

Analysing Cultural Commoditization in relation with Tourism in India

Author:

Dr Kamakshi Maheshwari

Asst. Professor IITTM Gwalior

Kamakshi.maheshwari@iittm.ac.in

9977191550

Indian Tourism industry is expanding and has been multiplier in generating job opportunities, earnings and foreign exchange. It is one of the most important income generating source in addition to this the process of globalisation has increased the interconnectivity, economic "depth". With the growth of globalization and technological advancements, tourism industry has reached to a global level facilitating the movement of people and wealth internationally.

The glorious past of India, its spirituality and the secrets of the mysterious land constituting the main themes of Indian culture which is being sold as the tourism products. Considering the same, the study focussed on analysing the commoditization of the culture. In the current study the researcher used semiotics as the methodology. Along with the commodification, homogenization and heterogenization and authenticity of the culture is also discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Tourism, Culture, Commoditization, Authenticity, Globalization

Introduction

India has always been one of the favorite destination for experiencing culture over the globe. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, culture is "the customary belief social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious or social group" and also "the characteristic features of everyday existence shared by people in a place or time". Culture does not only revolve around the artifacts, heritage, monuments, but also includes it the values, beliefs, lifestyle and the way society preserve and perceive them.

Cultural tourism is sometimes used to refer to people visiting or participating living culture, contemporary art and music or other elements of modern culture whereas instances are also encountered whereby cultural tourism and heritage tourism are often used interchangeably leading to overlapping phenomena.

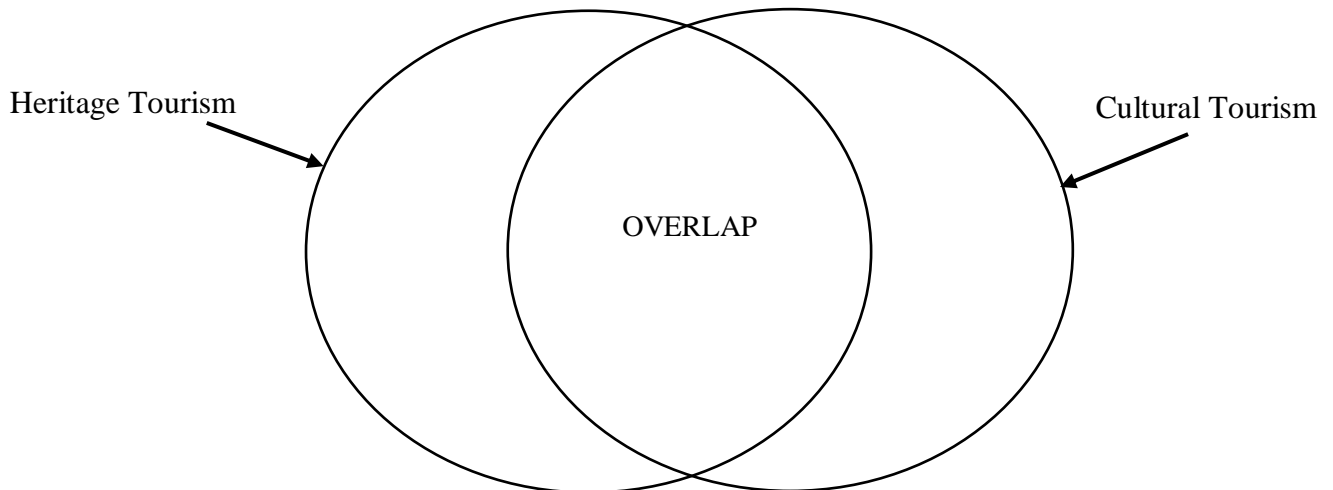


Fig. 1. Relationship of Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Tourism in general is an activity that requires inputs from an economic, social, cultural and environmental nature. It is a multifaceted activity yielding multiplier effect. Modern day tourism has become increasingly popular leading towards many faces and forms of tourism. If one goes back to centuries traces of tourism can be seen in the form of

- Deshatan
- Tirthatan
- Parayatan

People over time have travelled to experience cultural tourism which has led to commoditization of culture and tradition to be showcased as tourism products and services.

Definition adopted during 22nd century of tourism of the General Assembly held in Chengdu, China (11-16 September 2017) cultural tourism is defined as an activity where travel motivation of the tourist is to acquire the knowledge, discover and understand the knowledge related to cultural, heritage and lifestyle of the past. Tourist, travel to attractions which showcase the attributes of the society passed by, constituting the emotional, social, intellectual features, value system belief and traditions, music, art, cuisine literature etc.

Cultural tourism can further be classified into three subdivisions namely:

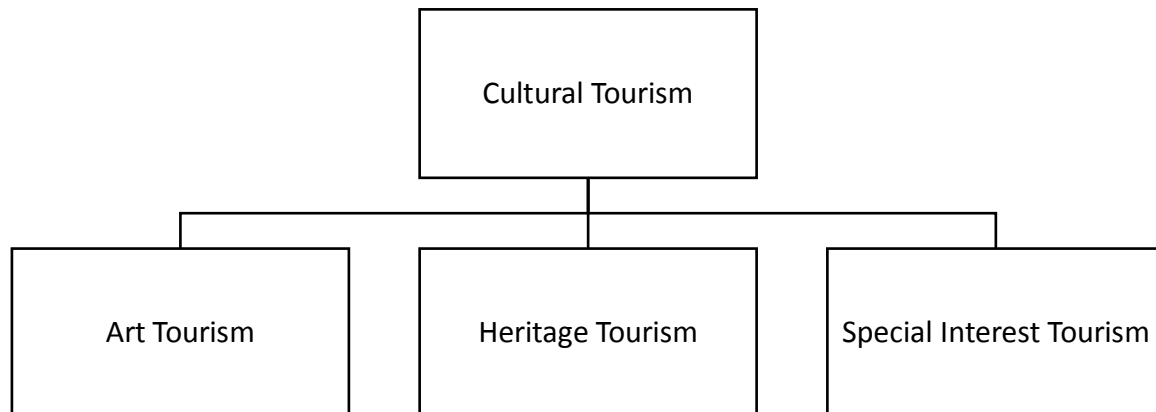
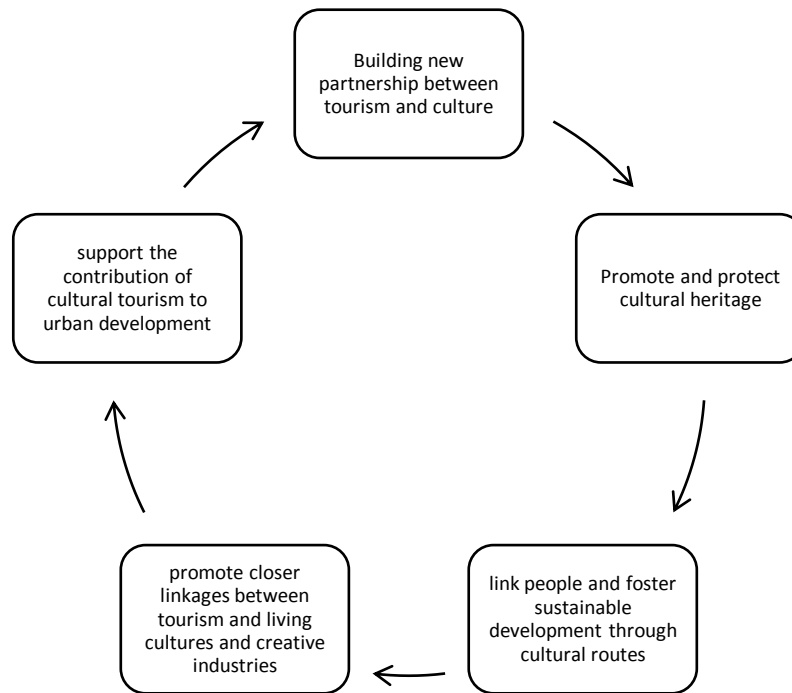


Fig. 2. Classification of Cultural Tourism

Looking at the figure above it is observed that Art tourism denotes to the naivest type of culture that can be commodified for the purpose of leisure and pleasure where heritage tourism demonstrates the blend monuments, cities and structural patterns and places related to the historical events and personalities like JalianwalaBagh and Rajghat.

More interestingly the research has identified that major portion of transition of culture into commodity can be seen in its third form, special interest tourism whereby tourists travel to experience values, attitudes, behaviours, rituals, traditions etc. with the rise in the tourism and people travelling for the purpose of experiencing culture, UNWTO and UNESCO the two apex bodies of tourism and culture in the year 2015 came up with Siem Reap Declaration on tourism and culture. The major aspects of the declaration were:



This paper outlines the relation of culture transition into tourism products. Indian is defined by rich cultural boundaries. Every state, city, town, district, village has its own culture, ritual, tradition, fair and festivals, art, craft, etc. unlikely other countries. India has very lately understood that very big fact that cultural commodification can lead to an important aspect of tourism industry. Pattern of the people travelling to India to enjoy the royal lifestyle of the erstwhile estates, perform rituals at holy places, enjoy natural scapes etc. have been seen. This engagement in culture while enjoying the tourism services has led towards commodification of culture which is widely known as cultural tourism.

Commoditization of Culture for Tourism

The commoditization of culture for tourism may entail the use of new channels to get access to ancient cultural traditions. Commoditization of culture for consumption may result in fading away the authenticity of cultures. Culture is dynamic and emergent in its nature. Mac Cannell (1976) Suggest that tourists are highly enthralled by a 'pursuit of originality' it has been seen at many tourist places that culture and various cultural variants have become commodity due to proper payback to authentic cultures. Another major change which has been seen during last few years is people practicing culture are decreasing day by day. New generation is not interested to practice the age old culture be it dance, art, music, craft, painting, weaving, worshipping, gurukul education etc. New opportunities are attracting the younger generation to move from authentic culture to replica, power loom, fashions etc.

It needs to understand the commoditization often hits the culture when it is already in decline stage because of the negative impacts due to the external forces, one among those can be tourism also. More tourism more demands for cultural products and services at affordable and cheap prices has led to more alternatives to be chosen for practicing cultures.

But another change which has seen is revival and preservice of culture in many cases for tourism, which in-turns helps the culture to be available for the generations to come and enjoy.

Cohen (1988) stated that most of the literature accepts the manifestation of three elements: commoditization, authenticity and demonstration. It can be seen that commoditization and authenticity of culture can normally be seen but demonstration of culture in its purest form can be another major factor leading to negative and positive impacts. In its negative sense demonstration of culture has led to redefine culture to suit the tourist market demand like the history woven in the form of light and sound show, dance forms getting refined with the addition of fusion style to suit both performers and the viewers as well, demonstration of martial arts as tourist show etc.

At the same time, its positive impacts can be seen in the form of preservice of performing arts, younger blood learning the traditional art to earn, lack in migration to new cities for commercial work etc.

Literature Review

Culture in wider form contains all that describes the way of life of a human being including knowledge, language, customs, arts, morals, traditions, and all the other qualities that can be acquired by a human as a part of society (Tylor, 1871). Despite of this early effort to describe culture, many newer efforts were made by numerous researchers to define culture but still they have not arrived on consensus. Kroeber and Kluckhohn(1952) in their work, had collected more than 50 definitions on culture in their study. Furthermore, Jahoda (1984) defined culture as the most ambiguous term as after so many publications and researches devoted to this topic, there hasn't been an agreement relating to the definitions of culture.

Etymologically, the word 'culture' got its origin from the Latin word 'cultura' meaning "to tend," "to cultivate," and "to till," among other things (Tucker, 1931). Bladwin et. al. (2006) the word culture as we know today is evolved in stages and have different linguistic origins.

S.N	Origin	Word	Meaning
1.	Latin	Colere	To till the ground
2.	Latin	Cultivare	Prepare the ground for crops
3.	French	Culture	Tilling of the ground
4.	Latin	Cultus	To care for, develop, worship
5.	English	Cultivate	To till the ground, to care for, bring up
6.	Mid-English	Cultura	Tilling of the ground
7.	French	Culte	Homage to deity, worship
8.	German	Kultur	Agriculture development
9.	English	Culture	Refinement of plant and people
10.	English	Culture	Group of people who hold a shared system of ideas, beliefs, norms, etc.
11.	German	Kultur	Mode of human existence
12.	English	Culture	Products, consequences of action of symbolic activity system of value and behaviours
13.	English	Culture	System of value and behaviours
14.	English	Cult	System of religious worships
15.	English	Culture	System of ideas, beliefs etc.

Table 1. Evolution of the word 'Culture'

Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) grouped the definitions of culture under different classifications namely Descriptive, Historical, Normative, Psychological, Structural and Genetic.

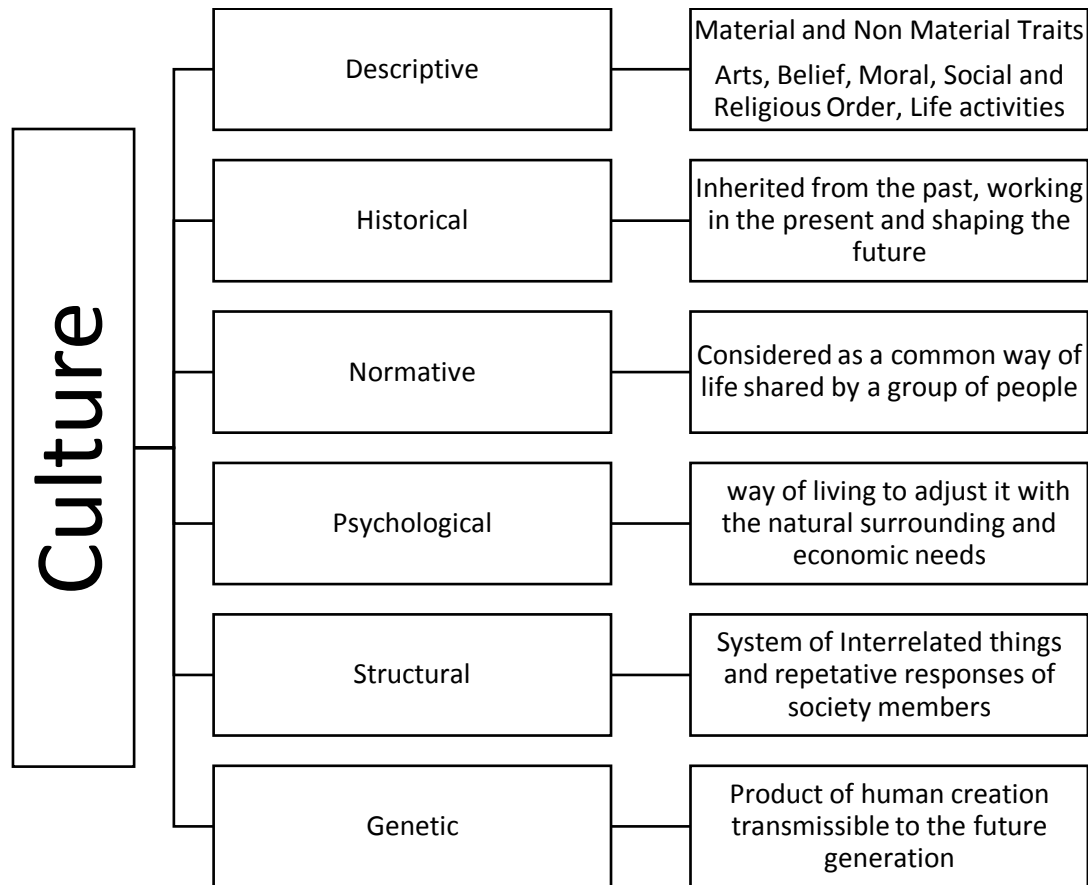


Table 2. Definitions of Culture

Culture and tourism are always considered as inseparable entities, also stated by Zhang et. al. (2010) said that culture is the soul of tourism. The relation of both tourism and culture can be tracked down from the 17th century in the form of Grand Tour (Fieffer, 1985). Later, Tighe (1986) has been identified that the cultural tourism got recognition in the decade of 1970's when the marketing and academic sector has identified that people were specifically moving for the purpose of understanding culture. Despite of being the oldest form of tourism, cultural tourism is one of the most misunderstood form of tourism.

In the previous studies, it has been seen that to cater the cultural tourism as mass tourism, the culture is being commoditized. According to Greenwood (1977), tourism lead to commoditization in the communities due to the economic impacts and growing prospects of cultural tourism. He further added that, the richer the culture is the more chances of it getting commoditized be it in in positive aspect of negative aspect.

In this research the researcher tries to identify how the cultural commoditization had affected tourism and vice versa. Further the researcher tries to identify the relation between culture and tourism.

Methodology

This research is a conceptual research which deal with the clarification and analysis of the concept on the basis of logical understanding (Xin et. al. 2013). This study used the published researches. Furthermore, Leuzinger-Bohleber (2004) stated that conceptual research deal about any statement or problem formally and systematically and analysing the ideas emerging from it. According to Xin et. at. (2013), conceptual research can be used in the researches which are trying to find the answer to the big and holistic questions.

This researcher majorly appoints the use of secondary data. As Donnellan and Lucas(2013) suggest that secondary data provide the researcher with the ability to manage and analyse the large datasets making it affordable and time saving. In this article, the researcher made the analysis of Qualitative Secondary data, its purposes, and modes of data sharing and approaches. Secondary data analysis is used where data collected from previous studies and it is analysed by the researcher to discover new problems or utilization of different analytical tools that were not a part of the primary analysis (Szabo and Strang, 1997). The study will be used the research papers, books archives, articles to identify the original cultures of the area and by comparing it with the modern day researches we can draw a conclusion of the area of this study.

Challenges and Issues

Various challenges and issues faced by culture is due to the over tourism. It has been experience by the local inhabitants that there can be problem in maintaining culture because they don't have control over commodification of culture through tourism.

Another challenge is commercialisation of the native people's art and craft. At times, it has seen that, culture is more than just demonstration tourist these days are more interested in experiencing culture which leads to commercialising every small culture, for making money through tourism for clicking photos in traditional attire and taking back the lovely memories. This one act of people to sell culture as tourism product has moved towards lost identity of culture.

One of the major threat of over tourism to culture was, people from all over the globe comes to India to enjoy culture and people in India especially the host population have started

selling culture as the commodity irrespective of understanding its negative impacts of being commercialized.

While studying and analysing various research papers, reports and survey documents it is also observed that government of India is also taking steps to improve the status of cultural resources especially intangible cultures like art act, craft and performing arts. Schemes like Atmanirbhar Bharat, vishwakarma card to artist, cluster training etc. are helping the artist to improve their skills and sell their cultural resources and its authentic form. But, challenge in front of governments is of how many get benefited by such schemes? Some doesn't get enough information whereas others don't want to take advantage of such schemes.

Maintaining cultural resources was always Complex process. Culture tourism has always taken as means to maintain the past it improvises the community's quality of life, provides economic development and create jobs but at the same time challenges in front of the communities or stakeholders is to provide a unique, special and participatory tourist experience and preserve the character of culture, offer and authentic experience always while ensuring sustainability.

Other problems and challenges are lack of conservationists, economic collapse, lack of synergies, lacuna of knowledge on the prominent of cultural asset, involvement of locales etc.

Major gap which can be seen is lack of synergies in terms of managing the cultural sites and arrest between local authority, stakeholders and locals all of these are working unconditionally without having a common interest.

Tourism is a powerful economic development tool; create job, provide entrepreneurial opportunities and help to improvise local economy. Looking at these multiplier effects of tourism drives every stakeholder to indulge in tourism and culture giving birth to cultural tourism.

Findings and Conclusion

Interest in culture and tourism has exploded over uh in the past several decades into a worldwide industry, creating both opportunities and concerns. Tourism and culture has a complex relationship lying between tradition and modernity. Culture tourism can also be understood as the movement of people to understand the culture and tradition that primarily represents the stories of the societies of the past and present. Promoting and marketing of culture as tourism product should focus on sustainability including conservation,

preservation, restoration, authentic interpretation, ethnic visitor experience and at the same time revenue generation.

It is therefore understood that experiencing culture is not only limited to the recognition, administration, preservation and safeguarding the heritage and cultural values but should also understand its effects on locales leading to monetary and societal benefits, revenue generation, resource optimization as well as promotion and marketing.

Cultural Heritage Values

Values	Details
Symbolic	Culture provides pride in cultural identity to local communities and nation as a cultural heritage
Historic	Culture represents eras and civilizations that have bygone. History and heritage symbolises fluorescence of regions traditions and cultures
Informational	It gives an important to learn how communities have lived, what they have practiced, their traditions, rituals, customs, etc. This study of cultural leads to intellectual achievements
Aesthetic	It also provides emotional experiences for their visitors leading to personal growth and development of people experiencing it. It also paves the ways and means to combine traditions with modernity.
Economic	Culture and heritage provides opportunities to develop resources into products to be used by tourist which in-turns generate employment and revenue at local, national and international level.

Looking in the Heritage values of culture it can be laid out that culture have deep influence on tourism and on host community as well. Culture may take on many forms and it can also meet economic social and other aspects of tourism. It is now recognised that cultural tourism must adhere to a number of basic principles. The ICOMOS's international committee on cultural tourism has developed a charter on cultural tourism which outlined an approach to Tourism Development. With these principles it is clear that cultural tourism must fulfil few objectives like identified cultural resources should be maintained enhanced and aptly interpreted. Moreover, the resident community should be involved in practicing cultural tourism.

While developing this research paper it is also observed that following the gaps needs to be fulfilled for sustainable transformation of cultural resources into to cultural tourism products.

- Lack of inventory of cultural resources which can be developed into products.
- Lack of community involvement.
- Assessment of cultural resources from tourist and tourism perspective.
- Assessment of carrying capacity of each heritage/ culture/ traditions etc.
- Creation of culture Tourism Development Plan by identifying potential of any area or region.
- Ongoing management of cultural tourism resources.
- Maintenance of the Authenticity
- Revival, preservation of the cultural tourism resources.
- Developmental plan for cultural resources.
- Marketing and promotion of culture in its original form.
- Training and development of local communities as cultural tourism service provider.

It is highly significant to overcome these gaps for development of community centered cultural tourism. though, government of India is taking much efforts to develop culture and tourism hand in hand like in October 2017, Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with other central ministries, tourism offices and other stakeholders organized " paryatanParv" across country. This 21-day program aimed at showcasing the cultural diversity of India reinforcing " Tourism for all" concept. Indian government have signed number of MoU's with other countries to promote Indian culture and motivate foreign tourist for visiting India for experiencing its culture and tradition.

Another important measure can be services of " DekhoApnaDesh" by Ministry of Tourism is trying to promote different cultures, traditions, customs, folklore, languages, dance, music etc.

Schemes and campaigns like Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, Swachh Bharat Mission, Atmanirbhar Bharat etc. Are moving towards the protection, promotion and preservation of the cultural resources. It is evident from the findings that a great extent of tourism in India lies on culture on which many tourism products are based. These resources will continue to play a significant role in developing Indian tourism. But, to retain cultural resources and their longevity to service tourism resources it is very important to plan, find suitable ways and means to overcome mentioned gaps, preserve and protect overuse of resources, manage

available resources for optimum use and lastly but importantly involve the local and Indigenous communities to develop and practice cultural tourism.

References

- Baldwin, J. R., Faulkner, S. L., & Hecht, M. L. (2006). A moving target: The illusive definition of culture. In *Redefining culture* (pp. 27-50). Routledge.
- Cohen, E. (1988). Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of tourism research*, 15(3), 371-386.
- Donnellan, M. B., & Lucas, R. E. (2013). Secondary data analysis.
- Greenwood, D. J. (2012). 8. Culture by the pound: An anthropological perspective on tourism as cultural Commoditization. In *Hosts and guests* (pp. 169-186). University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Jahoda, G. (1984). Do we need a concept of culture?. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 15(2), 139-151.
- Kroeber, A. L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions. *Papers. Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University*.
- Leuzinger-Bohleber, M. M. (2004). Leuzinger-Bohleber, M.(2004). What does conceptual research have to offer? 1. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 85 (6): 1477-1478. *International journal of psycho-analysis*, 85(6), 1477-1478.
- MacCannell, D. (1976). *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: SchockenBooks.
- Szabo V and Strang VR (1997) Secondary analysis of qualitative data. *Advances in Nursing Science* 20: 66–74.
- Tighe, A. J. (1986) The Arts/Tourism Partnership, *Journal of Travel Research*, 24 (3): 2–5.
- Tucker, T. G. (1931). *A concise etymological dictionary of Latin*. M. Niemeyer.
- Tylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art and custom* (Vol. 2). J. Murray.
- Xin, S., Tribe, J., & Chambers, D. (2013). Conceptual research in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 41, 66-88.

ZHANG, C., SUN, X., & LU, Y. (2010). Culture is the Soul of Tourism: Misunderstanding and Reflection: A Case Study of Mount Wuyi. *Tourism Science, 1*.