

# TOURISM AND COMMODIFICATION RELATIONSHIP IN THE GLOBALIZED WORLD: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL PROPOSAL

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## INTRODUCTION

Modern capitalism helps ontological boundaries between near and far to disappear, difference between home and foreign lands to erode by transforming the world into a global home; and this transition deterritorializes everything paradoxically (Argın, 2003). In this context, as a result of globalization, culture is believed to be separated from its roots and become deterritorialized, and it is thought that tourism contributes the process. Urry (2009) claims that the large number of people and places have caught up in the vortex of global tourism which makes tourism to be universalized and cultural values to be consumed. Structural changes in the tourist profile and demand growth for touristic activities lead to cultural differences in the structure of society in globalization process. And it is stated that intensive interaction between locals and tourists speeds up these cultural changes.

The impact of tourism on local culture is claimed to lead the emergence of commodification concept and it has become prominent in international tourism research (Mbaiwa, 2011). There are in-depth discussions among scholars on the impacts of commodification. While several researchers admit commodification reduces authenticity of cultures, destroys local identity and cultural values, leads to standardization of culture and transforms local phenomenon into global which results in conflicts affecting cultures in a negative way (Greenwood, 1978; MacCannell, 1992; Watson and Kopachevsky, 1994; Mason, 1996; Goulding, 2000; Halewood and Hannam, 2001); some researchers, on the contrary, claim that commodification has positive effects on

cultures because cultural values are saved from extinction with the increase in demand and thus traditions have preserved and revived; new cultural formations have occurred from tourist-local people interaction and develop new and different meanings on existing values; encourage local people to own and proud of cultural consciousness (Cohen, 1988; Kroshus Medina, 2003; Xie, 2003; Cole, 2007; Finn, 2009; Su, 2011).

This study aims to bring a comparative perspective on the relation of tourism and commodification; which arise from globalization, and clarify positive and negative aspects in the first instance and then to propose a conceptual model to understand the leading patterns that cause the commodification process. Lack of a clear consensus in the literature, especially on the concept of heterogeneity, makes this study essential to explain these concepts. It is revealed in the conclusion that both cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity create commodification, and as a result, this cycle helps cultural values to revive, diversify, renew and continue on the one hand; but also causes to lose their authenticity, deterioration or degeneration on the other.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### *Globalization*

Although globalization is not a new concept used all around the world, there are different views about the philosophy behind it (Oduwole, 2012). Giddens (2000) states that there are very few issues spoken as frequent as globalization but hard to conceptualize. In this context, it is difficult to agree upon a common definition of globalization, causing

lots of discussions in literature on dimension, chronology and explanation of globalization (Scholte, 2002). Globalization cannot be fitted in a common definition because it covers and affects a wide area from economics, politics and culture to life styles and has different approaches from every discipline, perspective, objective and ideology; the main reasons of different perspectives arise on globalization because of the ambiguity of itself, its impacts on wide scale, ongoing evolution and still unknown dimensions (Genç and Hasanov, 2007; Yağcı, 2013).

Cohen (2012) claims globalization resolves worldwide economic, political and cultural boundaries, and provides a free flow among human, commodity, capital, information, communication and life styles. According to Robertson (1999) globalization means contraction of the world, whereas Giddens (1998) defines it as the connection between remote places and people to each other and concentration and tightening of worldwide social relations. Yeates (2001) states that there are many concepts used as substitution of globalization such as transnationalization<sup>1)</sup>, multinationalization<sup>2)</sup>, internationalization<sup>3)</sup>, universalization<sup>4)</sup>, liberalization<sup>5)</sup> and triadization<sup>6)</sup>; yet it is not clear whether they are used as synonyms or in different meanings. Scholte (2005) claims that globalization means "deterritorialization", disappearance of regionalism<sup>7)</sup> and lands, or in other words "supraterritorialization", the relationship among individuals and societies in a more developed and outspread understanding over lands and frontier boundaries; rather than it refers to internationalization, liberalization, modernization/ westernization<sup>8)</sup> or

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Transnationalization: Boundaries of economy or political economy to be defined rather than national borders

Multinationalization: Production to be shared by multinational organizations

Internationalization: Factors like capital, labor, ideas to be shared among two or more countries

Universalization: People and cultures to be spreaded in universal level

Liberalization: Barriers in international exchange or transfer legislation to be removed

Triadization: Economic, technological and political developments to be gathered by the world's most developed regions such as America Europe and Japan and Far East

Regionalization: Regional blocks to be developed like EU or NAFTA

Westernization: Homogenization of the world by the leadership of West or USA

universalization. "Supraterritorialization" notion means that people all around the world are connected to each others in physical, legal, linguistic, cultural and psychological sense in a transborder connection. According to Scholte (2007), this notion is related with deterritorialization and contemporary society is just a piece of it; that is why he claims that regional relations are prevailed by global relations which leads unnatural cultural relations. Tomlinson(2004) states culture is one the fundamentals of country mark however it becomes insignificant and deterritorialized with the globalization. Deterritorialization is one of the terms that changes contents of identities, people and meanings in postmodern world system (Kaplan, 1987) so it is possible to say that the two main symptoms; cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity emerged within this concept (Marti, 2006).

### ***Cultural Homogenization and Heterogeneity***

The tension between cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity is one the fundamental issues of current global interactions (Appadurai, 1990). In this context, some researchers suggest culture becomes homogeneous (Ger and Belk, 1996; Giddens, 1998; Wallerstein, 1998; Farquharson and Omori, 2009), others think culture becomes heterogeneous (Friedman, 1994; Robertson, 1994; King, 1995; Said, 1995; Hall, 1998; Berger, 2003).

The main reasons of homogenization are that values of people become ordinary associated with popular culture which spreads through social media to whole world and the distance between people and cultures disappears with the technological developments creating resemblance in shared values (Çoban, 2010). Cultural homogeneity is clarified as time independent places, elimination of differences and emergence of standard global culture (Giddens, 1998). Having same structures in shopping malls and hotels in distant and different cities (Holton, 2013) and having standardized touristic experiences offered in various destinations throughout the world can be seen as the results of homogeneity.

Ritzer (1998) considers homogeneity under the concept of "McDonaldization" and states fast-food chains apply the same service standards all over the world, sell their products on standard menus, and destroy authenticity in society and important cultural elements. This has positive results for global entities however for the cultures trying to sustain their existence suffers from the same situation because

global business can offer their standard products for sale to every country without any changes, standardization of products destroys specific cultures and leads to the domination of a single culture. Barber (1995), aligned with Ritzer's McDonaldization concept, states that even the nations having self sufficiency claims do not have true sovereignty. For example, Iranians listen conservative mullahs calling for holy war, while overhearing TV series broadcast through satellites above themselves; Chinese investors compete with each others to draw attention of notables of the party also strive for KFC restaurants in their own cities when they are serving to hundreds of thousands of consumers, Russian-Orthodox church makes a bid to revive old beliefs, at the same time contracts a joint venture with Californian businessman to bottle spring water.

Considered from tourism point of view, people travelling with mass tourism are known for searching their own lifestyles in destination countries (Cohen, 2012). Tourism movements are expanding from west to east and from developed countries to underdeveloped or developing countries result in tourism goods developments among unpopular and non-western countries to spread tourism (Shepherd, 2002; Cohen, 2012). Therefore, it is argued that mass tourism destroys the culture in visited regions. Destinations competing for mass mobilization in order to attract more visitors creates commodification of local identities and competitive western style regions (Urry, 1999). One of the most obvious example of this is having fast food chains even in small villages, on the other side western style restaurants, stores or museums can be also considered with the same perspective. According to some researchers some destinations face with the danger of losing their appeal due to cultural and architectural uniformization around the world (Cole, 2007; Cohen, 2012 -quoted from Relph, 1976). According to Barber (1995)'s "McWorld" approach, nations are stucked commercially in this homogeneous global network. Similar airports, shopping malls and entertainment centers can be examples for deterritorialized places (MacCannell, 2001).

It is known that local people are also affected from homogeneity movement. Intense interactions of local people with tourists result some changes in clothing, speaking, habits and attitudes (Doğan, 2004). To instance, local people wear cheap imitations of wear western clothes instead of their

original clothes, change eating and drinking habits heading for dining out and ready to serve food and change their speaking by adding especially English foreign words in their native language.

By the nature of globalization, homogeneity is not the only consequence of inclusion of local cultures into global culture or locality effects from globalization. It is said that cultural elements and meanings are derived from different interactions (Taylan and Arklan, 2008). Accordingly, on the contrary to homogeneity, heterogeneity argues that differences are still standing, cultural diversity enriches out of interactions of different cultures (Alankuş, 2001). Examples for heterogeneity may be that Turkish people celebrate their own religious holidays, at the same time celebrate Christian holidays like Christmas and Halloween as well; in tourism point of view, hotels serve local foods and drinks by having others belong to different cultures, tourists travelled to Far East try to eat their own food by chopsticks even it is a part of Far East culture and they also wear destination specific local clothes when they back to homeland. Said (1978) and Hall (1998) argue that globalization has not only emerged from western culture, but also existed in eastern cultures. Said (1978) emphasizes east is just an imitation of west understanding is wrong. Similarly, Tomlinson (2004) opposes the opinion of globalization leads to cultural homogeneity, and states "advocating globalization creates homogeneous cultures is similar with spending leisure time in duty-free shops amongst global brands by not going out from airports". Taylan (2008) suggests globalization should be defined as a symbol for the interaction between the cultures and a heterogeneous process interconverting from global and local essentials within an inevitable relation and interaction.

In literature, both heterogeneity and cultural diversity (Iwabuchi, 2002) along with cultural homogeneity and cultural commodification concepts are discussed prominently (Hay and Marsh, 2000; Mazur, 2010). In addition, both phenomena are examined with their positive and negative sides by the researchers. Kotler and Armstrong (1992) claim that market will be differentiated by heterogeneous variations and different consumer demands and needs; Levitt (1983) states homogeneous commodification associated with globalization will result in uniformed single marketplace.

### ***Tourism - Commodification Relationship***

Different socio-cultural structures interact thanks to tourism and some of the beliefs and norms may change accordingly (Erwin and Smith, 2008; Duran, 2010). The most important factor of cultural commodification can be considered as increased tourism activity interaction in the globalization process (Shepherd, 2002). Cohen (1998) defines commodification as a process that objects and activities are evaluated according to their exchange values and categorized as goods and services in commercial context. In terms of tourism, cultural values presented to market such as local traditions, rituals and festivals are considered as cultural commodification (Gotham, 2002; Mbaiwa, 2011). Watson and Kopachevsky (1994) consider commodification as an all-pervasive feature of modern capitalism and standardization of products, pleasure and experiences. Therefore the process reifies the consciousness and spreads modern capitalism. Tourism, a complex socio-cultural dimension of modernity, is exposed to the same effects of capitalist consumer culture. Apart from economic impacts, it causes commodification of social environment in terms of sex, culture and religion (MacCannell, 2001; Shepherd, 2002; Bauer and McKercher, 2003; Poulin, 2003; Macleod, 2006; Kitiarsa, 2008). Also life styles of society, traditions, language, music, dance and other artistic elements can be considered examples of other commodified factors in this process (MacCannell, 1999; Halewood and Hannam, 2001; Cole, 2007). Another specific example may be young Asian women are seen as sexual objects by male tourists visiting Southeast Asia (Urry, 2009). On the other hand, wearing cross necklaces or clothes with cross symbols despite being Muslims can be examples of the commodification of religion (Ercal, 2000).

In tourism market, positive and negative consequences of cultural commodification on local culture are discussed. However in literature mainstream opinion is commodification minimize authenticity of the culture (Halewood and Hannam, 2001; Kroshus Medina, 2003; Cole, 2007). Greenwood (1978) claims that tourism developed on the basis of capitals western evolution causes commodification and this commodification ruins the values of local identity and culture. Watson and Kopachevsky (1994) state cultural heritage tourism leads to cultural standardization and transformation

of local phenomenon into a global one. Some of locals accept their culture to be commodified as a touristic element, others object to commodification concerning their culture and beliefs will be depreciated (Mbaiwa, 2011; Kaygalak et al., 2013). That is why cultural commodification causes cultural conflicts. Cultural commodification in destinations changes people behaviours and affect local social capital like hospitality adversely (Cohen, 1988; Mbaiwa, 2011). If Şirince -a local town in Turkey- is analyzed as an example, thanks to tourism crafts, old businesses and food culture are maintained and caused a revival in cultural sense, yet in recent times it has become too popular as a touristic destination and those elements become commodified with the danger of losing their authenticity. Commodification of cultural elements creates economic benefit for local people, on the other hand same people worry to lose these values at the same time (Kırlar and Sünnetçioğlu, 2013). In this context, local people perceiving tourists as "money" (Doğan, 2004) and uniformed souvenirs sold everywhere make their culture standard and directly contribute to commodification. According to MacCannell (1999) who stimulates tourism to worshipping, the process, where touristic elements are perceived like "sacralization" can be called mechanic and social replication. Touristic patterns become commodified by demonstration of traditions as well as attractiveness thorough replicated photographs, sculptures and other souvenir items.

In a study conducted in Botswana on cultural commodification and tourism, implies that the commodification of cultural values for the sake of the development of tourism causes cultural conflicts among the local population. Middle aged local people are afraid of losing authenticity of cultural values and do not want tourism to be developed, young population defend developments in tourism by considering its socio-economic effects such as business opportunities and employment (Mbaiwa, 2011). In another study which examines the relation between local culture and tourism in rural areas of Ireland determines that in the process of commodification of local culture and heritage changes the distance of social relationship between individuals and groups living in urban and rural areas (Kneafsey, 1998). And a study conducted in Mardin -a city of Turkey- upon authenticity and tourism shows that as a result of developed tourism activities,

local people present their clothes, activities and rituals according to demands of tourists which leads cultural commodification and losing authenticity of local culture (Kaygalak et al., 2013).

Despite the fact that commodification associated with globalization has negative impacts on cultural elements, it is argued that the demand for cultural elements enriches these factors and maintain traditions from extinction (Cohen, 1988). In addition, positive sides of commodification are argued in terms of new formations rising from the interaction between tourist and local people and change in new and different meanings to old values (Cohen, 1988; Kroshus Medina, 2003). For example, a study conducted on Mayas reveals that eventhough majority of the villagers abandon their local identity, they are trying to reach traditions through new channels since they can not learn from the old way, in order to meet the growing demand for tourism now. Thus the tourist demand for goods and objects reflecting Mayan culture trigger especially tourist guides, stone carvers and potters to track studies of some epigraphers and archaeologists working in the same area in order to learn Mayan cosmology and use relevant patterns and symbols on their business and try to learn their native language and encourage native speakers to use their own language (Kroshus Medina, 2003). Halewood and Hannam (2001) study on Viking cultural heritage tourism suggest commodification can be considered as a process containing both disowning and embracement for the sake of Viking cultural values development. Similarly, Xie (2003)

and Finn (2009) also indicate commodification has some positive socio-cultural impacts like survival of cultural identities and folk traditions. For example, an island called Visby in Baltic Sea has a tradition of wearing Medieval clothes for a week every year which enables the survival of Medieval theme and keeping the tradition (Urry, 2009). Another study conducted by Su (2011) in Lijiang in China also support the same opinion, accordingly commodification secure forgotten ethnic music to revive, diversify and make young people to be interested in ethnic music. Another positive effect of commodification is referred as strengthening cultural bonds. In the research Cole (2007) studies in Indonesia shows that commodification resulting from tourism has many benefits for local community such as economic benefits, utilization of touristic facilities and opportunity to make friends. The most important contribution of commodification is making local people to have culture self-consciousness and proud of their culture.

***A Conceptual Model Proposal for Tourism & Commodification Relation***

Theoretical framework about the relationship between tourism and commodification reveals gaps. The submission of a new model proposal is to contribute to the understanding of tourism's cultural effects and can be used for the typology of tourism and commodification relationship. The model results from the combination of the theoretical background of related literature and discusses the leading patterns that cause the commodification process.

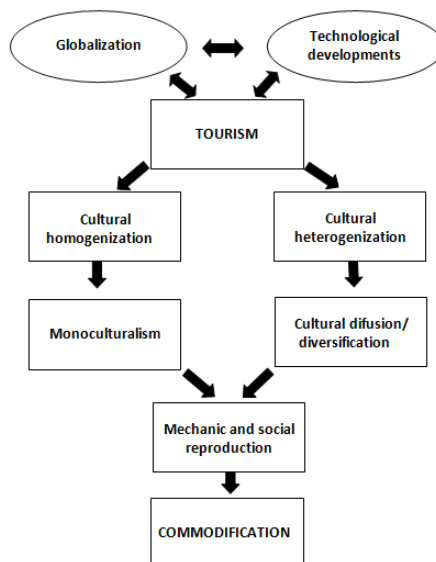


Figure 1. Proposed model for Tourism&Commodification relationship

According to tourism-commodification relation model, a mutual communication exists among globalization, technological developments and tourism. Technology is one of the most important factors for borders to be disappeared and acceleration of globalization process. Thanks to technological developments people can travel cheaper to distant and different places in a more secure and comfortable way, also they can easily have access to all information and can spread this information. Align with these developments more people are travelling which lead a continuous increase in touristic activities and variations. On the other hand changes and demand structure of tourism can shape technological developments. Existing or new technologies are adopted according to the needs arising from touristic demand. People can travel to every corner of the world through mass movements which accelerate globalization through tourism.

It is stated that the interaction between globalization, technological developments and tourism have two different effects on culture. Accordingly, in cultural context tourism leads both homogeneity and heterogeneity. Cultural homogeneity means that places become time-independent, differences are disappearing and standard culture is emerging (Giddens, 1998). On the other hand, cultural heterogeneity means that differences are standing still and cultural diversity is increasing due to the interaction among different cultures. In this context, as a result of cultural homogeneity single culturalism concept (Hay and Marsh, 2000; Mazur, 2010) and as a result of cultural heterogeneity cultural diversification concept (Iwabuchi, 2002) are arising. Thus, on the one hand societies resembles to each others and correspondingly they contribute the process of the emergence of a single global culture, on the other as a result of interaction with different communities society is experiencing the process of defining and expressing their differences (Keyman and Sarıbay, 2000). To illustrate these processes, an example can be given from a local town called "Alaçatı" which is located in the city of Izmir/Turkey. Although there are authentic stone houses for tourists accommodation aligned with local culture in the town, without considering the local structure hotel chain businesses continue their activities with the same standards all over the world are examples to cultural homogenization. On the contrary, alongside

the local dishes, offering Mexican or world cuisine to a German tourist staying in a stone house in Alaçatı can be accepted as an example for cultural heterogeneity.

The opinion of cultural homogeneity and thus single culturalism lead commodification dominates in the literature. However in suggested model not only homogeneity but also heterogeneity, as the revealer of cultural diversity, are considered to be lead in commodification. Considering objects and activities primarily with their exchange value and converting them into goods or services is stated as the definition of commodification (Cohen, 1998), in tourism point of view, definition changes as presenting local values such as local traditions, rituals and festivals to tourism market (Gotham, 2002; Mbaiwa, 2011). In this context, it is thought that mechanical and social reproduction of the items offered in the tourism experience leads to commodification. Starting from this, mechanical reproduction means making simple copies of touristic elements, and social reproduction means associating groups, cities and regions with famous touristic elements. Referring over the same example of Alaçatı; mechanic and social reproductions process with the tourists buying uniformed souvenirs (i.e., magnet, sculpture, t-shirts) of Alaçatı and use them in their own countries or giving as a gift to their relatives and imitating local foods and habits (lifestyle and philosophy, clothing etc.) in their own culture and sharing these values with surrounding. All this process at the end it believed to turn into a commodification in this conceptual model. To sum up the model, the argument of this research is that not only cultural homogeneity but also heterogeneity lead the commodification as the result of mechanic and social reproduction of the cultural elements mentioned above.

## CONCLUSION

There are two different views on the relationship between globalization and local culture in the literature, and accordingly, it results both in cultural homogeneity and also emergence of different cultures (Urry, 1999). Cultures become commodified by the interaction of communities having different social and cultural structure in the process of globalization with accelerated tourism mobility. In this context, cultural values such as local

traditions, crafts, rituals and festivals presented as a package to tourists are considered as cultural commodification (Gotham, 2002; Mbaiwa, 2011). In order to develop tourism, commodification of cultural elements like clothing, architecture, crafts and eating drinking habits have both positive as well as negative effects on culture (Cole, 2007; Mbaiwa, 2011). In literature on the one hand negative effects of commodification are discussed in terms of reducing or ruining authenticity of cultures, destroying local identity and cultural values, leading to conflicts in culture, social environment and relation as well as making the destination less appealing (Greenwood, 1978; MacCannell, 2001; Shepherd, 2002; Bauer and McKercher, 2003), on the other, it is argued that commodification has also positive impacts especially on oblivious cultural values, identities and traditions to be preserved and revived, old businesses and crafts to be reappeared, cultural diversification and enrichment, cultural values to be strengthened, encouraging local people to own and proud of cultural consciousness (Cohen, 1988; Halewood and Hannam, 2001; Cole, 2007; Su, 2011).

Although there are many examples in Turkey reflecting positive and negative sides of tourism associated commodification, a very few researches are encountered in literature. To demonstrate, in order to increase demand, nonconforming modern buildings, shopping malls or hotels are constructed in tourism destinations serving mass tourism like Alanya, Bodrum and Kuşadası, cause local area to lose its authenticity and appeal. Also in Mardin after tourism development, crafts become more prominent but with developed touristic activities cultural values like clothes, activities and rituals are shaped around the demands of tourists which leads losing authenticity of local culture. Also in Şanlıurfa, one the most important cultural tourism centers, traditions like *sıra nights*<sup>9</sup>\* presenting in new formations to foreigners as well as domestic tourists are damaging the authenticity. On the other side, local crafts like carpet weaving, ceramics, pottery and stone dressing contribute local culture due to commodification to develop tourism. For example as a positive contribution, cultural items such as pottery are commodified for the sake of touristic development and local people are encouraged to get

interested in Cappadocia or the increasing interest in gastronomy tourism in recent years make local food culture to gain importance again.

In conclusion, developments in the globalization process like many other areas affect tourism activities and with these developments tourism creates some changes in culture. Many destinations willing to meet tourism demand, offer their local cultural elements to tourists leading cultural commodification in time. On the one hand, cycle of commodification causes losing authenticity of cultural elements, cultures to get disrupted or corrupted, on the other it results in revival, diversification, renewal and continuity of cultural values.

Although it is generally accepted in the literature as cultural homogeneity turns out to monoculturalism and this also causes commodification of the culture, it is suggested in this model that not only homogeneity but also heterogeneity result in commodification. By means of mechanic and social reproduction -suggested by MacCannell- tourists duplicate cultural values and it turns into a commodified outcome at the end. As a result, both of the processes end with commodification. An example can be given to sum up the suggested model; some of the tourists buy, keep or present just a monotype copy of souvenir that can be found everywhere and reflect the culture of host community, some tourists on the contrary experience authentic and original goods and practices during their travel and afterwards they sustain this foreign culture on their own lives or share these experiences with relatives or friends. It is accepted that both processes either buying just a souvenir or having an authentic experience and then sharing the tangible outputs of it lead the commodification by making a mechanic and social reproduction of these cultural values.

Evaluation of tourism and commodification relationship in a conceptual point of view makes impossible to have practical analysis. An applied research with practical analysis for further studies is expected to contribute to literature. Besides it is suggested to have deeper destination based researches to examine positive and negative impacts of commodification of cultural elements. Especially, interviews with local people living in popular tourism destinations will be beneficial for the related area.

\* A kind of event that features a gathering of people to eat and sing with traditional musical instruments.

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