

Cross-Border Cultural Tourism in Europe

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Contributor: Szemerédi Eszter

A special historical feature of Central and Eastern Europe is that, during the formation of national borders, many areas with ethnically diverse populations came under the jurisdiction of other nation states as regions inhabited by minority nationalities. The European Union has inherited many of these historically cohesive cultural and ethnic areas in the course of its eastern enlargement. For a long time, the aim of national borders was to separate national territories from one another, but due to the European Union's integrative approach, the number of examples of cross-border cooperation is steadily growing. One of the main driving forces of the European Union is to turn the dividing borders into connecting borders by strengthening the cohesion between states and regions, thus, encouraging regions to remedy the existing ethnic and cultural fragmentation by increasing the intensity and number of cross-border contacts. Through these, the EU intends to enhance cross-border integration, which is necessary for enhanced integration at the European level. Cross-border development of tourist destinations can play a significant role in this process.

Keywords: cultural tourism ; cross-border tourism ; regional tourism

1. Heritage Tourism

According to historical sources, the ancient Egyptians and Romans as well as the medieval nobility travelled to culturally significant historical places ^[1]. Hall and Zeppel ^[2] observed experientialism as a common element between cultural tourism and heritage tourism, and noted that, in the context of heritage tourism, it is narrowed down to cultural heritage and "is connected with visiting selected landscapes, historical places, buildings and landmarks—here the experience occurs via searching for contact with nature and sense of unity with the history of the visited site" ^[2] (p. 87). The issue of heritage is still unclear; however, researchers on the subject agree on the point that heritage is, in fact, the present use of the past ^[3]. However, this definition of heritage does not focus directly on tourism use, and Boyd and Bulter ^[4], Thorsell and Sigaty ^[5], and even UNESCO have attempted to extend the scope of definition to include natural heritage as well.

It is in this context that Timothy and Boyd developed their own definition of heritage tourism: "This form of travel entails visits to sites of historical importance, including built environments and urban areas, ancient monuments and dwellings, rural and agricultural landscapes, locations where historic events occurred and places where interesting and significant cultures stand out" ^[6] (p. 2).

It is also clear from these definitions that much of the research on heritage tourism focuses on the supply side, a view confirmed by Leask and Fyall ^[7], who argued that research focuses mainly on the interpretation, conservation, and other elements of resource management as well as the services provided for visitors of historic places. In contrast, on the demand side, there is a growing need to focus on the motivational factors of heritage tourists. During their research on heritage demand, Herbert et al. ^[8] found that, in most cases, visitors to heritage sites are better educated, travel in groups, have a higher than average income, and spend more.

In the context of heritage tourism, it is important to note that heritage is a complex phenomenon with a highly political nature; therefore, it is one of the most controversial types of tourism due to its historical dimensions ^[9]. In some cases, deliberate efforts can be observed not only to ignore parts of the past but also to erase it altogether. Light ^[10] cites, as an example of this, the situation in Romania and Hungary in the 1990s, when post-communist governments attempted to erase the remnants of the communist past. These actions were prevented by interest groups, who argued that the history of this era should be preserved too.

Heritage tourism is commonly used to create a sense of patriotism in the residents of a nation state and to spread propaganda to international visitors. Heritage sites are often presented in a way that highlights the virtues of a particular political ideology, e.g., in socialist countries, tours usually include visits to monuments dedicated to great communist leaders and patriots. This is also a feature of the area we are studying. These kinds of tours also include visits to schools, community centres, factories, and specially designed villages where residents (often actors) lead idealised communist

lifestyles. Heritage sites and events are often used as a means of reinforcing nationalism and patriotism among domestic tourists: battlefields, cemeteries, monuments of national heroes, and other important sites in the national psyche are central elements for this particular use of heritage.

Another example of the complexity and highly political nature of heritage is social/collective amnesia, which refers to the selective memory of certain events and people, or the deliberate disregard of certain historical events. There are numerous examples of this in some parts of South-East Asia and in relation to the Chinese, Native American, and African-American people. There are groups of people, who, at one point in history, were oppressed by the dominant ethnic group, which resulted in their past being erased or rewritten ^[11]. The discussion of ethnicity in the tourism is not only of interest in the context of history and, thus, heritage tourism but is also linked to culture and, thus, to cultural tourism. As it is linked to cultural tourism, the next chapter will look at ethnic tourism.

2. Ethnic Tourism

The analysis of social interactions between tourists and locals often involves the study of inter-ethnic relations. Tourism brings together people, who are often members of different ethnic groups. Domestic tourism, in most cases, does not necessarily involve interactions with other cultures; however, in the case of international tourism, contact with other cultures is of great importance ^[12]. In addition, ethnic tourism accounts for a significant part of global tourism, and can best be described as 'the search for the authentic cultural experience' ^[13].

Van der Berghe's ^[13] definition of ethnic tourism is almost synonymous with that of Smith ^[14], who defined it as visiting exotic and often peripheral destinations, which involve performances, representations, and attractions portraying or presented by ethnic groups. Smith's work has been the starting point for the anthropological research on tourism; however, its anthropological nature has also led to many debates. Smith used the terms 'host' and 'guest', which have since been debated by many scholars due to their limits when referring to the encounters between tourists and people living in the visited destinations.

Selwyn (1994) critiqued the terms due to their limited analytical value for a complex industry involving many relationships ^[12]. MacCannell ^[15], on the other hand, argued that the global spread of white culture and the accompanying tourism institutions create highly deterministic ethnic forms. MacCannell drew attention to the use of ethnicity in tourism as exotic cultures become tourist attractions, while distinguishing the ethnic approach to tourism from earlier ethnological and colonial perspectives. MacCannell also stated that tourist ethnicity is dependent on earlier forms of constructed ethnicity, and is, thus, rooted in earlier formulations of identity. He also argued that the use of reconstructed ethnicity in tourism is an attempt to universalize the Western sense of exchange.

Several researchers expressed concern about how tourism presents ethnicity to consumers; however, relatively little attention is paid to actions and motivations: too much emphasis is placed on Western values in the context of global tourism ^[12]. Wood refines Smith's ^[14] definition and points to "the cultural uniqueness that is marketed for tourists" ^[16]. According to Wood, the focus is on cultural practices and "the observation of indigenous homes and villages, dances and rituals" ^[16] (p. 361). 'Otherness' and 'other' ways of living are re-dimensioned as a commodity to be consumed as tourists are exposed to cultural differences.

This leads to differentiation and to the resurgence of culture and ethnicity. However, a distinction between ethnic and cultural tourism can be discerned, as the former is used to refer to 'primitive cultures' and the latter to the high arts of developed nations ^[17]. "Currently, Western scholars use the term 'ethnic tourism' when cultural differences are great and 'cultural tourism' when they are less so" ^[17] (p. 91). In relation to that distinction, the next chapter focuses on the motivations and background of cultural and heritage tourism related to ethnicity.

3. Motivations and Background of Cultural and Heritage Tourism Related to Ethnicity

MacCannell claimed that ethnicity in tourism is dependent on earlier forms of constructed ethnicity, and thus it is rooted in the earlier constructions of identity. It can, thus, be seen that tourism often creates "staged" or inauthentic authenticity to meet the expectations of the visitor. This idea is supported by Lanfant ^[18], who argued that the reconstruction of identity begins with the 'gaze of the stranger' acting as a point of reference and a guarantor of identity. Tourist perceptions are shaped by the complex and often competing voices of authority.

The interactions between the tourists and hosts are usually temporary, mostly one-off, bilateral, of limited duration, and for specific or instrumental purposes. As tourist–host interactions are carried out across a wide range of linguistic and cultural barriers, they are vulnerable to misinterpretation and may be subject to stereotyping ^[19].

While exploring the background of ethnic tourism, border maintenance is an important concept when studying the impact of tourism on indigenous cultures. Picard ^[20] argued that the emphasis is on the ability of local people to maintain a dichotomy of meanings and that cultural identity will continue to be of significant importance to local people regardless of the presence of tourists. This allows the integrity of the societies in question to be examined and demonstrates that tourism reinforces the boundary between what people do for visitors and what they do for themselves.

The use of the term ‘ethnicity’ varies widely in political discourse, the first main theoretical distinction is made between the so-called ‘ancestral’ and ‘situational’ or ‘instrumental’ approaches ^[21]. According to the ancestral viewpoint, ethnic identity comes from being born into a particular community, identifying with the values of that community, speaking its language or even a dialect of its language, and following a set of cultural practices. Ethnicity is not closely related or linked to class or political phenomena, and ethnicity, therefore, has its own internal dynamism, existing independently from other elements of the political phenomenon ^[21].

The instrumentalist perspective takes a more dynamic view and treats ethnicity as a set of social relations. Barth ^[22] raised the question of where the boundaries between different groups may lie, and refused to see ethnicity as the property of cultural groups, thus, avoiding any notion of cultural determinism ^[23]. Along these lines, several authors, such as Eidheim ^[24], have developed concepts for the analysis of interpersonal ethnicity. The essence of this approach is that it conceives of ethnicity as a social process in which cultural differences are communicated, facilitating comparison without resorting to simplistic formulations of cultural groups.

The situational approach rejects the simplistic notion of culture as bounded entities and focuses on ethnicity as a set of social relations and processes through which cultural differences can be communicated ^[25]. Ethnicity appears to be more stable than other markers of individual and group identity. Barth observed multi-ethnic societies constituted under the control of a state system dominated by one of the ethnic groups ^[22]. Similar observations were made by Smith ^[26], who used Malinowski’s institutional theory (1944) to analyse the meaning of cultural differentiation.

Looking at the Caribbean, Smith argued that there was no single society but rather several societies side by side, each with its own set of institutions. Ethnic identities tend to be associated with different languages, although this may prove problematic if identities are reassessed in the context of tourism ^[26]. An example of this was given by Esman ^[27] regarding the situation of Cajuns, who are mixed descendants of Nova Scotian exiles whose culture combines Native American, French, Spanish, and German elements and who speak dialects of French. Sometimes an ethnicity is so closely associated with a particular activity that the name is applied to all persons engaged in such an activity.

An example of this is the term Sherpa, which actually refers to the occupation of mountaineering and trekking in Nepal ^[28]. According to MacCannell, tourism promotes the restoration of ethnic characteristics and, therefore, resembles the behaviour of leaders of separatist ethnic groups ^[15]. Pitchford, however, argued that this is a two-way process and that ethno-nationalist rhetoric can ‘bear a striking resemblance to the image created by the promotion of tourism’ ^[29] (p. 48) citing Welsh culture as an example of this, where the ‘victim image’ created for tourism purposes fits in well with nationalist attitudes.

Ethnicity can be used as a ‘rhetorical weapon’ as well in tourism to draw attention to alleged grievances ^[15] (p. 168). The ethnicity of modern Hungary, for example, includes the core elements of the former Kingdom of Hungary. A large part of its territory was annexed to neighbouring countries after the 1920 Trianon peace treaty, which resulted in around 2.5 million Hungarians living today in the neighbouring countries, especially in Transylvania, where loyalty to Hungarian identity creates the illusion of the continuation of a former political reality ^[30].

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