

Contextualizing the issue of touristification in Asia

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to intend to contextualize touristification with a focus on Asia. It argues that touristification in Asia extends beyond physical transformation and is used as a socio-political mechanism by the state and communities alike. This study aims to broaden the discussions on touristification by noting how the issue of authenticity and state intervention is approached in Asia.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper is based on literature review, sourced from academic material discussing touristification and the influence of tourism.

Findings – Aside from undertaking physical changes, states in Asia adopt a socio-political angle in the commercialization of culture for tourism so that the culture that is presented to tourists is aligned to its national image. The construction of culture and narration of history for tourism branding predominate touristification in Asia. Conversely, minority culture had also used cultural touristification in asserting their identity, as can be seen in South Thailand and Bali, Indonesia. Also, hybridization and recreation of cultural activities in Asia contribute to the evolving debate on authenticity in tourism within Asia.

Practical implications – The paper suggests the implication of state intervention in branding and commodification of tourism among minority communities in Asia.

Originality/value – The paper contributes to an extended discussion on touristification by contextualizing the issue within Asia.

Keywords Cultural hybridization, Authenticity, Touristification, Statism

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction

During the past two to three decades, Asia witnessed a phenomenal growth in its international and domestic tourism that had left strong touristification imprints on destinations. The change is often seen as a form of gentrification brought about by the economic transformation of the urban façade. The influence, seen as a form of touristification, encompasses physical and more subtle changes. Interestingly, the changes occurring because of touristification is often seen as a form of gentrification. Describable as the changing façade of urban settlements as economic transformation pushed for change, the concept of touristification in Asian context is more complex. It can be described as the physical and cultural impact experienced because of the internal and external forces of tourism, leading to various interpretations.

As a growing contributor to the economies of Asia, the tourism sector had expanded considerably in the region as financial and regulatory barriers impeding its growth slowly evaporate (Tisdell and Wilson, 2012; Managi, 2015). Consequently, tourism is bringing in changes, both in its tangible and intangible form. Scholarship on the influencing factors of tourism in Asia are generally negatively critical (Picard and Wood, 1997; Yeoh and Kong, 2012; Suntikul and Jachna, 2013; Khan, 2015); however, the issue had also been broadened to include the positive impacts, especially in reducing poverty and increasing the quality of life in Asia.

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Moreover, the disparate political structure and colonial legacy in Asia contributes to the complexity of touristification in Asia. The inflow of migrant populations into colonized countries brings into conflict cultural identity with the native population. Meanwhile, political doctrine clashes with minority cultural identity in countries with strong statist tendencies. As such, touristification in Asia remains vague and needs to be explored further, especially with regards to the infusion of state politics in tourism development. Hence, this paper intends to contextualize the discussions surrounding the issue. To achieve this objective, a selective literature review on scholarly articles exploring the various facades of touristification in Asia was conducted using Google Scholar, Scopus database and printed material from university libraries in Malaysia. Online and physical material sourcing were undertaken as some journals, books and material especially in the Malay and Indonesian languages are only available offline. As the term touristification yields limited material, key points were unearthed from literature concerning the impacts and influence of tourism.

2. Touristification

2.1 The concepts of touristification

Touristification is often discussed from the angle of gentrification in literature (Gotham, 2005; Cocola-Gant, 2015). It is described as the population displacement of original inhabitants with new settlers who are drawn to the area as it becomes commodified for tourism (Sequera and Nofre, 2018; Cocola-Gant, 2015). Predominantly centered on the West, literature generally considers touristification as neo-liberal urbanism with a dominant market force, while state intervention is centered on urban planning (Ashworth and Page, 2011). Touristification is often explored based on its outcomes, for instance the public resistance against the transformation of urban environments in Paris (Colomb and Novy, 2016). Similarly, the emergence of civic protest in post-communist Prague is also noted as a response on the physical transformation of the historic core of the city for tourism (Pixová and Sládek, 2017). Key literature themes on touristification in the West are described in Table 1. Notably, the emerging themes focusses on reactions related to touristification as a form of commercial gentrification. Arguably, touristification in the West is seen from a linear frame, focused on gentrification and urban renewal while the cultural and political influence are sidestepped.

2.2 The approach of touristification in Asia

In the Asian context, touristification is slanted towards the cultural and physical changes through tourism, with visible presence of the state apparatus. For instance, the role played by the state in Singapore in repurposing Chinatown and Little India is a good example of the utilization of touristification for socio-political need (Henderson, 2008; Wang and Bramwell, 2012; Yeoh and Kong, 2012; Katahenggam, 2019). The maturity of tourism in the Western

Table 1 Themes of touristification in the West

	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Literature</i>
1	Gentrification/ physical change	Evans (2002), Lees (2012), Wellner and Landau (2014), Mendes (2017), Cegot and Cegot (2018), Renau (2018), Sequera and Nofre (2018)
2	Overtourism	Dodds and Butler (2010), Opillard (2016), dos Anjos and Kennell (2019), Novy (2019)
3	Resistance	Lypson (2009), Opillard (2016), Sequera and Nofre (2018), Novy (2019)
4	Commercialization	Gotham (2005), Herrera <i>et al.</i> (2007), Mendes (2017), Sequera and Nofre (2018), González-Pérez (2020)

hemisphere (Jørgensen, Law and King, 2018), along with the decreased dependence on tourism ensured the cultural and political impact of touristification to remain low (Liu, 2014). Meanwhile, tourism is a rapidly growing industry in Asia (Lin and Fu, 2017), contributed by the increased political stability and improved global connectivity. Arguably, the growth of tourism in Asia can be attributed to touristification through physical, social and cultural adaptation of destinations to be more appealing for tourism (Caust and Vecco, 2016; Bui *et al.*, 2017).

2.2.1 Physical touristification. A prime example of physical transformation can be seen in Singapore where the state-driven urban renewal efforts are both pragmatic development-led initiative and efforts to spatially create an identity for the city-state (Yuen and Hock, 2001; Ooi, 2017). Touristification in Singapore constitutes two types of changes: physical transformation and identity building (Phua, Berkowitz and Gagermeier, 2012; Ooi, 2017). While vast expanses of the city-state were gentrified with new housing projects and town planning, the physical transformation due to touristification is more evident in the designated heritage enclave (Yuen and Hock, 2001; Henderson, 2008).

As physical change, gentrification in Singapore followed a trajectory dissimilar to trends observed in the West in which social-class transformation occur with middle class neighborhoods being replaced with the working class (Caulfield, 1994; Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Cocola-Gant, 2018). Nevertheless, with the outflow of population from the heritage enclave, following the expansion of new housing and commercial development all over Singapore, the state engaged in efforts to transform the enclave by repurposing the heritage shophouses for commercialization. Apart from commercial reasons, enclaves were designated as ethnoscaapes to fit into the spatial narration of the city-state, labelled as Chinatown, Little India and Kampong Glam. Hence, the physical transformation arising from the urban renewal had been repurposed into ethnic enclaves for Singapore to tap into its tourism potentials and political spatialization. As noted by Yuen (2006) and Henderson (2008), Singapore used physical gentrification for the creation of its unique branding and image. This is described as the “politics of culture” (Picard and Wood, 1997, p. 203), where culture is transformed into a political tool for state-building and tourism. However, attempts to reconstruct and re-culturize heritage cities for ethno-tourism may prove futile when authenticity of the reconstructed product and culture are questioned, as the changes are geared to fit the heritage enclave as a commercial extension of the larger city, as seen in Chinatown, Singapore (Mathew, 2018).

2.2.2 Cultural touristification. Touristification as a cultural change is described as cultural transformation from the influence of tourism (Bhandari, 2008; Picard, 2008; Husa, 2019). Although touristification as gentrification is driven by external influences, Picard (2003, 2008) argues that both internal and external forces are involved in the transformation of culture as a result of tourism. In their study on Bali, Picard and Wood (1997) and Picard (1999, 2017) noted that the commonly perceived Balinese culture had been developed as a result of tourism. In effect, the Balinese culture is an amalgamation of various local traditions, presented as a tourism product, sidestepping the issue of authenticity that often plague constructed culture (Cohen, 1988; Hong *et al.*, 2016). In this regard, the creation of a Balinese culture serves a broader political purpose, aligning disparate culture into one marketable product alongside various other elements of the Indonesia culture to create a regional cultural identity.

The construction of culture and the process of new cultural invention or renegotiation for tourism had long been explored (Cohen, 1988; Adams, 1997; Picard and Wood, 1997; Dunbar-Hall, 2001; Medina, 2003; Picard, 2003). Generally, the agent of change is determined by the governance doctrine of the country (Peters and Pierre, 2016). Within Asia, the role of the state is more prominent than the impact of commercial interests alone. In the case of Indonesia, state-led initiatives to spread tourism in the 1970s to the more remote provinces have had a profound impact on the Toraja community (Jong, 2013). The

Torajan culture was packaged with identifiable themes such as “funeral parties” and “dancing warriors”, which were extensively studied academically (Nooy-Palm, 2014; Connell, 2018). However, the thematization of culture for tourism created a sense of cultural objectification where the Torajan community identified themselves as being more “cultured” than other ethnic communities around the region (Adams, 1997).

The main theme emerging from the concept of touristification in Asia is the varying involvement of the state. The state plays a pervasive role in Asia ranging from catering to its socio-political needs to the commercialization of cultural activities.

3. Touristification and the state

Seen beyond the commodification of culture, touristification also serves as a branding image to meet the socio-political needs of certain nations (Ooi, 2011). As a form of spatial construction, touristification combines urban development with identity politics, apparent in states grappling with multicultural identity with attempts to solidify specific cultural identity (Phua *et al.*, 2012; Ooi, 2017). For instance, countries striving for a more insular identity guide the touristification process to be in line with the national political doctrine (Wang and Ap, 2013; Wu, 2015), while certain nations such as Indonesia utilize its state mechanism to establish localized identities as part of its touristification process.

3.1 Imposition of state-driven narrative for tourism

The idea is often explored in China, where the centralization doctrine influences decisions on the redevelopment of cities for tourism. This is more prominent in cities that houses sizeable minorities with cultural and religious differences that are far apart from the majority Han-Chinese. Local religious, cultural sites, as well as entire traditional villages in Xinjiang, are contracted by Han-Chinese tourism organizations where Chinese-styled commercial entities would envelop the said sites (Dawut, 2016). The rampant commercialization isolates the ethnic minority site as an odd attraction set within surroundings that mirrors the image of Chinese capitalism.

Similarly, the historical narrative of the city of Melaka in Malaysia is often a subject of political discourse and national identity building (Worden, 2003; Blackburn, 2012; Lai and Ooi, 2015a, 2015b). Touristification in this regard is a construction aided by the state in chronicling a historical discourse that fits into the national narrative. For instance, Lai and Ooi (2015a, 2015b) noted how in the revitalization of Melaka's heritage core for tourism, the state decided to replicate the Sultan's Palace and establish various Islamic and Malay historical museums amidst colonial architecture as the A-Famosa and The Stadthuys. Moreover, the physical transformation of Melaka's heritage enclave is also notably state-led with the placement of the Menara Taming Sari, modelled after the Kris, which is synonymous with Malay cultural identity (Lai and Ooi, 2015a). The historical narrative of Malaysia presented during the Melaka River Cruise portrays the idealized historical image of Malaysia for tourists (Lai and Ooi, 2015a, 2015b).

Another quirk of the influence of state-driven tourism imagery can be seen in the adaptation of cultural practices alien to a community or criticized previously as a tourist attraction (González Martínez, 2016; Verdini, Frassoldati and Nolf, 2017; Rey Pérez and González Martínez, 2018). This is evident in the influence of street art, particularly in George Town, Malaysia and later adopted in Phuket, Thailand (Liang, 2017). The introduction of street arts in the form of murals and graffiti is initiated by the government, rationalized as fitting into the multicultural melting pot of George Town that is receptive to newer ideas. Initially criticized as clouding the visual authenticity of the city, the street art of George Town, particularly “Children on Bicycle” had morphed into a tourism symbol of George Town (Spencer, 2013). Moreover, the success attributed to brand “George Town” with the street art mural had been emulated elsewhere, particularly in Phuket's Old Town. In this sense, the normalization

of once-criticized practices is a gradual transformation, where acceptance within the local community occurs as the practice gains accreditation and recognition on a wider scale (Cohen and Cohen, 2012). Nevertheless, the normalization of new cultural practices that had led to George Town being labelled as a hipstertown had reignited the debate of the identity of the city as a heritage city (Ferrarese, 2019).

Looking from another lens, repurposing remnants of the past for tourism can also be interpreted as a negative strain from touristification (Merican *et al.*, 2018). Oftentimes, the revival of architectural structure or cultural practices from the colonial days are criticized as normalizing colonialization. On one hand, independent states tend to portray the period of colonialization in a negative light, especially when the political dynamism of the country revolves around independence era politics (Elias and Rethel, 2016). For instance, the George Town Festival in Malaysia which celebrates the rich cultural history of Penang is being criticized for normalizing and celebrating the British colonial legacy in Malaysia (Merican *et al.*, 2018). In addition to this, the bicentennial celebration of the founding of Singapore observed in 2019 is criticized in a similar fashion. The event was intended to be a celebration of Singapore as a nation-state with a historical identity that predates its founding as a British colonial outpost (Boh, 2019). However, the narrative and the branding image of Singapore focused on the colonial history, especially in tourism-related promotional campaign (Crisp, 2018). This angle of touristification represents a more subtle conflict involving historical and cultural narrative aligned with political dogma of a state against commodification of tourism products. Mamdani (2012) and Shahmsul (2012) recognized this conflict as a postcolonial effect of colonial knowledge, regarded as revisionist power of the British to reconstitute local oral and historical knowledge to reflect European viewpoint (Cohn, 1996).

Interestingly, touristification is also used as a method to establish minority identity against centralization of culture (Bräuchler, 2018). As a response towards centralization of cultural identity for Thailand in tourism promotion, South Thailand's provinces had increasingly been promoting its Malay-Muslim identity especially with a focus on its religious establishments such as madrassas (Jory, 1999) and halal tourism (Nurdiansyah, 2016). Here, touristification plays a duality of role. In one instance, the centralized promotion of seaside resort tourism in Phuket and Koh Sa Mui brings with it the commodified touristic culture where the impact of tourism is immersive. In another instance, the local minorities in the southern provinces attempt to create an alternative image for tourism focusing on their ethnoreligious identity to assert their placement against the constructed image on tourism in Thailand (Askew and Cohen, 2004).

At the core of politicization of tourism is the notion of power (Nunkoo, 2017). The response of the minorities is essentially the outcome of political wrestling for power against the influence leveraged by state authorities even when multiple stakeholders are engaged (Keyes, 2019). Although central tourism authorities are engaged with local stakeholders, their localization effort is seen to be inadequate as the local communities have a different interpretation of their identity. Nevertheless, democratization of societies and the leverage accorded by the state influences the display of power by the minority communities. In the case of Thailand, the state tolerates a parallel narrative for tourism in its southern provinces as part of its effort to contain the secessionist movement, although state scrutiny in religious promotion is high (Chalk, 2017). On another note, the construction of the alternate image for ethnoreligious tourism in South Thailand transcends regional borders, solidifying their sense of "otherness" and social cohesion with similar communities in northern Malaysia and Sumatra (Liow, 2004; Brown, 2013).

The connection between democratic leverage with identity building through touristification is more apparent in the Asian context. Notably, the extent to which the state is involved in touristification of cultural identity at a regional level is dependent on the state governance doctrine, of either a more statist stance or devolution (Peters and Pierre, 2016). Looking at China, the touristification of local culture is apparent as its diversity is increasingly used for the growth of domestic tourism (Yang and Wall, 2016). The sense of otherness in an

otherwise politically monolithic nation is a major draw for domestic tourism in China (Yang and Wall, 2009); hence, the efforts by the state in allowing for the depiction of local identities (Henders, 2004; Abrahams, 2015). In effect, the centralization of identity imposed since its founding had seen recent resurgence of local cultural identification, tied to economic liberalization of the country (Henders, 2004; Zhou, 2016). Nevertheless, the state contains the increasing ethnic identification by tying the regional identity to prospects of cultural commoditization for domestic tourism (Henders, 2004). For instance, placards and signages denoting halal eateries are periodically removed even though the area is frequented by international tourists (Lock, 2019). Acts that are interpreted as detrimental to the notion of a state with singular socialist core value identity warrants such action and leverage is hardly provided (Brown and O'Brien, 2019).

3.2 What is authentic?

The physical and cultural transformation through touristification leads to the debate of tourism authenticity. The concept of authenticity in tourism had progressed from various forms, where early debates focused on the retention of originality through rigid preservation (Cohen, 1988; Theobald, 1998) to the more subjective outlook (Cohen and Cohen, 2012; González Martínez, 2017) and tolerating hybridization (Steurer, 2013; Hassan, 2014; Yang, 2014). As such, authenticity in touristification needs to weigh in the sense of attachment of local residents with the demands of commercialization of tourism (Husa, 2019).

The creation of new byproducts of heritage tourism such as street arts raises the question of authenticity in touristification. Based on a conservative interpretation of authenticity, the intrusion of new elements, for instance street art that does not blend in with the heritage environment is arguably contentious. However, the debate and acceptance of authenticity had evolved. The demands of tourism allow for newer inclusion to be gradually considered authentic if society continuously identifies its placement against the original narrative, described as hot authentication (Cohen and Cohen, 2012).

Husa (2019) considered the hybridization of cultural items that are produced for tourism in the hill tribe region of Thailand. Drawing on the concept of mutual gaze (Maoz, 2006), local communities would react to commodification of their culture and touristification by either resisting or cooperation (Maoz, 2006; Larsen and Urry, 2011). Noting that tourists would buy souvenirs and mementoes of authentic culture during their tours, souvenir makers responded in kind by producing items that are expected by the tourists. In this instance, touristification is interpreted to be a form of cooperation between local communities and tourists, where communities are willing to produce generic souvenirs that are assumed to be authentic by tourists such as hill tribe jewelry, wood carvings or amulets even though they are not part of the community culture.

The willingness of communities to compromise and cooperate in hybridizing their culture for tourism can be linked with the benefits of cultural economy (Scott, 2010). Opposition against the cultural impact from touristification can be expressed as both "inside" (cultural values) and "outside" (economic values) (Picard, 2008, p. 158). Acceptance and compromises are inherently made when the changes of cultural values can be transmuted into economic values (Picard, 2008). Nevertheless, touristification of culture in Asia is not without its backlash, even though resistance is often discussed in the Western context, where visible actions have been taken by the state such as Barcelona imposing limits to the number of tourists (Plush, 2017).

3.3 The protest against touristification

The intrusive forces of tourism in its negative light is often felt in more conservative societies, linked with the entry of capitalist business ventures based on their cultural activities (Bloch, 2017). A prime example of the intrusive form of touristification is Thailand, where community

acceptance of uncivil behavior associated with alcohol-fueled nightlife consumption in more conservative parts of the country faces a backlash, even in the form of violence (Stapleton, 2014). Rising number of backpackers and travelers settling in Thailand for extended period is increasingly seen as a cultural intrusion and xenophobic cries are often heard (Stapleton, 2014). Similar backlash was observed as local religious and cultural icons are absorbed into products for tourist consumption. As an example, Bali has to grapple with tourist intrusion into temples, performing sacrilegious acts on venerated temple icons (Adams, 2019; Chong, 2020).

Similarly, the belief that cultural practices in Bali are being diluted had been noted by Chong, (2020) in his study among the local population in Bali. This is aggravated by the fact that overtourism had allowed for the practices of the visitors being increasingly accepted as the norm by the host population especially in areas receiving high number of tourist (Chong, 2017, 2020; Markwick, 2018). Dilution of cultural practices due to touristification brings in the debate of identity politics in Bali. The unique position of Bali as a Hindu island within a predominantly Muslim majority country had solidified its identity, asserted as *Ajeng Bali* or Baliness (Allen and Palermo, 2005; Picard, 2008; Chong, 2020). As laid out previously, the creation of a Balinese identity is attributed to touristification (Picard, 1999). Nevertheless, once an idealized image of Balinese culture had been solidified, acceptance of newer norms is viewed as a threat (Picard, 2017). As such, concerted efforts are afoot in Bali with the co-option of the media and community organizations to preserve the cultural practices of Bali and assert the island's otherness against the Indonesian polity (Allen and Palermo, 2005).

Another interesting parallel that can be observed is the response of Hong Kong against the upsurge in the use of Mandarin as part of the influence of increased tourism from mainland China (Coca, 2018). Although the adaptation of Mandarin includes factors beyond tourism, the normalization of the usage of Mandarin in lieu of written Cantonese in advertising targeting mainland Chinese tourists is viewed as another threat to the Hong Kong identity by the locals (Coca, 2018; Li, 2019). In effect, the movement for localism, the push for Hong Kong identity in its usage of Cantonese is also one of the factors leading up to the rebellion in Hong Kong (Chan, 2016).

4. Asian touristification in context

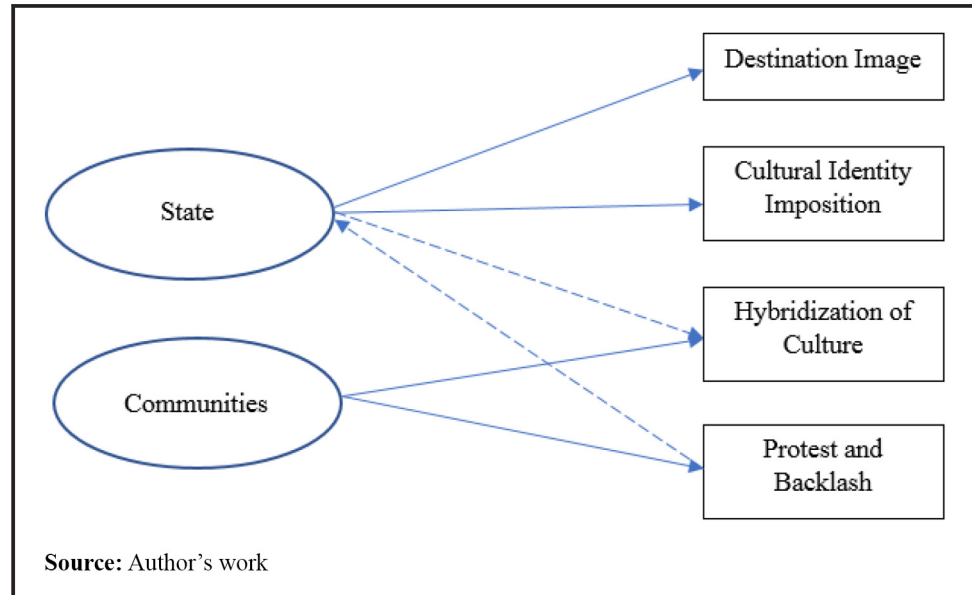
The plurality of culture, religious diversity as well as the predisposition to statist forms of governance in Asia presents a complicated image for a study on touristification. Several themes can be developed when touristification in Asia is contextualized, which is depicted in Figure 1.

As opposed to the Western context where commercialization of tourism destination drives touristification, the state and the communities are the primary agents for touristification in Asia. The state can use tourism to assert its objectives, whereas communities are also willing to hybridize certain elements of culture in response to the demands of tourism. Separately, minority communities are driven to create a backlash against state ideological imposition by using the external exposure provided by tourism.

4.1 Commercialization of tourism

Viewed from the viewpoint of commercialization of tourism, a direct oversight by the government allows increased marketability and brand image of tourist destinations as evidenced in Singapore. The same is observable in China where the state focusses its investments in selected localities for the promotion of tourism, allowing for increased conservation of historic towns under pressure from development (Zhang *et al.*, 2015; Verdini *et al.*, 2017). Yet, the roles played by the state in touristification may waver with democratic

Figure 1 Contextualizing touristification in Asia



leverage, as in George Town it increasingly takes on a more detached role, allowing for increased localization especially involving cultural activity and its promotions (Poon, 2016).

4.2 Authenticity in touristification

Increased popularity of tourist destinations had seen unregulated modification of traditional buildings for commercial uses (Lovell and Bull, 2017; Lovell and Bull, 2018). Nevertheless, in destinations where the state takes on a more active role, the concept of authenticity receives more attention. The state in China, through museums revive traditional craftsmanship for tourist consumption by providing necessary funding and expertise, that might be lacking among rural communities (Fu *et al.*, 2015). Arguably, objective authenticity is comprised with staged authenticity as elements to be represented and imbibed with the political input of the state as well (Cohen and Cohen, 2012).

In the West, the awareness on authenticity is high, with the involvement of academia and civil societies in safeguarding the architectural heritage. This contrast with Asia where touristification is both cultural and physical. Coupled with the willingness of communities to hybridize culture for tourist consumption, authenticity becomes a delicate subject. In this instance, a strong presence of the state allows for greater awareness among communities of the significance of retaining their cultural traits. Moreover, the idea of a community-based tourism, using available cultural traits of local communities remains a new concept in Asia, requiring the assistance of overseeing agencies (Kontogeorgopoulos *et al.*, 2014).

4.3 Democratization of governance

The pervasive role of the state in touristification in Asia is apparent when democratization in Asia is considered. The EIU Democracy Index had consistently ranked Asia as being average when it comes to democratic freedom in governance although this is improving annually (Tamang and Bakken, 2017). Arguably, the touristification in Asia can be linked with development state politics prevalent in Asia (Kumar, 2018; Woo, 2018). The all-encompassing role played by governments to develop their countries extends into tourism when there are potentials to be tapped. This leads to the debate over the extent of the

involvements of state in touristification, either acting as regulators or actively engage in using tourism for state development. Although the case of China is often presented as a success story of state intervention in touristification for the purpose of domestic tourism growth, the central government is slowly taking a backseat and allowing for increased localization (Wu, 2015; Verdini *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, in the pursuit of development state politics, the tendency to favor a dominant identity to be marketed for tourism risks alienating alternative voice of minorities, who may choose to counter the narrative with their own imagery.

5. Limitations and conclusion

Although this paper intends to contextualize touristification in Asia, its geographical definition is vast, with various cultural, linguistic and political background. Against this background, this paper focusses on South East Asia and China as a microcosm of Asia, due to its plurality of culture and political systems.

There are various issues linked with touristification in Asia, ranging from hybridization of culture to preferential treatment for single cultural identity, the issue can be contextualized based on the intensity of state involvement. Essentially, touristification in this region is a natural process of commodification of tourism. As tourism expands, the state steps into the fray with investments into urban renewal while achieving its political ideals in the ensuring touristification. In the process, awareness on cultural authenticity increases as the state provides the necessary funding for preservation for tourism branding. As for minority communities, the intervention of the state brings in both perks from tourism and a resurgence of traditional identities. Nevertheless, increased democratization of Asian societies would foresee a change in the role of the state in touristification. Yet, a resurgent sympathy for state dominated models of governance, aided by the success of China is also apparent. Leveraging on an increasingly interconnected world and more information available to prospective tourists, the changing approach of the state in touristification, especially in cultural construction warrants a future study.

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