1980s, and it is only now that they are beginning to see the full benefits.

In addition to developing innovative and creative strategies to link culture and tourism, regions also have to communicate their products effec-

tively to clearly identified target markets. The use of Internet to promote regional culture and tourism is becoming indispensable as a promotional tool, but the marketing message needs to be delivered to tourists with the motivation to consume the cultural products of the region. More work needs to be done on identifying the elements of the cultural product and the resulting cultural experiences that are likely to be successful in global markets.

Developing a profile for the region is clearly easier with effective collaborative marketing. Many regions are developing stakeholder networks which can support such initiatives, but the marketing proposition is still based largely on products that share a physical space rather than clearly identified theming or links to specific target markets. Regions need to target more effectively, as well as linking together the different parts of their product in terms of “visit, work, live, invest” benefits if they are to fully develop their attractiveness and competitiveness.

The report outlines a number of policy implications for culture and tourism. Most importantly, leadership is required to provide the long-term vision, positioning, partnership arrangements, and innovatory products necessary to succeed in a highly competitive global market. Tourism and culture need to be linked through effective partnership between stakeholders in the two sectors, which often requires mediation from the public sector. It is also important to build other partnerships—for example, with other regions, between the public and private sectors, and between a region and its citizens.

In order to attract cultural tourists, places need to make clear decisions: on the one hand, about which elements of their culture should be marketed, and on the other hand, which segments of the cultural tourism market should be targeted. In the drive to create distinctiveness, regions also need to look beyond the commercial providers of tourism products to seek out new and innovative products. It is symptomatic of the attitude of the tourism sector that “noncommercial” activities are seen as a problem rather than an opportunity. In reality, as cultural tourists increasingly search for “authentic” experiences of “everyday culture,” they are more likely to avoid (obviously) commercial products.

In the long term, therefore, regions will have to be increasingly innovative in the way in which they develop, manage, and market culture and tourism. This is particularly true if they want to extract the full range of benefits from this relationship for people who visit, live in, work in, and invest in the region.

The future challenges regions are likely to face include:

- *Challenges of funding culture.* One of the major issues for the cultural sector is funding, as culture is often seen as a necessity to which all should have access; cultural goods and services are often priced low to facilitate this.
- *Creating sustainable relationships and conserving cultural resources.* Cultural tourism may place a greater burden on the cultural infrastructure and the local community than other forms of tourism. The desire to experience the “local” and the “authentic” culture may place visitors in competition with local people for certain services and resources, which may require special management and conservation measures as a result.
- *Integrating cultural, tourism and national/local development strategies.* Most regions now recognize the virtue of integrated development strategies that increase attractiveness for visitors while delivering quality of life benefits to residents. A good example is the “slow cities” movement, which shows that a slower pace of life, a slower way of preparing and eating food, and a richer network of contact between residents is also extremely attractive for tourists.
- *Dealing with multicultural societies and intercultural dialogue.* Increasingly diverse resident populations not only problematize stereotypical cultural images of places, but also allow diversity to become a resource for culture and tourism.

Evolving Debates in Tourism and Culture

To some extent, the material presented in the OECD report and accompanying case studies reflects some of the broader academic debates about the relationship between culture and tourism.

In the context of *globalization*, the report emphasizes the increasingly competitive nature of

cultural tourism as a result of increased tourist mobility, but it also underlines the opportunities presented by strengthening local culture in the face of globalization. In many ways these opportunities are strengthened by the shift towards more intangible forms of cultural consumption. As Vidal González (2008) points out, the development of phenomena such as Japanese flamenco tourism, “globalization fosters a relationship between distant intangible heritage and personal identity” (p. 808), which allows the reproduction of cultural forms far from their supposed origins, as well as stimulating long-distance tourism flows.

The roles of *locals and tourists* in tourist destinations have also been the subject of much debate, even though empirical studies of the relationship between these two groups have been scarce (Franquesa & Morell, 2007). Local people are often placed in opposition to tourists, even though the boundaries between the two are often small or almost nonexistent. The OECD report places local people on the same footing as tourists, as one of the groups that the region should serve in attempting to improve quality of life for all. Although locals and tourists may compete for resources in some situations, for most destinations the same qualities that make a place attractive to tourists are also those enjoyed by local people as well. Tourism is often the first step in a person’s decision to move regions or countries, and may therefore stimulate labor mobility and eventually inward investment as well.

The search for *distinctiveness* is driving destinations to create cultural attractions and narratives that set them apart. In much of the literature cultural tourism is seen as one of the forces reducing the distinctiveness of places, and in the most extreme cases leading to a feeling of “placelessness” (Smith, 2007). However, even if increased tourist mobility may lead to a feeling of “deja place,” the arrival of visitors may be one of the stimuli that convinces locals they live somewhere special (Gu & Ryan, 2008).

One of the elements in the discussion about the distinctiveness of places is *authenticity*. It has often been argued that the authenticity of places is an important factor in attracting cultural tourists (Munt, 1994). However, the concept of “authenticity” is complex, and its interpretation depends on

the standpoint of the individual tourist as well as that of the local resident or cultural producer (Schouten, 2007). As Cohen (2007) has argued, the fragmentation of notions of authenticity may also reflect the postmodern fragmentation of concepts of culture and the acceptance of different, and sometimes competing narratives. At present, it seems, many governments are still unable (or unwilling) to deal with the multifaceted nature of authenticity, preferring simplistic, unidimensional narratives that support mainstream views of history and contemporary society. The prevalence of cultural routes and themed attractions devoted to popular figures and elements of high culture underlines this trend.

Dealing with *diversity* therefore becomes more than a question of marketing ethnic enclaves. It involves the recognition of diversity in the audience for culture as well as the local populations which produce it. As Tweed and Sutherland (2007) point out in the case of cities: “built heritage conveys different meanings to different groups of people and that these meanings are likely to be important in the future growth of towns and cities and so need to be considered part of sustainable development. In increasingly cosmopolitan cities it will be important to develop a deeper understanding of how meanings are created and sustained for different groups” (p. 65). These different meanings are also not static, but change over time and may vary between one visit and another. Much recent research has pointed to the rise of the “cultural omnivore” (Peterson, 2005; van Eijck, 2001) and the mixing of high and popular cultural consumption has also been noted in cultural tourism (Richards 2007). Increasingly, the cultural tastes of consumers are organized not only along an axis of high-popular culture, but also from old to new cultural forms (Bellavance, 2008). Forms of cultural consumption and the negotiation of authenticity therefore depend highly on the positioning of individuals in social microspaces within their respective class.

In the rapidly shifting landscape of cultural taste, the important message for product development and marketing may well be that the framing of experiences is more important than the actual content. The frames provided for cultural experiences through the media, marketing activities,

travel literature, and previous travel experience are dynamic and may coexist in apparent contradiction to one another, enriching the cultural narrative of destinations (Almeida Santos, 2004). Such flexibility may allow places to overcome some of the effects of commodification of culture, as Cole (2007) suggests in the case of Flores in Indonesia: “people can use cultural commodification as a way of affirming their identity, of telling their own story, and of establishing the significance of local experiences” (p. 956).

Reaffirming the importance of local experience is one potential means for mitigating problems of institutionalization and “touristification,” as Almeida Santos, Belhassen, and Caton (2008) point out in the case of ethnic enclaves such as Chinatowns. Such ethnic enclaves are increasingly being incorporated into the mainstream tourist products of cities, in many cases because they are seen as sources of diversity, and therefore by implication creativity. In fact, much of the development of such enclaves is bereft of creativity and based on stereotypes derived from the host population. There is a need for a more sensitive approach to such developments which is based on the needs of the local population while still opening up these cultural spaces and making them accessible to visitors. There is a need for a wider vision of the function of such enclaves, which recognizes their attractiveness not just to tourists, but also to local residents and “co-ethnic” and “co-cultural” groups in the region (Collins & Kunz, 2007).

The fact that people consume the culture of places in different ways for different reasons also means it is difficult for regions to capture the economic value of “cultural” tourism. Although the “new cathedrals” of cultural consumption (Ritzer, 1999) such as the Bilbao Guggenheim and the Tate Modern have arguably had an important impact on their regions, the general relationship between cultural infrastructure and economic impact remains unclear. In the US, Rosentraub and Joo (2009) found that “Cultural tourism attractions were weak and ambiguous predictors of the number of employees in the tourism industry. Arts had a negative impact on employees in the tourist sector” (p. 766). They conclude that cultural facilities are less profit oriented and therefore less likely to generate tourism jobs. However, it may also be the

case that the most frequently mentioned motive for visiting places—their “atmosphere” cannot be operationalized in terms of the number of museums or art galleries. This approach also ignores the fact that culture generates wider benefits which cannot be measured in direct economic terms, such as its contribution to quality of life, social cohesion, and education.

One means by which regions may be able to capitalize more fully on the relationship between tourism and culture is through the development of new forms of cultural tourism, such as “creative tourism” or “experiential tourism.” Creative tourism is a means of involving visitors more actively in the creative life of the places they visit, ensuring that they benefit in terms of personal development as well as contributing to the cultural vitality of the destination (Richards & Wilson, 2006). The recent International Conference on Creative Tourism held in Santa Fe, New Mexico (<http://www.santafecreativetourism.org/>) brought together many commentators under the auspices of UNESCO to discuss this new form of tourism. One of the main conclusions of this forum was that the development of creative tourism and other new forms of cultural tourism would require the emergence of a new form of cultural intermediary, or “experience broker,” capable of linking the culture and creativity of places with the needs of tourists. These new intermediaries will need to bridge the current gaps between tourism and culture, ensuring a more holistic approach that will benefit both locals and visitors by improving the quality of life in the destination region as a whole.

Nota Bene

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