

Viewpoint

Tourism and Cultural Identity: Multi-Aspect Perspectives

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Abstract Tourism as an industry serving as an axis of development has always brought many speculations. Opposing this approach undermines the culture and cultural identity of society. For this reason, various perspectives have focused on the nature of travel and tourism. However, cultural identity requires more in-depth analyses. The path taken so far cannot serve as a touchstone for verifying relevant activities. Thus, a profound review of the nature of tourism, cultural identity, and the objectives of both and their visions, engenders the perspective that tourism and culture are inherent human phenomena that both search for the human's identity nature. Tourism and culture have roots in human's spiritual values that warrant rethinking so that they meet their proper stations. Therefore, in respect of various aspects of the relationship between tourism and cultural identity, some consistency can be established between the two by providing a context and creating a different perspective on cultural identity and tourism.

Keywords *Tourism, Culture, Cultural identity.*

Introduction and Problem Statement As a social and cultural behavior in the tourism industry, travel serves as a service activity regarded as one of the development factors, especially in the economic domains of different countries. Making higher incomes from tourism boosts the development of this industry. Hence, most tourism studies have investigated the economic aspects and impacts of the development of this industry. However, they do not consider the main aspects of tourism which may thus neglect the main nature of tourism. In the first stage, tourism is a cultural phenomenon. Previously, tourism has been economically investigated. It has not focused on how it may serve as leverage for cultural development. For this, tourism is mainly viewed as a factor that harms culture. In this connection, few perspectives consider tourism as a factor in the prosperity and development of societies. A culture study elucidates that societies of different cultures have unique cultural identities. Tangible and non-tangible cultural heritages are seen as tourist attractions that the presence of tourists may destroy, thus having a social-cultural identity be undermined. Hence, many oppose tourism and view it as what would appear to undermine cultural identity. This is because its negative consequences are far higher than its economic and positive

impacts. As a result, tourism studies go beyond economic aspects and seek to investigate culture. In this connection, in response to negative tourism impacts on cultural domains, intercultural communications are viewed as factors that form cultural interaction among societies, as this could improve the negative impacts of tourism. On the other hand, the term "sustainability" has been introduced to improve tourism and eliminate its negative impacts. In other words, it will not be accepted if tourism does not promise sustainability. An analysis of tourism studies tends to concern the apparent form of the problem rather than remove its negative consequences. In this connection, the questions raised are: Does tourism engender harm considering the multi-aspect relationship between tourism and cultural identity? Furthermore, can effective measures be taken to improve the relationship between tourism and cultural identity?

Structure of Criticism

Despite a superficial approach to tourism and the limited impacts of the economic development of this industry, we are still witnessing the destructive impacts of the presence of tourists on the cultural identity of the host society. Thus, this is a concern that warrants contemplation because the unplanned presence of tourists in a region, on the one hand,

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and the unawareness of the host society of the tourism environment and tourists' visits, on the other hand, will cause destruction and harm to tourism. It should be stated, however, that in the modern industrial world, travel does not merely denote movement from one place to another. The previous superficial criteria cannot be used to measure tourism because this matter requires more investigation and analysis and in-depth approaches. In other words, there is a need for a profound rethinking of concepts. The cultural identity of society represents the culture in the flesh and skin of that society. In this connection, outward components are used to express it [culture] in an inward form. Thus, in this approach, we are dealing with a society that introduces itself; now, which cultural component helps introduce it? This component is the same unique cultural identity. On the one hand, tourism lies at the heart of inherent human nature. Search, discovery, and looking for meanings, meanings of life, spirituality, and freedom are the very inward human concepts that unfold in the context of travel. Now, if travel and, in its industrial sense, tourism revolves around its primary nature, it refers to its search for values and is founded on the path of learning and meaning-seeking; for this, travel is a religious movement that brings forth freedom and recovery of energy for the human being. Hence, as for those who aspire to travel, we are witnessing searchers of identity who look for awareness, an action that lies with those values. Thus, in this realm of analysis, we are dealing with two components: culture, value, learning, spirituality, seeking and finding meanings, and identity-based on the innate human essence. According to this approach, tourism is what characterizes our identity; it is what assists cultures, respects values, and seeks to introduce them. For this, society honors and respects its unique cultural identity because it is culturally associated with it. On the other hand, some travel to learn about these cultures. The interesting point here is tourism, which can contribute to and strengthen the regional cultural identity. If people of a region have a sense of cultural belonging, love, and honor their cultural identity, then tourism can be viewed as an influential factor in promoting that regional culture. When the entry of tourists to a region engenders the sense that

traditional culture and values are popular and have followers all around, that will be considered a desirable factor for the cultural identity; this will occur when differences are seen as unique than a weak point. In this regard, many measures can be regarded as the basis of work to strengthen cultural identity and tourism. One of the essential perspectives is the research results by planning researchers who have developed a collaborative approach to the local society's planning, together with the transfer of wealth and distribution of economic incomes into the local society. This is the most primitive and maybe the most notable impact of tourism development in a society that considers culturing a significant factor of development. That said, the unique culture of the local society is seen as an honorable symbol for the promotion of cultural identity. Cultural identity as a cultural identifier of an individual and society unfolds in the direction of awareness-raising and culture-building. Today, different social media and networks can contribute to this important thing. Use of oral history, the conduct of field research of interview formats and discourses, making documents and advertisements to promote and strengthen cultural identity, greater familiarity with the history and civilization of a region, holding festivals, fairs, national prizes, and epitomes of the cultural identity of various areas of Iran are the measures that can significantly contribute to the promotion of cultural identity and more significant enrichment of the Iranian civilization and culture through the host community, organizations, officials and stakeholders.

In sum, consistency can be established between the two by using a new platform and an approach to the relationship between tourism and cultural identity. Human identity has roots in the human's innate, which is the cradle for forming culture and tourism. Modern society takes a step in the path of search for its own; thus, by looking deeper into the philosophy of travel, on the one hand, and searching for a cultural identity that is unique and attractive for those who observe it, tourism requires consistency between the nature of tourism and culture, with identity formed inside them both. Tourism and culture are thus the two phenomena that work to introduce and reveal identities.

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