

Chapter 18

Serendipitous Cultural Tourist

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ABSTRACT

Factors such as technological developments, increasing population growth, social opportunities, the right to paid vacation, increase in leisure time, increase in income level have provided tourism development and rapid acceleration in recent years. In addition, factors such as culture and education level have gained importance in the development of tourism. The prominence of cultural values in the destination management is proportional to the satisfaction of the tourists coming to the region. The aim of this chapter is to explain and give knowledge about the “serendipitous cultural tourist” typology, which is one of the types of tourists who do not come for cultural motivations. Although tourists do not participate in tourism for cultural purposes, the fact that they visit cultural attractions causes them to be named as cultural tourist type. Destination management organizers providing better service and more detailed information to the tourists improve the likelihood of them visiting the destination again.

INTRODUCTION

With technological developments, leisure time of individuals has increased as well as their disposable incomes and they desire to leave the routine has revealed the need for touristic experience. With the return of touristic experiences to routine, alternative and special interest tourism types such as cultural tourism, sport tourism, cycling tourism, ecological tourism and agro-tourism have emerged (Yun et al., 2007).

Since the 1980s, cultural tourism has become a popular form of tourism that has a common agreement among tourism authorities to create a positive image for destinations, affirm national pride, prolong the length of stay of visitors and even revive endangered traditions (Qi et al., 2018, p. 217). According to many studies, a significant percentage of tourists are seeking cultural experiences, such as visiting cultural attractions unrelated to the sea, sand and the sun, and participating in various cultural activities.

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World Tourism Organization estimates that cultural tourism currently accounts for 37% of all touristic trips, with demand having increased by 15% per year (McKercher, 2002; Richards, 1996). American Travel Industry Association estimates that two-thirds of U.S. Adults visit a cultural or heritage site or tourist destination while traveling (Silberberg, 1995). Based on these data, it has been suggested that cultural tourists represent a new type of mass tourist seeking meaningful travel experiences (McKercher & Du Cros, 2003).

Cultural tourism is a sub-set of tourism (Mishra, 2013). The range of possible uses of the term is so vast, that no single widely accepted definition of cultural tourism emerged (Dolnicar, 2002; Hughes, 2002). United Nations World Tourism Organization defines cultural tourism as “Movements mainly aimed at cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other events, visits to places and monuments, studying nature, folklore or arts, and travel for pilgrimage” (WTO, 1985).

Cultural tourism means different things to different people (Hughes, 1996; McKercher & Du Cros, 2003; Stebbins, 1996). Bonink and Richards (1992) came up with two main approaches by reviewing the current definitions of cultural tourism. The first is the areas and monuments approach, which is clearly related to a product-based definition of culture and focuses on defining the type of tourist attractions visited by cultural tourists. The second is the conceptual approach that attempts to explain the causes and meanings attributed to cultural tourism activity and are clearly related to the process-based definitions of culture. For example; cultural tourism covers all aspects of travel (McIntosh et al., 2009, p. 268). The contextual role of culture shapes the tourist’s experience of a situation in general, without a specific focus on the uniqueness of a particular cultural identity (Mishra, 2013, p. 45).

Various tourist typologies appear in cultural tourism. The most common tourist typologies are explained by McKercher (2002); (1) purposeful cultural tourists are those who have a deep cultural experience and their major reason of visit is learning about culture or heritage; (2) sightseeing cultural tourists visit mainly for culture or heritage. However, their experience is shallower and entertainment-orientated; (3) casual cultural tourists are those whose cultural reason plays a limited role in the decision of the visit and subsequently they visit in a shallow manner; (4) incidental cultural tourists participate in cultural tourism activities, although cultural tourism plays little or no meaningful role in their destination decision-making process. They also have shallow experiences; (5) serendipitous cultural tourists visit cultural attractions and have a deep experience even if at the beginning cultural tourism plays little or no role in the decision making of visiting a destination.

Serendipitous cultural tourists were firstly described by McKercher (2002). Fortunately, the cultural tourist represents an outlier. Cultural tourism factors play little or no role in the decision to visit a destination for this person, but have a profound experience when participating in cultural tourism (McKercher, 2002, p. 33). McKercher (2017) created a framework showing that the needs of tourists can be accommodated through a general-specific process. The cultural needs of serendipitous tourists seem to be general, because cultural tourism is not important in terms of their motivation. However, in some cases (e.g. Poland), it seems that fortunate tourists have certain cultural needs.

Studies show that serendipitous cultural tourists are rarely investigated (Morita & Johnston, 2018). Depending on the target content, they can be found at high frequencies. However, the portrait of serendipitous cultural tourists remains unclear in detail. Clarifying the portrait is important for cultural tourism marketers and destination marketing organizations as marketers need to understand and anticipate causes and behaviors to successfully identify the appropriate marketing mix (Croes & Semrad, 2015; Morita, 2014; Vong, 2016). The scarcity of studies remains insufficient to understand the serendipitous

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