


HERITAGE TOURISM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN CHINA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Article history:</p> <p>Received 31 March 2023</p> <p>Accepted 26 June 2023</p> | <p>Purpose: Being culturally rich and historically significant, China is seeing a growth in heritage and cultural tourism. From being seen as a country with a singular national identity, local communities are increasingly marketing their local heritage and culture for heritage tourism.</p> |
| <p>Keywords:</p> <p>Heritage Tourism in China; Cultural Identity; Authenticity in Tourism; Over Tourism.</p> | <p>Theoretical framework: These activities include the generation of money and the facilitation of the development of infrastructure. The advantages are mutually beneficial; for example, travelers report feeling psychologically better after participating in heritage tourism activities because they are motivated by feelings of nostalgia and a sense of cultural connection.</p> <p>Design/methodology/approach: In this regard, authenticity becomes a state driven effort, where values in communities are expected to change as needed. For example, in Lijiang the local Dongba religious rituals which had been included into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register had been reinvented to be more suited for tourist consumption.</p> |
|  | <p>Findings: These activities include the generation of money and the facilitation of the development of infrastructure. The advantages are mutually beneficial; for example, travelers report feeling psychologically better after participating in heritage tourism activities because they are motivated by feelings of nostalgia and a sense of cultural connection. Despite this, the advantages come with certain negatives, which manifest themselves as physical and cultural harms that are incurred as a result of the situation.</p> <p>Research, Practical & Social implications: To begin, it paves the way for specific historic places to become a ritualized channel via which collective social memory may be conveyed and gathered together. To elaborate, heritage tourism enables a person to validate their membership in a nation based on the imagined reality that has been established through the course of their history.</p> <p>Originality/value: Mentioned three perspectives in authenticity in China, namely spatial separation, value shifting and emotional banishment. In this regard, authenticity becomes a state driven effort, where values in communities are expected to change as needed.</p> <p>Doi: https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i7.2393</p> |

TURISMO PATRIMONIAL E IDENTIDADE CULTURAL NA CHINA: DESAFIOS E OPORTUNIDADES PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO

RESUMO

Objetivo: Por ser culturalmente rica e historicamente significativa, a China está observando um crescimento no turismo patrimonial e cultural. De ser vista como um país com uma identidade nacional singular, as comunidades locais estão cada vez mais comercializando seu patrimônio e cultura locais para o turismo patrimonial.

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Estrutura teórica: Essas atividades incluem a geração de dinheiro e a facilitação do desenvolvimento da infraestrutura. As vantagens são mutuamente benéficas; por exemplo, os viajantes relatam que se sentem psicologicamente melhor depois de participar de atividades de turismo de patrimônio porque são motivados por sentimentos de nostalgia e por um senso de conexão cultural.

Projeto/metodologia/abordagem: Nesse sentido, a autenticidade torna-se um esforço orientado pelo Estado, em que se espera que os valores das comunidades mudem conforme necessário. Por exemplo, em Lijiang, os rituais religiosos locais de Dongba, que haviam sido incluídos no Registro de Memória do Mundo da UNESCO, foram reinventados para serem mais adequados ao consumo turístico.

Conclusões: Essas atividades incluem a geração de dinheiro e a facilitação do desenvolvimento da infraestrutura. As vantagens são mutuamente benéficas; por exemplo, os viajantes relatam que se sentem psicologicamente melhor depois de participar de atividades de turismo de patrimônio porque são motivados por sentimentos de nostalgia e uma sensação de conexão cultural. Apesar disso, as vantagens vêm acompanhadas de certos aspectos negativos, que se manifestam como danos físicos e culturais resultantes da situação.

Implicações sociais, práticas e de pesquisa: Para começar, ele abre caminho para que lugares históricos específicos se tornem um canal ritualizado por meio do qual a memória social coletiva pode ser transmitida e reunida. Para elaborar, o turismo patrimonial permite que uma pessoa valide sua participação em uma nação com base na realidade imaginada que foi estabelecida no decorrer de sua história.

Originalidade/valor: Mencionou três perspectivas de autenticidade na China, a saber, a separação espacial, a mudança de valor e o banimento emocional. Nesse sentido, a autenticidade se torna um esforço orientado pelo Estado, em que se espera que os valores das comunidades mudem conforme necessário.

Palavras-chave: Turismo de Patrimônio na China, Identidade Cultural, Autenticidade no Turismo, Turismo Excessivo.

TURISMO PATRIMONIAL E IDENTIDAD CULTURAL EN CHINA: RETOS Y OPORTUNIDADES DE DESARROLLO

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Por su riqueza cultural y su importancia histórica, China está experimentando un crecimiento del turismo patrimonial y cultural. Al ser considerado un país con una identidad nacional única, las comunidades locales comercializan cada vez más su patrimonio y cultura locales para el turismo patrimonial.

Marco teórico: Estas actividades incluyen la generación de dinero en efectivo y la facilitación del desarrollo de infraestructuras. Los beneficios son mutuos; por ejemplo, los viajeros afirman sentirse psicológicamente mejor después de participar en actividades de turismo patrimonial porque les motivan sentimientos de nostalgia y un sentimiento de conexión cultural.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: En este sentido, la autenticidad se convierte en un empeño impulsado por el Estado en el que se espera que los valores de las comunidades cambien según las necesidades. Por ejemplo, en Lijiang, los rituales religiosos locales de Dongba, que habían sido incluidos en el Registro de la Memoria del Mundo de la UNESCO, se reinventaron para adaptarlos mejor al consumo turístico.

Conclusiones: estas actividades generan dinero y facilitan el desarrollo de infraestructuras. Las ventajas son mutuamente beneficiosas; por ejemplo, los viajeros afirman que se sienten psicológicamente mejor tras participar en actividades de turismo patrimonial porque les motivan sentimientos de nostalgia y un sentimiento de conexión cultural. Sin embargo, las ventajas vienen acompañadas de ciertos aspectos negativos, que se manifiestan en forma de daños físicos y culturales derivados de la situación.

Implicaciones sociales, prácticas y de investigación: Para empezar, allana el camino para que lugares históricos concretos se conviertan en un canal ritualizado a través del cual se pueda transmitir y reunir la memoria social colectiva. Por último, el turismo patrimonial permite a una persona validar su participación en una nación basándose en la realidad imaginada que se ha establecido a lo largo de su historia.

Originalidad/valor: Mencionó tres perspectivas de la autenticidad en China, a saber, la separación espacial, el cambio de valor y el destierro emocional. En este sentido, la autenticidad se convierte en un empeño impulsado por el Estado en el que se espera que los valores de las comunidades cambien según las necesidades.

Palabras clave: Turismo del Patrimonio en China, Identidad Cultural, Autenticidad en el Turismo, Turismo Excesivo.

INTRODUCTION

With the growth of intermodal connectivity globally, tourism had also expanded to include visits to archeological sites (Picard & Wood, 1997a; Poria et al., 2001; Shepherd & Yu, 2013). In addition, the interest in heritage arose as cultural differences became a point of interest for visitors, leading to greater awareness in the preservation of heritage (Bec et al., 2019; Park et al., 2019). In China, the opening up of the country in the 1990s and its growing wealth had allowed more of Chinese citizens to explore their country. With more infrastructure being built in the country, connection various regions in the vast country, attractions in far flung cities had increased in prominence, bringing in more tourists annually (Shepherd & Yu, 2013). Moreover, the rise of social media, which allows for certain attractions to gain prominence allowed for the rise in heritage tourism in China.

According to Graham et al., (2016) and Leask and Fyall, (2006), the notion of heritage tourism can be traced back to the early historical traditions of tourism, during which travelers went to old architectural marvels produced during ancient civilizations in Egypt and Europe. Heritage tourism as a concept may be traced back to the early historical traditions of tourism. As mentioned by Caust and Vecco (2016), the late 1980s and early 1990s were pivotal years for the development of heritage tourism as a contemporary concept. This coincided with a period in which international politics were more stable, making it possible to travel to a greater number of nations that include historical sites.

There are various meanings and concept to heritage tourism, this ranges from ethnic and cultural tourism (Diekmann & Smith, 2015; García-Hernández et al., 2017; Picard & Wood, 1997b; Shepherd & Yu, 2013; Tiberghien & Xie, 2018), the authentic experience of tourism (Fu et al., 2015; Katahenggam & Wee, 2020; L. Yang & Wall, 2016) as well as historical tourism (Graham et al., 2016; Leask & Fyall, 2006)

Heritage is the amalgamation of a community's past historical values and cultural traditions. Heritage is difficult to properly categorise, but Ashworth and Tunbridge, (2000); Tunbridge, (2018) have divided its meanings into five categories:

Table 1. Categorizing Heritage Tourism

| | | |
|-----|------------|---|
| i | Places | Destinations, villages, cities, towns |
| ii | Memories | Community memories, collective rituals |
| iii | Theatrical | Artistic as well as cultural theatrical productions |
| iv | Landscapes | Flora and fauna, hills, seaside |
| v | Industry | Commodification of heritage |

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

According to Ashworth, (1998); Ashworth and Page, (2011); Graham et al., (2016); Renau, (2018); Tunbridge, (2018), heritage is fundamentally a resource that draws on personal and societal recollections and is industrialized in a variety of forms. Millar, (2002:3) defines the heritage business as an industry where "the benefit of the present and future from the form of ideas, images, stories, plays, traditions, buildings, artefacts or landscapes of the past." Heritage can take the shape of ideas, images, tales, plays, traditions, buildings, artefacts, or landscapes. Several researchers, (Landorf, 2009; Ooi, 2010; Seyfi et al., 2019; R. Su et al., 2018; Timothy, 2018), interpreted heritage as the process by which a select portion of the past is affirmed of its worth in the present by organizations, individuals, and communities in order to remain relevant (Landorf, 2009; Ooi & Stober, 2010; Seyfi et al., 2019). This paper intends to find out the challenges experienced in the development of heritage tourism in China. It will also question the cultural identity associated with heritage tourism in the country.

METHODOLOGY

Heritage Tourism and Cultural Tourism

An overview

Many times, physical and architectural historical attractions are the ones that get the most attention in the field of heritage tourism. Smith, (2015), on the other hand, pointed out that heritage tourism is a significant part of cultural tourism, and features linked with it may be found in all of the other categories that fall under cultural tourism.

Table 2. Cultural Tourism Typology

| Typology | Explanations |
|--------------------|--|
| Arts | Visiting galleries, concerts, street art, museums |
| Heritage | Visiting monuments, cultural and religious sites. |
| Creative | Handmade crafts, language, arts and craft installation, hybridized art |
| Urban Culture | Night market, hybrid and modern heritage interpretations, urban ruins, |
| Rural Culture | Agro-tourism, national parks, cultural landscapes |
| Indigenous Culture | Cultural festival, souvenirs, arts and craft |
| Popular Culture | Theme parks, e-sports events, shopping malls, sports-based events, industrial heritage |

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

According to the classification, heritage tourism is a subset of cultural tourism that emphasizes the consuming of artifacts and places of historical significance. The idea that heritage tourism is a subset of cultural tourism is further reinforced by Ivanovic (2008), who

notes that this type of tourism is characterized by nostalgic cultural landscapes and travel experiences.

The cultural tourism business in China is one of the most well-known and successful in the world, drawing in millions of tourists from all over the world each year. Visitors may experience anything from ancient temples and palaces to contemporary museums and galleries. This is attributed to the fact that China has a cultural legacy that is both rich and diverse and extends back thousands of years (Diekmann & Smith, 2015). The Great Wall of China, the Forbidden City, the Terracotta Warriors, and the Temple of Heaven are among the most visited cultural sites in all of China. In addition to these historic places, tourists may also participate in traditional Chinese arts and crafts such as painting, calligraphy, and silk weaving throughout their trip (Dong, et.al 2023).

Benefits of Heritage Tourism

To begin, it paves the way for specific historic places to become a ritualized channel via which collective social memory may be conveyed and gathered together. To elaborate, heritage tourism enables a person to validate their membership in a nation based on the imagined reality that has been established through the course of their history (Palmer 2009). It is also described as a system that allows citizens to experience and witness its historical past and imagination is a mechanism that would allow them to visit heritage places, for example. This would unwittingly create a link with the national identity of the nation.

On a related point, the commercialization of legacy gives economic advantages as well when tourists are lured to the aesthetic, nostalgic, and romanticized way of living as well as the cultural atmosphere that is supplied by certain towns or areas (Chhabra, 2019). In this case, the visitors spend money in the local economy. These kinds of vacations explore a broad variety of topics, including immersive experiences of heritage-related culture, natural landscapes, customs, festivals, rituals, and performing arts (Klein, 2011).

According to Michelson and Paadam, (2016), heritage is sold as a tourist product focusing on the socio-cultural assets. Heritage is defined as a resource that is indirectly created by groups or settlements. Meanwhile, Lovell and Bull (2017) observed that the marketability of items in the form of historical tourism is dependent on the product's image of authenticity. In exchange, the location that is subjected to legacy tourism is able to reap the benefits of the economic activities that are made possible by tourism. These activities include the generation of money and the facilitation of the development of infrastructure. The advantages are mutually

beneficial; for example, travelers report feeling psychologically better after participating in heritage tourism activities because they are motivated by feelings of nostalgia and a sense of cultural connection. Despite this, the advantages come with certain negatives, which manifest themselves as physical and cultural harms that are incurred as a result of the situation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges and Opportunities in Heritage Tourism in China: A Developmental Perspective

Over tourism and environmental impact at heritage sites

Arguably, increased number of tourists visiting attractions is a welcoming sight for destinations managers (Capocchi et al., 2019). This translates into greater revenue for sites directly from ticket sales and through supportive economic activities (Jamieson & Jamieson, 2019). However, when it comes to heritage cities, over tourism puts strain into the system. In China, domestic tourism is a large contributor to national economy, especially towards smaller cities banking on tourism (Qin et al., 2011), Nevertheless, an influx of tourists brings with several perils. For example, the small village of Zili in southern China had seen an increased number of tourists intending to visits the Kaiping Watchtowers, an UNESCO World Heritage Site (Hunt, 2012).

The attractions are located in a small town with older settlers, however with the World Heritage Site status, an influx of domestic tourists was noted in the old town (Yi et al., 2018). While the increase has resulted in commercialization of the site, allowing for more tourist dollars, this had also led to gentrification (Novy, 2019). The older generations moved out of the town and existing houses were converted into businesses. Nevertheless, small towns administrators such as Mount Sanqingshan World Heritage Site in rural China strive to market their destinations for domestic tourism to bring in the tourism dollars (Su et al., 2016). This can be viewed from two perspectives (Su et al., 2016). First, greater tourism allows for rural villagers to explore other job opportunities apart from traditional farming, the cascading effect of the benefits of tourism dollars allows for the reduction of poverty. Secondly, increasing the number of tourists leads to over tourism and puts stress on the location, for instance the Watchtowers saw an increase in the number of visitors from 70000 visitors a year to 2 million a year within 3 years (Hunt, 2012). Essentially, this creates added stress to the attraction, yet greater awareness from the environmental impact leads to conservation. According to Tisdell and Wilson, (2012), the environmental impact from tourism increases awareness among local

communities on the need to conserve their attractions, in the case of the Kaiping Watchtowers, farmers who used the other watchtowers for storage, leaving them derelict realized the benefits of conservation, leading to its preservation (Hunt, 2012).

From another angle, over tourism gives rise to anti tourism movement, often seen in Europe such as Barcelona where tourism is seen to be threatening local residents, leading to various policies by the government to limit tourists (Capocchi et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the anti-tourism movement in China is relegated to the backburner, especially when tourism becomes a state policy. This is related to the state centered focus of tourism governance decisions in China and the population's tendency to not aggressively question the government (Zhao & Timothy, 2015).

Infrastructure hinderance

Heritage sites often comprise of archaeological attractions or old, small cities with historical and heritage value for tourism (Leask & Fyall, 2006). Oftentimes, the locations are further inland, far away from logistical connections, further hindering the growth of tourism in the area. Major heritage attractions such as the Great Wall of China contributed to extensive infrastructure development such as roads and hotels to supplement the site, however infrastructure support for less known heritage attractions such as remain insufficient (Li & Chen, 2020). A good example is the city of Kashgar, a key attraction in the Silk Road beltways of China (Szadziewski et al., 2022; Winter, 2016). The Silk Road journey is part of the heritage identity of China, having contributed to the age-old trade in the region (Guan, 2019). However, visitors intending to go to Kashgar would be hindered by the lack of comprehensive logistical support in terms of paved roads, public transportations, hotels and tourism supporting structure. In this regard, efforts to grow the tourist numbers to the heritage sites trailing the Silk Road is hampered by a lack of infrastructure, especially so when the area transcends several countries (Winter, 2016). However, the Chinese government had embarked on major infrastructure building as part of its effort to increase security and governance in the region of Kashgar (Szadziewski et al., 2022).

The relationship between infrastructure and tourism development is analogous. With greater visibility of an attraction, the government would be keener to invest in better facilities (Ford, 2012). This would also be supported by the private sector, looking to cash into the potentials of tourism commercialization. Wang et al., (2022) noted that the Guangfu Ancient City in Yongnian County, Hebei Province, in China experienced two stages of infrastructure

development. In the first, pre-commodification stage (2006-2011), the government invested in conservation efforts and the building of basic infrastructure for tourism. This was followed by the commodification stage, (2012-2017) where large private companies as well small commercial enterprises increased their investment in hotels, restaurants and tour facilities with the aid of local population who took on a more positive perspective of heritage tourism.

Preservation of heritage sites

The cost for preservation of heritage sites is high, especially when extensive restorations are required (Fletcher et al., 2007). The Angkor Wat Temple complex for instance requires millions of dollars annually with funding from various international government and bodies (Manoj, 2022). In China, the issue and cost of conservation becomes more contentious especially when the need for devolution, territorialization and local identity becomes an issue (Szadziewski et al., 2022).

Aspects of authenticity of heritage and cultural practices in tourism

Authenticity in heritage tourism is described either as rigid preservation (Katahenggam & Wee, 2020; Lee et al., 2016), a more lenient, subjective approach (Cohen & Cohen, 2012) to tolerating hybridization (Steurer, 2013; Sun et al., 2014; Wu, 2015). Essentially, this involves the question of what is to be restored and preserved and how it is seen by the tourist and other stakeholders (Lee-Anant, et. al 2022).

In this regard, preservation is conducted based on several perspectives, which includes the need to preserve from an archeological viewpoint, to fit the expectations of tourism and a state directed politically linked perspective of authenticity (Katahenggam & Wee, 2020). Zhu, (2015) mentioned three perspectives in authenticity in China, namely spatial separation, value shifting and emotional banishment. In this regard, authenticity becomes a state driven effort, where values in communities are expected to change as needed. For example, in Lijiang the local Dongba religious rituals which had been included into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register had been reinvented to be more suited for tourist consumption (Shi et al., 2020). The communities had been receptive towards the change, seeing it as something that brings in the benefits of tourism.

Built heritage and authenticity

To the outside world, China might appear to be a singular culture, however in reality there are many cultural built heritages in the country. The city of Xian for instance had long served as one of the imperial capitals of China. Preservation of built heritage is important from two points, the building of state identity and the assertion of local identity (C.-H. Yang & Lin, 2014). The challenges often occur in the contestation of ideals between locals who wish to retain characters relevant to their cultural identity against though favored by the state, either for political needs or for tourism (Zhao & Timothy, 2015). This is where the contestation of power occurs between various figures in the tourism industry.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, historical and cultural tourism in China, despite the fact that it presents considerable obstacles as well as a chance to promote and conserve the country's rich cultural legacy, offers an opportunity to do so. The ever-increasing number of visitors to these locations has brought up problems such as over tourism, effects to the natural environment, and the commodification of the local culture, leading to questions on authenticity. In addition, the preservation of heritage sites and the administration of these assets involve striking a careful balance between commerce and conservation efforts. In spite of these issues, there are actions that may be taken to solve them, such as creating practices for sustainable tourism, including local people in decision-making processes, and enacting legislation and policies that are successful. Suggestion: Finding the correct balance between boosting tourism and maintaining the cultural legacy of the nation for future generations will, in the end, be the determining factor in determining whether or not historical and cultural tourism in China will be successful in China.

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