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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CULTURAL TOURISM IN EUROPE

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Abstract

Cultural tourism plays an important role in the development of the tourism industry in European countries.What does 'cultural tourism' mean? The term is widely used, and also widely misunderstood. Academics and policy-makers have been quick to identify cultural tourism as a growth market, without seriously considering what that market consists of. In order to examine how significant cultural tourism is in Europe, we first need to have a definition of the term. Cultural tourism is a problematic concept, however, because it consists of two elements, 'culture' and 'tourism', which are in themselves difficult to define. Most attempts at defining cultural tourism agree that it consists of the consumption of culture by tourists, but this approach introduces new problems. What kinds of culture should be included within the scope of cultural tourism? Does a visit to a museum turn an entire holiday into a cultural tourism experience? Are tourists who engage in cultural consumption actually culturally motivated? This chapter examines the problem of defining cultural tourism, and the changing nature of the relationship between culture and tourism.

Keywords: cultural tourism, Europe,bywater,ATLAS cultural heritage, historical monuments, sustainable tourism, tourism development

Introduction

The cultural heritage of Europe is "one of the oldest and most important generators of tourism" (Thorburn, 1986), and it retains its central role in the European tourism industry to this day. According to the European Union, "tourism, and especially cultural tourism in a broader sense,..... deserve priority attention" as policy areas (Bernadini, 1992). Cultural tourism has become recognized as an important agent of economic and social change in Europe. Politicians now refer to cultural heritage as "Italy's General Motors" (Fanelli, 1993) or as "the oil industry of France" (Mosser, 1994). The dramatic metaphors attached to the rapid growth of tourism and cultural consumption are appropriate. The cultural and tourist industries appear to be advancing in all European nations and regions, occupying the spaces vacated by manufacturing industry, and claiming strategic city centre locations (Corijn and Mommaas, 1995). Cultural consumption has grown, and tourism is an increasingly important form of cultural consumption, encouraged and funded by local, national and supranational bodies. This reflects the change from an era when production drove consumption, to the consumer society where consumption drives production. By attracting that most mobile of consumers, the tourist, cities, regions and nations can secure the consumption power necessary to fuel their productive capacity. The cultural tourism market in Europe is therefore becoming increasingly competitive. A growing number of cities and regions in the European Union are basing their tourism development strategies on the promotion of cultural heritage, and the number of cultural attractions is growing rapidly. Traditional cultural attractions such as museums and galleries are having to reassess their role as the pressure to generate visitor income intensifies, and the need to compete with a new generation of commercial tourist attractions grows. The opening up of new cultural tourism

destinations in Eastern and Central Europe will add to the growing supply of distractions for the European cultural tourist in future. On the global stage, Europe has long enjoyed a dominant position in international tourism and the cultural industries. However, just as manufacturers are facing growing global competition, so Europe can no longer be complacent about its leading position in the cultural tourism market. Europe is losing market share in the global tourism market as a whole (Brent-Ritchie HW DO, 1993), and it is also facing growing competition in the sphere of cultural production and consumption. The culture and tourism industries are now growing fastest in those areas which used to be on the margins of global production. A growing number of tourists are forsaking the Mediterranean beaches for the palm-fringed delights of Asia and the Caribbean. The manufacture of CDs and much other cultural software is now dominated by East Asia. Countries in these former peripheral regions are also beginning to compete with Europe in traditional 'high culture' markets. Examples include the moves by Singapore to literally 'buy into' the international art auctions market, and the creation by the Taiwanese government of a $365 million cultural foundation to underpin the island's fast growing art market .There is no doubt that culture is an important tourism resource in Europe, and that maintaining the competitiveness of the European tourism product is vital. However, a number of questions surround the use of cultural resources by tourists. Who are the tourists who use these cultural facilities? Why do they engage in cultural tourism? How great is the demand for cultural tourism? What elements of culture attract cultural tourists? Whose culture is being consumed by the cultural tourists? Few previous studies have attempted to answer these basic questions. One important obstacle to supplying the answers to such questions is the lack of data on cultural tourism. The identification of cultural tourism as a growth market in Europe has been based more on assertion than hard information, and more on isolated observations than systematic analysis. It has therefore been difficult to demonstrate just how important cultural tourism is in Europe, just how fast it is growing, or to identify the reasons why it has grown. This book attempts to provide some of the basic data required to make an informed analysis of European cultural tourism, its causes, its significance and its impact. This book further aims to analyse the meanings and significance of cultural tourism in a rapidly-changing Europe. In doing so, it examines cultural tourism within the context of the major social, economic and political processes which have influenced its development. The rest of this introductory chapter therefore examines the causes and implications of the growth of tourism demand and cultural supply in an historical context. An introduction to the structure of the book is provided at the end of the chapter.

Literature Review

Cultural tourism has become an important area of research in the tourism industry. Many researchers have studied its role in preserving cultural heritage, promoting historical attractions, and supporting economic development. Cultural tourism allows visitors to explore the history, traditions, architecture, art, and lifestyles of different communities.According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), cultural tourism is closely connected with visitors' motivation to learn about and experience the cultural attractions of a destination. Europe is one of the world's important cultural tourism regions because of its historical cities, museums, castles, religious sites, art galleries, and traditional festivals.Previous studies have highlighted the contribution of cultural tourism to local economies. Tourism activities create employment opportunities, support local businesses, and generate income for communities. Countries such as Italy, France, Spain, and Greece attract international visitors through their historical monuments, museums, architecture, and cultural traditions. These destinations demonstrate how cultural resources can contribute to tourism development and international recognition.Another important aspect discussed in tourism literature is cultural heritage preservation. Cultural tourism can encourage governments and local communities to protect historical buildings, archaeological sites, and traditional

practices. However, the increasing number of tourists can also create challenges, including overcrowding, environmental pressure, and damage to cultural sites. Therefore, sustainable tourism management is necessary to balance tourism growth with the protection of cultural heritage. In conclusion, the literature shows that cultural tourism has significant cultural, social, and economic value in Europe. It contributes to heritage preservation, supports local communities, and provides educational experiences for tourists. Nevertheless, further attention to sustainable tourism practices is essential to ensure that Europe's cultural resources remain protected for future generations. Cultural tourism has developed over many centuries and is often considered one of the earliest forms of tourism, originating from the tradition of the Grand Tour. Today, it continues to attract considerable attention from policymakers, who regard it as an important area for future tourism development. According to the World Tourism Organisation, cultural tourism represents approximately 37% of international tourism and was expected to expand by 15% annually. Although these estimates have frequently been cited in research on the cultural tourism market they are not always supported by sufficient empirical evidence.Research conducted by the European Commission (2002) on the cultural consumption patterns of Europeans revealed that individuals visited museums and art galleries abroad almost as frequently as they did in their home countries. This finding highlights the growing role of tourism in providing opportunities for cultural engagement. Nevertheless, the increasing participation in cultural activities during holidays raises an important question concerning the definition of cultural tourism: how can cultural experiences undertaken while travelling be distinguished from similar activities pursued during leisure time at home? Studies conducted by the Association for Leisure and Tourism Education (ATLAS) on international cultural tourism have demonstrated considerable similarities between people's cultural consumption patterns at home and those experienced during their holidays.

Methodology

This article uses a secondary research methodology based on existing academic literature and previously conducted studies on cultural tourism in Europe. Particular attention is given to the research conducted by Greg Richards (1996) through the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Research Project. This project collected data from 6,316 visitors across 26 cultural attractions in nine European countries. The findings provide valuable information about tourists' motivations, cultural interests, and participation in cultural activities. These secondary data are used to examine the importance and development of cultural tourism in Europe.

The ATLAS Cultural Tourism Project

The ATLAS Cultural Tourism Research Project aimed to establish a transnational database which could provide comparative data on cultural tourism trends across Europe. The project started in 1991 with 10 members in 9 EU states, and has since expanded to cover 11 EU member states. ATLAS is the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education,Greg Richards (1996, ed.) Cultural Tourism in Europe. CABI, Wallingford32which had more than 100 members in 18 countries in 1994 (Bonink, De Jong and Sanders,1994).

The original aims of the ATLAS project were to:

1) Devise definitions of the nature and scope of cultural tourism
2) Collect data on cultural tourism visits to European attractions
3) Assess the profile and motivations of cultural tourists
4) Develop case studies of cultural tourism management

The research undertaken in 1992 and 1993 included a review of definitional issues (Bonink,1992), a survey of the supply of cultural attractions and attendance in the European Community, and interviews with over 6300 visitors at 26 attractions in the EU. The countries covered by the original visitor research

were France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. The research was undertaken by universities in the countries concerned, all of whom are members of the ATLAS consortium. The most important feature of the research was that the data was collected on a transnational basis, rather than simply being a collection of nationally-based surveys. The methods of data collection, the choice of sample sites and the sampling criteria were all agreed on a transnational basis before the research commenced. The emphasis on site-based surveys ensured that a high proportion of those interviewed were cultural tourists. It also allowed a comparison to be made between the cultural consumption of people in their own country and as tourists in other European countries. The site-based survey also ensured that tourists from outside the EU were represented. In order to provide a fairer reflection of the distribution of cultural visitors across Europe, the figures on foreign tourists were weighted according to the level of foreign tourism in each survey country in 1992.The data collection therefore followed the meso-scale research approach advocated by Murphy (1992). This is based on the integration of on-site surveys to capture information about the consumption of specific products and regions by tourists. This approach has the advantage that it can be used to compare the behaviour of tourists transnationally, without the need to compile samples representative of national populations. The ATLAS survey did not, therefore, attempt to obtain a representative sample of all cultural tourists in Europe.Such data would have to be based on a sample of all tourists, not just cultural visitors. The practical problems involved in assembling a transnational analysis of cultural tourism in Europe are dealt with in detail by Richards and Bonink (1992). The following sections summarize some of the important transnational findings of the research. Analyses of surveys on a national and a regional basis can be found in the national chapters in Part 2.The visitor surveys, conducted at 26 sites in 9 countries (Table 2.3) indicated that the major source markets for international cultural tourists were the USA, the UK, Germany, France and Spain. Almost two thirds of foreign cultural tourists came from within the EU. The respondents had a high level of educational attainment, with over 20% having some form of postgraduate education. In contrast to the widespread idea that cultural tourists tend to come from older age groups, the survey found that over 40% of visitors were aged between 20 and 29 years. Younger visitors were even more important in particular major cities, such as Amsterdam, where over half the visitors were under 30 years old (Richards and Bonink, Greg Richards (1996, ed.) Cultural Tourism in Europe. CABI, Wallingford

33 1994). While it can be argued that the summer survey period boosted the proportion of students among cultural visitors (20%), this overall age distribution is consistent with other surveys of heritage attraction and museum visitors in Europe (Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991;Ministère de la Culture, 1991; Merriman, 1991; Schuster, 1993)

Table 2.3: ATLAS Cultural Tourism Research - Survey Site Profile

Site	Location	Country	Interviews
Chateau de Blois (HB)	Blois	France	200
L'abbaye de Cluny (HB)	Cluny	France	199
Pompidou Centre (AC)	Paris	France	199
Neue Pinakothek (G)	Munich	Germany	200
Altes Museum (Mus)	Berlin	Germany	201
Porta Negra (M)	Trier	Germany	200
National Art Gallery (G)	Athens	Greece	186
Archaeological Site (A)	Dion	Greece	179
Archaeological Museum (Mus)	Thessaloniki	Greece	181
Muckross House (HB)	Killarney	Ireland	828
St Patrick's Rock (HB)	Cashel	Ireland	109
Palazzo Ducale (HB)	Venice	Italy	609
Rijksmuseum (Mus)	Amsterdam	NL	291
Van Gogh Museum (Mus)	Amsterdam	NL	314
Museu de Arte Moderna (Mus)	Porto	Portugal	198
São Francisco (HB)	Porto	Portugal	200
Torre dos Clérigos (M)	Porto	Portugal	197
Avila (M)	Avila	Spain	200
Mosque (M)	Cordoba	Spain	200
Prado Museum (Mus)	Madrid	Spain	200
Art Museum (G)	Bilbao	Spain	120
Museum of Childhood (Mus)	Edinburgh	UK	208
People's Story (HC)	Edinburgh	UK	97
Urquhart Castle (M)	Inverness	UK	196
St Paul's Cathedral (M)	London	UK	201
Victoria & Albert Museum (Mus)	London	UK	403
Total			**6316**

Site codes
M = Monument
Mus = Museum
G = Art gallery
AC = Arts centre
A = Archaeological site
HB = Historic building
HC = Heritage centre

Results and Discussion

Research on cultural tourism in different countries has consistently indicated that not all visitors to cultural attractions are culturally motivated Bywater (23), for example, makes a distinction between ‘culturally motivated’, ‘culturally inspired’ and ‘culturally attracted’tourists, with the highest level of cultural motivation being accorded to the culturally motivated visitors.. The culturally attracted tourists,

who only have a secondary interest in culture, therefore make up the majority of cultural visitors. These 'general cultural tourists', for who a visit to a cultural attraction is an incidental part of their holiday, appear to have become a more significant part of the market in recent years. In the UK, for example, national surveys of inbound tourism show that the proportion of tourists with a specific cultural motive declined from 10% in 1989 to 6% in 1993, while the share of general cultural tourists grew from 26% to 28% over the same period .As suggested by the earlier definition of cultural toruism, cultural tourists are primiarily motivated by a desire to learn and experience new things.. There is an increasing desire for novelty in contemporary society, and culture provides a never-ending source of novelty,allowing people to discover new cultures and also providing opportunities for people to learn for themselves. The skilled consumer can create their own novelty as a cultural tourist, through painting, languages, crafts, gastronomy and other activities. As qualitative research among cultural tourists in different European countries shows, the search for novelty and the desire to learn are at the top of the agenda for most cultural tourists (25). One should not interpret the desire for 'learning' as we might understand it in the narrow traditional sense of receiving and storing information, but in the more active sense of self-development.For most of the culturally inspired and culturally attracted tourists, culture is a general, ratherthan a specific experience. The serious contemplation of 'high culture' in museums is intertwined with relaxed atmosphere generated by the popular culture to be found in the public spaces of European cities. Where do they go? Museums are undoubtedly the most popular form of cultural attraction for cultural tourists. In 1997 more than 50% of the tourists visited a museum during their stay in the research location Monuments (40%) and galleries (30%) were also very popular, but the performing arts (23%) and festivals (9%) were less frequently visited. This supports the distinction made inthe 1992 research (27) between 'heritage' attractions, which have a low visit threshold and'arts' attractions, which are often less accessible, because of the limited time of performances,the difficulty of obtaining information and tickets and the language barriers which are often involved.In terms of European cities, Paris, Rome and London are by far the favourite cultural tourismdestinations This is related to the high concentration of 'real cultural capital' in these cities A second group of cities, which includes Athens, Venice, Florence and Amsterdam also scores relatively well, particularly among visitors with a cultural occupation.These cities tend to be smaller, and in addition to a rich historical past have a wide range of museums, monuments and also a great deal of 'living culture'. The relationship between the supply of real cultural capital and the attractiveness of a city is underlined by the post-war development of Bonn as a 'cultural capital' Cultural tourism is an attractive market for the public and private sectors alike – upmarket, well educated and often looking for something 'new' or 'different'. It is not surprising, therefore, that the supply of cultural attractions in Europe has grown considerably in recent years. As competition for the cultural visitor grows however, marketeers are increasingly concerned to discover what makes the cultural visitor choose one destination over another. This real cultural capital provides the basic raw material for the 'new producers' or 'new cultural intermediaries' to develop products for cultural consumption The new producers occupy a key position in the cultural tourism system, determining which products are fashionable, and which products will be offered on the market. The new producers are predominantly from a cultural background and have a cultural education, and therefore possess a great store of personal cultural capital, which they convert into economic capital by designing products with a high symbolic value for consumption by the new bourgeoisie. These relationships tend to strengthen existing hierarchies of cultural consumption in Europe, which are reflected in the ranking of European cities by new producers and consumers alike. This makes it very difficult for 'new' cultural destinations to break through and capture a significant share of the European cultural tourism market. The importance of real cultural capital in generating cultural tourism is also becoming evident in the trend towards 'mega events' and 'blockbuster exhibitions'. Because of the

increasing globalisation of cultural tourism demand, the cultural distance between host regions and their visitors is often increasing. This means that the ‘cultural flagships’ of a globalised culture are likely to attract larger numbers of tourists than those associated with local or national culture. Mega-events aimed at a global audience have therefore become an important part of the tourism marketing strategies of many countries, as evidenced by the recent Rembrandt, van Gogh and Vermeer exhibitions in the Netherlands (31). One of the consequences of this is that people in the cultural sector are been pulled into the tourism arena, whether they like it or not. There is often resistance from cultural organisations to what is perceived as the ‘Disneyfication’ of culture (32). However, it is important for people in the cultural sector to recognise that they are already in the tourism business, and it is equally important for tourism suppliers to recognise the specific nature of the cultural product. Efforts must be made to break down the often entrenched barriers between the different cultures within government bodies, cultural organisations and commerical suppliers. Landry and Bianchini (33) have recently suggested that this is one of the keys to creating the ‘creative city’ for the next millennium.The need to mediate creatively between culture and tourism and leisure is not just a priority for established cultural attractions. As commercialisation moves in to translate the cultural needs of tourists into consumption opportunities, there will be a growing need to create and preserve spaces which facilitate the meeting of cultures, and therefore create opportunities for cultural innovation and creativity.. The first, ‘structural creativity involves the development of new infrastructure or finding new uses for existing infrastructure. The second is ‘derived creativity, or what Andersson calls "messing around". The creative development of cultural tourism depends on the presence of both structural and derived creativity. Structural creativity can be derived from the use of real cultural capital, in the form of cultural heritage, industrial heritage or tradition. Most cities are reasonably good in developing the hardware of structural creativity, and there is often funding available for it via government funds or lottery money. Structural creativity also delivers visible monuments to politicians and planners, and is therefore favoured by the policy makers. Derived creativity is more complex, and depends on the presence of a number of interrelated factors, including a vibrant cultural community, thriving cultural industries, different ethnic groups, imbalances, complexity and variability of architecture and attractive and accessible meeting places. Developing the supply of cultural tourism products therefore involves a lot more than just opening new museums. Diane Dodd’s analysis of Barcelona illustrates how Catalonia has built its temples of culture, but failed to give sufficient support to the derived creativity which can bring them to life. Meeting the needs of the visitor The lack of attention paid to the motivations and needs of the cultural visitor has strengthened the supply-led nature of cultural tourism policy and contributed to many unsuccessful developments. Account must be taken of the visitor experience, particularly as the cultural sector becomes more professional and the cultural tourist expects a better quality product.Conversely, the appropriate visitors also need to be found for the available cultural products. In interpreting culture to visitors, most authors are agreed that‘authenticity’ and truthfulness in presentation are crucial (35). As authenticity and truth are

relative concepts, however, the fact that perceptions of authenticity and truth vary among visitors, and that ‘authenticity’ can emerge over time (36) means that considerable skill will be needed in managing these messages. It is also becoming clear that in a postmodern landscape of relative truths, the product which lays claim to the best ‘story’ will usually be most successful. The meing is not just a tool for theme parks, fast food restaurants, shopping malls and other examples of the ‘new cathedrals of consumption (37), it can also be used creatively for cultural tourism. Themes such as those developed for the West Frisian Ring Dyke (Huibers, Case Study 3) or the Province of Utrecht (Meelisen, Case Study 6) can help to link locations more strongly with the specific motivations of visitors, as well as helping to produce the ‘mindscapes’ and maps of meaning such as those produced by the Identity Factory Southeast (Rooijakkers,

Case Study 5). The stories and themes created in the future will undoubtedly need to be more sophisticated than the fairly standard 'heritage tales' which have been created over the past two decades.

In conclusion

There is little doubt that cultural tourism has made a major contribution to the expansion of European tourism demand and supply in recent decades, and this contribution is likely to grow still further in future. Cultural tourism has been important in the expansion of cultural facilities, in the growth of tourism employment, and in the development of pan-European tourism and cultural policies. As Jan van der Borg has commented, however, (Chapter 12 this volume) "having heritage is one thing, using it another". In the past, cultural resources and the cultural tourist have largely been taken for granted, and this will have to change if the full advantages offered by cultural tourism development are to be realized. In particular, the growing segmentation of cultural tourism supply and demand requires that we stop referring to "the cultural tourist", and start thinking about the diverse kinds of cultural tourism consumption which exist in Europe. In particular, Europe has access to an accumulation of 'real cultural capital' which, as Scitovsky (1976) has pointed out, is far in excess of that in North America, the major source market for incoming cultural tourists. In order to maintain this competitive advantage in the global tourism market, however, Europe will not only have to make effective use of traditional European culture, but will also have to extend her capacity to develop new cultural products from the stream of contemporary global culture, including popular culture from America, Japan and elsewhere. In this way, perhaps the marriage of economic and cultural policy desired by the European Union, and recognized in retrospect by Jean Monnet, may be successful.

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