

Cultural Heritage and Tourism

Subjects: Cultural Studies

Contributor: Chuanchuan Yuan

The integration of the cultural/creative and tourism industries is one way to present different types of regional cultural heritage to the world. With the growth of scenic towns and the revitalization of rural areas due to mass tourism, intangible cultural heritage has become an important tourism and cultural resource. The numbers of domestic and foreign tourists visiting these traditional cultural resources are on the rise every year. Many areas with rich cultural resources rely on tourism to alleviate poverty and achieve revitalization. However, a region's tourism resources are not always proportional to its cultural heritage. It is important to carefully study the methods of regional tourism resource development, while also fully integrating cultural resources.

Keywords: cultural tourism ; IHC ; Cultural Heritage

1. Cultural Heritage and Tourism

Although forms of integrating culture and tourism have been around for a long time, there is no general or formal definition for this fusion. Early on, this integration was seen as a kind of special-interest tourism, with tourists seeking mainly cultural experiences ^[1], distinguished from leisure tourism in its intention to pursue antique or artistic products. The destinations can be associated with various types of cultural heritage, such as language, religion, festivals, customs, and architecture ^[2]. In the 1990s, cultural-oriented tourism was incorporated into revitalization projects in Europe and North America, particularly urban cultural tourism ^[3].

Every cultural tour has a purpose and motivation ^[4], through which tourists can enjoy a deep cultural experience ^{[5][6]}. Tourists become involved in certain cultural aspects of the destination, and the experiences gained from that involvement have a long-term impact on cultural tourism ^[7]. Chen's research demonstrated that tourist engagement significantly influences the degree of cultural exposure, and cultural exposure moderates the relationship between tourist engagement and experiences, which in turn has a significant positive effect on cultural tourism ^[8]. In addition, when economic pressure threatens endangered cultures, researchers resort to tourism as a solution to the conflict between the economy and culture, e.g., by bundling tourism with cultural attractions. This can bring tangible economic benefits to local governments and help to support the preservation of cultural heritage ^{[9][10]}. Ramírez-Guerrero proposed an approach for the management of intangible cultural heritage based on the fact that it is a component of the social system. From the point of view of available services and technical equipment, this approach breaks down existing barriers between heritage conservation and its social and touristic use, quantifies and diagnoses the current tourism potential, and enhances the tourist experience of cultural heritage in order to obtain benefits for society ^[11]. With these advantages, cultural tourism is gradually becoming a major part of the global tourism market, accounting for up to 40% ^[12].

Cultural tourism also acts as a driving force for rural development. Although the relationship between culture and tourism is mainly driven by private interests, it can stimulate the local economy. Cultural tourism cannot be the main driving force of rural development, but it can be an essential complementary activity that brings both economic and non-economic benefits. The combination of cultural tourism with tangible or intangible heritage and material or immaterial elements enables destinations to attract tourists by way of entertainment or the appeal of the destination itself ^[13]. Cultural tourism activities affect local people in many areas of their lives, and tourism in rural areas can improve the quality of life of local populations; in particular, smaller tourist destinations can find vital opportunities to develop sustainable tourism by organizing cultural activities ^{[14][15]}. Reyes et al. proposed improving the utilization of cultural heritage by evaluating tourist destinations in terms of cultural tourism media resources, facilities, and connectivity to fully explore the possibilities of local cultural development ^[16]. Therefore, cultural tourism is considered to have huge potential for local cultural preservation and sustainable development in general.

As a part of cultural tourism, heritage tourism has been the focus of numerous academic studies in recent years ^{[17][18][19]}, especially intangible cultural heritage tourism ^[20]. Sammells (2016) suggested that intangible cultural heritage creates new spaces for interactions with tourists, and the resulting host-guest relationships and social activities should be

carefully evaluated, as they must be planned and managed from the perspective of long-term conservation and development [21]. Therefore, the mission of heritage tourism is primarily to preserve cultural heritage in as pristine a condition as possible.

2. Intangible Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage includes the interdependent components of tangible and intangible culture [22], and the boundaries between the two are not obvious. Earlier discussions on cultural heritage were centered on tangible heritage [23][24][25], and only a few practical and theoretical studies have been conducted on intangible cultural heritage. Indeed, the two types of culture are considered to be interconnected and complement each other [26]. On the one hand, tangible and intangible cultural heritage share several values [27]. On the other hand, intangible cultural heritage provides key contextual information for understanding and appreciating tangible heritage.

The difficulty of interpreting intangible cultural heritage has not prevented scholars from studying it, and the research focus has begun to shift from tangible to intangible heritage [28][29]. The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (CSICH) pointed out the link between the two types of cultural heritage, specifying that intangible cultural heritage is “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills (such as musical instruments and artifacts) that exist in culture”, as well as “the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith” [12]. The CSICH also noted that ICH derives from the expression of human skills, practices, traditions, etc., and reveals interrelationships within society, i.e., human civilization is transmitted through elements of intangible cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage, as a multidimensional, rich, and dynamic system of human and historical values, is thus a valuable asset of traditional cultures around the world. This further expands the definition of heritage from that of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. Intangible cultural heritage is more interactive, dynamic, inclusive, and cohesive compared to the static and deterministic nature of tangible cultural heritage [30]. This represents a change toward embracing a more diverse and inclusive view of heritage by identifying and legitimizing intangible cultural expressions [31]. There are a variety of ways to describe, justify, and evaluate intangible cultural heritage, which also adds to its attractiveness [32][33].

In recent years, scholars have studied intangible cultural heritage starting from the definition of its concepts and characteristics, before gradually delving into ICH resources, categories, dissemination, and many other areas [34][35]. In addition, researchers have studied ICH from different perspectives, such as cultural creativity, national soft power, and various approaches to safeguarding tourism [36][37]. The difficulties of explaining intangible cultural heritage have not hindered research in this area. The fragmented knowledge of ICH is nowadays commonly associated with technology and marketing, wherein the economic and social benefits are regarded as a kind of cultural capital. Furthermore, the cultural capital itself is built into a cultural industrial chain, bringing more changes to the way that ICH is developed and produced [38].

However, under these changes, the integrity and authenticity of ICH have become a matter of controversy [39]. The impact from profits brought by tourism can easily compromise the limits of authenticity. In contrast, Li and Zhou’s study found that local music under tourism is not affected by tourists if it is grounded in the local music culture itself. This suggests that in rapidly changing modern society, ICH should still be grounded in local culture, and the opportunities provided by technology should rely on regional identity for sustainable development [40]. Therefore, the foundation of ICH is rooted in locality. In this way, the discovery and utilization of various local resources that coexist with the competitive aspects of ICH are maximized [41].

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