

THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF CULTURAL TOURISM: CONCERNS AND VIEWPOINTS

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Abstract

The special issue has the objective of exploring the interconnections between cultural participation and tourism from an economic perspective. The aim is to comprehend the economic effects, emerging trends, and policy implications of these relationships. The definition of cultural tourism has become increasingly elusive due to the expanding notion of tourists' cultural consumption. Empirical investigations into the relationships between cultural participation, cultural heritage, and tourism offer intriguing insights in various directions. In this introduction, we briefly outline the premise of this special issue, review the relevant literature, and highlight the diverse perspectives taken by the included articles. These essays all delve into important economic dimensions of tourism, in addition to their cultural topics—whether general, intangible, or temporary. The authors urge cultural economists to delve deeper into these captivating areas beyond just being intellectual tourists.

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Introduction. ‘Elusive’ cultural tourist Tourism is certainly a very important global industry because of its great contribution to the economy.¹ Indeed, tourists consume a variegated array of goods and services, with linkages to virtually every industry in the economy. So, it is usually considered as a crucial factor for local development, and great attention is devoted to the measurement of its economic impact.² At the same time, however, the ‘cultural’ impact and the potential risks generated by unsustainable tourism flows are also taken into account (Streeten 2006). Despite facing occasional shocks, over the past six decades, the tourism sector has showed strength and resilience, with a continuous expansion and diversification (UNWTO 2016)

In qualitative terms, holidays, recreation and other forms of leisure motivated about 53% of all international tourist arrivals in 2015, business and professional purposes represented 14%, while 27% travelled for other reasons (e.g. visiting friends and relatives, religious reasons and pilgrimages, health treatment). International organizations do not make distinctions between cultural tourism, and other touristic experiences⁴ and international statistics do not distinguish between ‘leisure’ and culturally motivated tourists; however, they can be defined. Notwithstanding the lack of systematic measures, OECD (2009) reports positive estimates from various sources suggesting that cultural tourists, including all visitors to cultural attractions regardless their motivation, account for 40% of international tourists. However, it is difficult to distinguish between accidental cultural tourists and tourists who

consider culture as the main goal of their travel,⁵ and this bears implications for the design of policies aimed at enhancing the role of culture as driver of attractiveness and competitiveness of destinations. Perhaps reflecting the blurred lines in official statistics, the scholarly literature continues to explore these overlaps. Indeed, cultural tourism is a longstanding phenomenon, and travellers making the Grand Tour⁶ in the past can be considered the precursors of those who nowadays are labelled as cultural tourists. However, as Bonet (2013, p. 387) argues ‘...it is actually very difficult to define what cultural tourism is about. There are almost as many definitions as there are tourists visiting cultural places’. Indeed, though there is a wide agreement that cultural tourism implies the consumption of culture by tourists, the meaning of ‘culture’ in relation to tourism is not straightforward. Such a relationship has evolved from a narrow one, mainly based on immovable heritage, to a broader one encompassing tangible and intangible elements as well as creative activities (Richards 2011) and the search for cultural experiences based on the lifestyles, the habits and the gastronomy of the visited places (OECD 2009). This expanding notion of the cultural consumption of tourists makes the definition of cultural tourism increasingly elusive. In the literature, various attempts have been made to identify different typologies of cultural tourists, considering the type of cultural attraction, and motivation and engagement, under the assumption that all people visiting cultural attractions can be considered cultural tourists (Richards 2003). Tracking technologies such as global positioning system (GPS) are increasingly used to understand cultural consumption of tourists in a destination (Shoval and McKercher 2017) or to investigate different profiles of cultural tourists, combining the data on the actual behaviour of tourists with information on motivation obtained through surveys (Guccio et al. 2017).

Motivation, satisfaction and loyalty in the case of a film festival: differences between local and non-local participants The next article examines how a temporary cultural amenity, a film festival, provides value to visitors and locals alike. Andrea Ba’ez-Montenegro and Mari’a Devesa-Fernández’s detailed analysis of participant motivations highlights important differences between residents and tourists and demonstrates how carefully applying a structural model can help disentangle critical concepts like satisfaction and loyalty. Notions of loyalty can be especially vital to sustaining cultural events like film festivals, which makes this kind of motivation study valuable in its own right. Yet their findings point to something even richer in the cultural tourism arena: the differentiated roles of locals and tourists in supporting cultural events. In particular, their data analysis reveals two segments of the spectator market—those attending the event for professional reasons and those with strong interests in the cinema. For tourists at least, these two segments exhibit greater satisfaction and loyalty, respectively. Identifying a loyal base of cinephile tourists for this film festival, above and beyond those visiting for professional reasons, points to a complementary role for tourism in supporting cultural amenities that may have historically relied heavily on locals. The growing importance of that segment, and their different interests and constraints, points to new challenges for future research to help illuminate the interplay between the local and the tourist experiences with cultural events.

Approximately 53% of international tourist arrivals in 2015 were motivated by holidays, recreation, and other forms of leisure. Business and professional purposes accounted for 14% of arrivals, while 27% traveled for various other reasons, including visiting friends and relatives, religious reasons and pilgrimages, and health treatment. International organizations generally do not make a distinction between cultural tourism and other types of tourism, and international statistics do not separate ‘leisure’ tourists from those motivated by culture. Nevertheless, these categories can be defined. The OECD (2009) claims that cultural tourists, who include all visitors to cultural places regardless of their purpose, make up 40% of international tourists, despite the absence of rigorous measures. However, it is difficult to differentiate between accidental cultural tourists and those who prioritize culture as the primary purpose of their travel. This distinction has important implications for developing policies that aim to enhance the role of culture in making destinations more appealing and competitive. The scholarly literature continues to investigate the intersections and ambiguities found in official statistics.

Cultural tourism has been a well-established practice for a long time, and individuals who embarked on the Grand Tour in the past can be seen as early examples of what we now refer to as cultural tourists. Nevertheless, according to Bonet (2013), the task of defining cultural tourism proves to be exceedingly challenging, as there exist a multitude of definitions, almost equivalent to the number of visitors who visit cultural destinations. While there is a general consensus that cultural tourism involves tourists engaging with and experiencing different aspects of a particular culture, the exact definition of 'culture' in the context of tourism is not clear-cut. This relationship has transitioned from a limited one, mostly focused on fixed heritage, to a more extensive one that includes both tangible and intangible aspects, as well as creative endeavors. It also involves seeking cultural experiences that are rooted in the lifestyles, customs, and cuisine of the destinations visited. The broadening concept of cultural consumption among tourists complicates the idea of cultural tourism, making it more difficult to define precisely. Within the literature, numerous endeavors have been undertaken to classify distinct typologies of cultural tourists. These classifications take into account factors such as the nature of the cultural attraction, as well as the motivations and level of involvement of individuals. The underlying assumption is that anybody who visits cultural attractions can be classified as a cultural tourist. Tracking technologies, like global positioning systems (GPS), are being used more and more to analyze the cultural activities of tourists in a specific location. They can also be used to study different types of cultural tourists by combining data on their actual behavior with survey responses about their motivations.

Moreover, an analysis of a film festival as a transient cultural facility provides valuable understanding of the incentives, contentment, and allegiance of attendees, emphasizing distinctions between individuals from the local area and those from outside. The analysis conducted by Andrea Báez-Montenegro and María Devesa-Fernández illustrates the effectiveness of using a structural model to unravel complex notions such as satisfaction and loyalty. The concept of loyalty is crucial for the continuation of cultural events such as film festivals. Research indicates that residents and tourists play distinct roles in supporting these events. Their data research identifies two distinct segments within the spectator market: individuals who attend the event for professional purposes and those who have a keen interest in movies. These two divisions demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty among travelers. Identifying a dedicated group of cinema enthusiasts who visit the film festival for reasons other than professional purposes emphasizes the important role of tourism in supporting cultural attractions that have traditionally depended on local residents. The increasing significance of this sector, together with their distinct interests and limitations, poses fresh obstacles for future research to elucidate the interaction between local and visitor encounters with cultural events.

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