

CULTURAL TOURISM: NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES



Edited by Greg Richards and Xerardo Pereiro



FCT Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA E DO ENSINO SUPERIOR



Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e
Alto Douro Pólo de Chaves

UNIVERSIDADE DE TRÁS-OS-MONTES E ALTO DOURO
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Índice

Introduction: <i>Cultural Tourism: Negotiating Identities</i>	I
Greg Richards and Xerardo Pereiro	

PART 1: Cultural Tourism, Heritage and the Experience of Identities

Chapter 1: <i>The Cultural Tourism of Museu do Vinho Macau: Negotiating Postcolonial Identities and the Nature-Culture Divide</i>	19
ONG Chin Ee	
Chapter 2: <i>National Cooperation to 'Tell The Story', Integrate Heritage More Effectively in Tourism and Add Value to the Visitor Experience in Australia</i>	35
Jane James	
Chapter 3: <i>Creativity in Tourism Experiences, A Closer Look at Sitges</i>	51
Esther Binkhorst	
Chapter 4: <i>Re- Imaging The Cultural Heritage of SPA Resorts in Europe: A Survival Strategy</i>	71
Katleen Vos	
Chapter 5: <i>Tourist Attractivity as an Expression of Searching for the Roots and Cultural Heritage</i>	87
Ángeles Rubio Gil	
Chapter 6: <i>Cultural Tourism in Italy. Multilevel Governance and Promotion of Community Cultural Identity</i>	93
Anna Papa	

PART 2: Cultural Tourism and (In)Material Cultural Heritage

Chapter 7: <i>The Role of Cultural Routes in the Identity of Tourist Destinations: A Prospective of the Romanic Route of Sousa Valley – North of Portugal</i>	III
Joana Neves and José Sirgado	

Chapter 8: <i>Tourism Activities in a Natural Park in the North of Portugal: The Importance of a Guide with a Tourism Background</i>	123
Fátima Selas and Domingos Lopes	

PART 3: Cultural Tourism, Images and Identities

Chapter 9: <i>From Content to Content, the Cultural Biography of Maastricht on the Internet</i>	137
Marjan Melkert	

Chapter 10: <i>An Assessment of the Image of Madrid by Contemporary Cultural Tourists</i>	151
Javier de Esteban Curiel	

Chapter 11: <i>Cultural Identity and Tourism Development in Salvador: Building the City Image</i>	185
Gloria Lanci	

PART 4: Cultural Tourism as a Means of Reinforcing Collective Identities

Chapter 12: <i>Cultural Tourism and (Cross) Cultural Identities: Understanding Nationalism</i>	205
Joachim Kappert	

Chapter 13: <i>Tourism and Identity in Catalunya</i>	221
Greg Richards	

Chapter 14: <i>Cultural Tourism in the Northern East Region of Portugal</i>	245
Catarina Antónia Martins, Aida Maria Oliveira Carvalho and Elsa da Encarnação Gonçalves Tavares Esteves	

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Introduction

Cultural Tourism: Negotiating Identities

Greg Richards¹ and Xerardo Pereiro²

Cultural tourism: a negotiation of identities

Cultural tourism has long promoted intercultural communication between peoples, countries and regions. From this point of view, the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990) interpreted tourism as an “ethnoscape”, that is, a landscape characterised by the flux of goods, information, services and tourists, all crossing borders in a globalised world.

In our view, cultural tourism is a social relationship with other people. We understand cultural tourism as a system in which cultural diversity and exchange are very important. This sociocultural relationship has been constructed by politicians, planners, marketing professionals, hotels, transport providers, guides, travel agencies, writers, researchers and so on. They are the mediators between visitors and their hosts.

Cultural tourism is a meeting between cultures and social systems that produces changes in both of them (Smith, 1992). Almost all cultural tourism is a negotiation between identities of human groups in contact (hosts and guests). Cultural tourism is also a social practice that constructs and re-constructs identities (e.g. social identities, nationalism, transnationalism) and it contributes to the creation of a globalised world (Bauman, 1999: 103-133). In addition, cultural tourism is a very good arena for understanding discourses, images and representations of the “Other”. These representations are an important element of the negotiation between hosts and guests and they in turn influence the contexts of interaction.

Cultural tourism is a movement of people which intensifies intercultural contact, and therefore can contribute to an appreciation of cultural differences and diversity,

¹ Tourism Research and Marketing (www.tram-research.com). E-mail: grichards@tram-research.com.

² CETRAD – University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro. E-mail: xpereiro@utad.pt.

stimulating mutual respect between cultures. It can also be 'an opportunity for peace, understanding and knowledge between different societies and nations' (Brunt and Courtney, 1999: 217). From another point of view, some authors maintain that tourism is a threat which can destroy or pervert the host culture, subjecting them to postcolonial dependence and depriving them of their decision-making powers (Krippendorff, 1986, 1987; Nash, 1992; Greenwood, 1992).

We must ask ourselves, however, if all tourists are equal. It is clear that there are different types of tourists, and groups of tourists from different cultures exhibit different travel habits and patterns of cultural consumption. There is a tendency for tourists to take certain elements of their culture with them when they travel, whether as tourists in general or as cultural tourists (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002; Richards 2007). It is therefore necessary to understand tourist diversity (Nash, 1994), in order to understand tourism. This diversity is determined by the tourist space, the interactions between hosts and guests and different groups of tourists, and their motivations and behaviour.

One of the first to study the situations of negotiation between hosts and guests was Emmanuel De Kadt (1979), who identified the following forms of encounter:

- a) Purchasing a good or service
- b) Encounters in a tourist space (e.g. the beach)
- c) Exchanges of information and ideas

The first two were seen as the most common, and the most transitory and commercial in nature. Jafar Jafari (1989) also identified three types of culture-tourism contacts: a) local culture; b) touristic culture; c) cultural contact between local and tourists. These typologies of the tourist-host encounter imply that these meetings occur in different situations or spaces, and the context of the encounter is likely to shape the experience of the encounter to a large degree.

However, we also have to accept that the categories 'tourists' and 'locals' are socially constructed. The 'local' can no longer be conceived of as a geographically limited locality, but rather as a sense of place, a lifestyle, ethos or worldview. Increasingly processes of 'glocalisation' imply that the local adapts itself to the global, and vice versa (Franquesa and Morrell, 2007).

To be a 'cultural tourist' is therefore a socially constructed concept conditioned by wealth, nationality, sex, age, social position and social and cultural distance. By the

same token, to be defined as a tourist signifies the application of a brand, or a label, as a form of social classification.

As Boissevain (1996; 2005) points out, tourists are a social category which is transient in nature, and they assume different temporary identities and maintain unequal relationships with local residents. These social relations are conditioned by the binary oppositions of integration/separation and hospitality/hospitality. In a few cases these social relations are repeated and continued, and the work-leisure distinction is always present in relationships between the two. Their encounters are always transitory and instrumental, as are other types of social relationships.

In cultural tourism, the nature of the host-guest encounter has also been shaped by the changing role of culture in tourism, particularly as culture has become a major element in economic development strategies.

Development trajectories in cultural tourism – from economic to cultural to social development

According to Bonink and Richards (1992) there are two main perspectives which are usually adopted in studying cultural tourism:

- a) The 'sites and monuments' approach, which sees cultural tourism simply as the process of consuming cultural attractions. The methodology adopted in such studies is usually quantitative and concentrates on activities and motivations of tourists.
- b) A conceptual perspective, which attempts to interpret cultural tourism in a more qualitative way, observing tourists and their guests, and analysing the meanings, practices and experiences of cultural tourists in contact with other cultures and places.

From this second perspective we can understand cultural tourism in a different way (Pereiro, 2002): as a psychosocial experience, a cultural commodification process, a nostalgia for the past and cultural heritage, a process of curiosity and learning, an escape to the 'Other', a modern pilgrimage, an industry of cultural representations, a special way of travel, a particular mode of cultural consumption.

In our view, we think that a combination of these two perspectives and methodologies is desirable. In this way, research on cultural tourism could benefit

from a more complete interpretation of the relationship between tourism and culture as a social practice and phenomena.

Nowadays, the relationship between culture and tourism has changed. In the past, culture was predominantly supported by the economy (e.g. through subsidies), but today culture produces economy and we can speak about an 'economy of culture'. One of the forces behind this change is the growing role of cultural tourism as a strategy of development.

As Ray (1998) has pointed out, regions and cities are increasingly valorising the 'cultural capital' they possess in order to attract economic development and jobs. In many cases, this process involves the use of a specific cultural identity of a place in order to generate tourism.

Changing approaches to the relationship between tourism and identity

'There is nothing so strange, in a strange land,
as the stranger who comes to visit it'

(Cannibal Tours, by Dennis O'Rourke)

Identity has always been an important part of tourism production and consumption. However, the precise role of identity in attracting tourism has been re-evaluated over time. Early approaches emphasised the tourist search for difference, whereas more recent studies have also examined the search for the 'everyday' as a tourist strategy.

Urry (1993) underlines the fact that cultural tourists search for diversity because they have a special curiosity for the Other, something historically invented. But Priscilla Boniface (1995) claims that cultural tourism is an escape from one culture and society to another, changing daily routines, a universal human need (not a historical construction) from the perspective of Graburn (1983) and MacCannell (1976). Cultural tourism could be a modern answer to this problem.

Cultural Tourism and Identity

These days, it seems that cultural tourists and their hosts are engaged in a collective project of identity creation and mediation. The hosts want to assert their identity by attracting tourists who (as well as bringing money) legitimate the specificity of the local identity that attracts them. For their part, cultural tourists are happy to collaborate in the construction and reinvention of 'local' identity, because to consume them is to distinguish oneself as a cultural tourist.

The emergence of identity as a key element in cultural tourism has occurred through a convergence of factors:

- a) The need for regions to distinguish themselves
- b) The search for new forms of community
- c) The need to valorise culture

- d) The shift towards experiential tourism
- e) Postmodern/postcolonial reification of identity

a) The need for regions to distinguish themselves

Identity is a process of social construction of meanings that utilises cultural attributes. This social construction occurs in the context of power relations. Manuel Castells (2000) distinguishes between three basic types of identity:

- a) Legitimated Identity: Created by dominant institutions to legitimate their power over other social actors.
- b) Resistant Identity: A claim by social actors in low social positions who are stigmatized by the dominant groups. It is a construction of alternative social principles of organisation, it is more communal and represents a defensive identity against exclusion and domination.
- c) Projectual Identity: Where social actors manipulate their cultural materials and construct a new identity that redefines their position in society and transforms the social structure.

Cultural tourism has a role to play in all these three types of identity: as a support for legitimated identity, for example in the promotion of 'national monuments'; as a source of resistant identity, for example in the creation of 'alternative' cultural itineraries and increasingly as a source of projected identity, for example in image change strategies for cities or regions.

Many regions have therefore used identity to position themselves on the cultural tourism map, but these regions have similar tourist products and they are trying to distinguish them from other regions with the objective of attracting tourists. In this process they use symbols of their identity and they re-construct it for tourism consumption. Identities have been transformed by the impacts of tourism in many places in the world, because tourism is one of the mechanisms of social and cultural change (Santana, 1997). In some cases cultural tourism can reinforce those identities (i.e.: ethnic identities), in other cases it can transform and add new meanings and senses to spaces and peoples. From a critical perspective, the commodification of culture can radically transform local identities and cultural tourism can become an adaptation mechanism to the present, but not without social costs.

Cultural tourism is often seen as the salvation of declining regions, although this doesn't mean it is a panacea. What Manuela Ribeiro (2004: 54) called 'the ideology of tourism', or the idea that tourism will bring development and wealth and therefore should receive priority over other strategies. In reality, cultural tourism is just one of the forms of development, often complementing others, and should be understood from an integral, endogenous and participatory perspective in order to really contribute to the sustainable development of communities.

b) The search for new forms of community

In many areas, traditional community forms are under pressure from globalisation, individualisation and loosening social ties. In particular, the decline of traditional family structures and forms of social organisation (such as associations and clubs), have meant that communities and individuals need to search for new means of defining their identities. Maffesoli (1995) talks about the rise of the 'neo-tribes', while numerous sub-cultures are being created or superseded. Old class structures are becoming less sound as foundations for identity, while new classes, such as Florida's 'creative class', are arguably gaining ground.

We think that cultural tourism is an arena in which to redefine the symbolic constructions of communities. From this perspective, cultural tourism could be seen as an ideological mechanism for reinventing community identities, but at the same time cultural tourism produces a new social space of relations between the local and the global, reinventing boundaries and borders between human groups. The use of identity in cultural tourism from this perspective becomes a way of creating, symbolising and projecting new communities.

c) The need to valorise culture

Culture has been converted into a commodity or product for tourism consumption. Nowadays we can identify an intensive process of commodification of culture and cultural heritage (Wright, 1998; García Canclini, 1989; Ashworth, 1994; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2001, 2004). This is better understood if we look at how culture is managed with economic and political aims.

From a marketing perspective, a product is something which can be offered in a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption. It satisfies a desire or necessity, generates benefits and solves real, invented or imagined problems. The

success of a tourism product depends on what the producers see as the needs of the consumer. However, many tourist organisations are ignorant of the motivations of the people who purchase their products. First they design products and then they try and find buyers, instead of designing their products to meet the needs of the market (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002: 103-109).

To market cultural tourism more effectively, the developers of projects need to pay attention to three aspects: the products offered; the markets they will attract and potential competitors. This requires investing in research as a strategy of implementation and intervention (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002: 206-207). Again, this process tends to privilege identity as an element of the cultural tourism experience, as it can provide an essential link between the cultural tourism 'commodity', its producer and its consumer.

d) The shift towards experiential tourism

Cultural tourism allows hosts and guests to experience alterity. But these experiences are plural, and we never know if we have really experienced the 'Other'. In some cases, the local people hide back regions of their lives. At other times, the tourist as a stranger invites local people to get to know them intimately. Hospitality, emotions and intimacy are cultural categories that contribute to a more experiential form of tourism.

According to Reisinger and Steiner (2005), the ritual experience of tourism can be seen from three perspectives: the modern, the constructivist and the postmodern.

The modern perspective, outlined by Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1976), for whom authenticity is synonymous with the genuine and the traditional. These authors maintain that cultural products encapsulate universal values which we learn to judge as true, genuine or authentic. This assumes that cultural products are immutable. Boorstin (1964) affirms that mass society is alienating and that tourists have to be satisfied with 'pseudo events', which are inauthentic, constructed and lacking in spontaneity. In this way, tourism is seen as an illusory experience. According to MacCannell (1976) the modern middle classes engage in tourism as an 'authentic' experience which they cannot find in their region of origin. The tourist lives in an inauthentic world, alienated from their home environment, and tries to obtain authenticity in their tourism consumption. Tourism becomes a compensatory escape from the unsatisfactory experience of everyday life. Along similar lines Turner and Ash (1975) argue that tourism is a superficial form of contact with the Other

which increases our stereotypical views of other cultures, while the tourism industry protects us from deeper cultural contacts. In contrast to the tourist, the traveller is seen as having a deeper and richer form of contact with local cultures.

From a constructivist standpoint, authenticity is seen as a social construction of reality, which therefore depends on the point of view of the observer. Bruner (1991) argues that authenticity is projected by the western consciousness and the stereotypical images associated with it. The images projected by the tourism industry become 'authentic' through the eyes of the tourists. Tourism products are perceived as authentic not because they are original or representative of local culture, but because they are symbols of authenticity (Reisinger and Steiner, 2005). This perspective emphasises that the significations produced and disseminated through tourism are perceived as authentic.

From a postmodern perspective, authenticity is not relevant. For authors such as Urry (1990) tourist experience is not governed by the search for authentic experience, but by the experience of difference. Tourists look for sites and experiences which are different from their everyday lives. Tourism is a search for the Other (Selwyn, 1996), which is explained by a growing search for intense emotions in routine societies, or the search for the 'safe danger' of controlled experiences with some risk or excitement (Elias and Dunning, 1990). The tourist is often conscious of the inauthentic nature of the experiences promoted by the tourism system, often with the intention of reducing the cultural and social impact of tourism on the host society.

These different views of the relationship between tourism and authenticity oblige us to question the way in which tourists are affected by their experiences. We also have to recognise that not all tourist experiences are the same, because not all tourists have the same values or worldviews. We therefore can't ignore the diversity of tourist experiences, as Cohen (1979, 1988) has demonstrated. Not all tourists are alienated – some just want recreational experiences and others seek intimate contact with local people and their culture. Some travel alone, others in a group, as a family, with friends or professional colleagues. This diversity of tourism experience underlines the fact that we are not just talking about the relationship between tourism and identity, but the relationship between different forms of tourism, different types of tourists and different identities.

e) Postmodern/postcolonial reification of identity

The tourism production system is arguably shifting from a fordist to a post-fordist model. The Fordist model (Vera, 1997) is characterised by sectoral specialisation based on natural resources such as beaches or mountains and characterised by a homogeneous product range and a mass market which is viewed as uniform and lacking diversity. The aim was to maximise the number of visitors, even at the cost of degrading the natural environment. This model concentrated tourist products in specific locations, increasing tensions between hosts and guests.

In contrast, the post-fordist model (Donaire, 1998) developed as a result of the crisis of the homogenisation and uniform nature of fordist tourist destinations. In the face of growing competition, destinations began to distinguish themselves by developing specific products for specific groups of tourists. This recognised the increasing individualised nature of consumption, in which consumers wanted to be seen as different from their peers, and to consume different things in different ways. The increasing valorisation of cultural heritage, the festivalisation of cities, the new ethics of ecotourism and business tourism were all reflections of this trend. These developments turned every space into a potential tourism space. Therefore cultural tourism is often more integrated into the everyday life of the host community, and may even become an aspect of its identity.

All of these trends taken together place more emphasis on the role of identity in cultural tourism. The contributions to this volume examine a number of different aspects of this developing relationship.

Structure of this volume

This collection of papers on the relationship between cultural tourism and identity has been organised into four sections, reflecting the main themes of the meeting.

The first part of this volume deals with the relationship between cultural tourism, heritage and the experience of identities. In tourism, identity has become an important issue for the tourist and the host. From the perspective of the tourist, the identity of the region visited is part of the experience to be consumed. The papers in this section illustrate that in a range of different contexts, the unifying feature of cultural tourism consumption is the search for aspects of local identity. In turn, it is important to tie the local identity into global circuits of cultural exchange. In Chapter I for example, Chin Ee Ong examines the way in which the shift from Portuguese

colonial rule to Chinese administration is reflected in the presentation of wine heritage in the Wine Museum of Macau. He demonstrates that in postcolonial Macau the presentation of the Chinese tradition of winemaking has appeared alongside the displays of Portuguese wine regions.

In Chapter 2, Jane James analyses the way in which narratives of identity have been used to interpret Australian heritage sites more effectively for tourists. She shows that thematic interpretation can play an important role in helping tourists to understand the sites they were visiting, as well as increasing appreciation of distinct narratives and identities.

Esther Binkhorst looks at the development of creativity in tourism experiences in Sitges in Chapter 3, in particular concentrating on ways in which consumers can become 'co-producers' of their own experiences. She emphasises the way in which Sitges is trying to change its identity as a tourist destinations, away from sun, sea and sand towards a more cultural product. Image change is also a central theme of Katleen Vos' contribution the cultural heritage of spa resorts in Europe in Chapter 5. She argues that in order to survive increasing competition from within and outside Europe, traditional spa resorts have to develop a new image which underlines the 'story' of the spa, and its relationship to cultural and natural heritage.

Ángeles Rubio Gil argues in Chapter 6 that tourist destinations around the world have to capitalise on the growing market of people searching for their roots and cultural heritage. The alienation of postmodernity produces a situation in which people are searching for their origins and identity, increasingly through tourism consumption.

In Chapter 7, Anna Papa looks at the way in which cultural tourism has been promoted by the public sector in Italy, particularly through the development of 'cities of art'. This in turn creates problems of management, as growing numbers of visitors begin to impinge on the daily lives of residents.

Part 2 considers the way in which (material) heritage is used in identity formation, based on two case studies from the North of Portugal. In Chapter 8 Joana Neves and José Sirgado look at the role of cultural routes on the identity of tourist destinations. They look at the development of a Romanic route in the Sousa Valley, and argue that cultural tourism development reinforces the identity of the region as well as improving attractions.

Fátima Selas and Domingos Lopes analyse tourism activities in the Alvão Natural Park in Chapter 9. They argue that transmitting the identity of the area requires

guides with a tourism background. In this way, information can be transmitted about the identity of the region, and visitors can improve their creative skills.

Part 3 analyses the production of images. Arguably there is a shift away from the material aspect of culture and heritage towards the symbolic, intangible aspects, but this has to be discussed in the light of the examples presented. Note that all the examples are cities – is this a particularly urban phenomenon, stimulated by inter-urban competition?

In the Dutch city of Maastricht, the local authority is trying to establish an identity by placing cultural biography on the Internet. In Chapter 10 Marjan Melkert analyses the use of cultural biography as a tool for transmitting multiple identities to tourists. Javier de Esteban Curiel assesses the images of Madrid held by cultural tourists visiting the Prado Museum and Reina Sofia Museum in Chapter 11. He shows that the images of the city are above all connected with active learning rather than visits to passive sites, once again emphasising the important role of education in cultural tourism.

The preservation of cultural identity in cities in the developing world is an issue in many countries. In Chapter 12 Gloria Lanci analyses the case of Salvador in Brazil, where tourism development is building the city image as a lively, atmospheric place, through the ‘spectacularisation’ of everyday life. This may provide short term gains, but the question is whether such exploitation of the intangible heritage is sustainable.

Part 4 looks at the importance of identity and its presentation to tourists as part of the project of creating or sustaining collective identities. These can be local, regional, national or transnational. In Chapter 13 Joachim Kappert points out that national identity depends on the production of stereotypes, which are sustained by a variety of mechanisms. These stereotypes can then become reproduced through cultural tourism consumption, for example by tourists visiting major national monuments or performances of ‘national’ dances. The same mechanisms also increasingly operate at regional level, as Greg Richards points out in the case of Catalunya in Chapter 14. He argues that regional and local governments are increasingly using cultural identity as a conscious means of tourism promotion, even talking about ‘identity tourism’. However, he raises the question of whether the projected identity of local places is known by, or attractive to, cultural tourists.

Finally, Catarina Antónia Martins, Aida Maria Oliveira Carvalho and Elsa da Encarnação Gonçalves Tavares Esteves analyse the situation of cultural tourism in the Northern East Region of Portugal in Chapter 15. They find that the main motives for

cultural tourism in the area are meeting new people and other ways of living. As with many other contributions to this volume, they argue that tangible heritage alone is not sufficient to generate repeat visitation.

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