

## **Cultural tourism impacts and place meanings: Focusing on the value of domestic tourism**

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### **Abstract**

People develop emotional bonds and meanings with the places they live in and visit. This is commonly referred to as place attachment, sense of place, or neighbourhood or community attachment. To ensure that tourism results in positive, community-wide social impacts, tourism planning processes should align visitor experiences and local inhabitants' place meanings. In this chapter, I make a case for focusing on domestic tourism, in particular the visitation of tourism sites by people living nearby these places (dubbed 'local visitors'), to build back the tourism economy in a more sustainable way after the COVID-19 pandemic. During pandemic times, domestic cultural tourism could: (i) contribute to local visitors' place attachment and well-being; (ii) sustain at least part of the tourism economy; (iii) provide insights into how tourism should be organized so as to avoid future conflict between local inhabitants and external (international) visitors when the global tourism economy re-starts.

Keywords: Domestic Tourism; Visitor well-being; Place attachment; COVID-19 pandemic; Cultural Tourism and place meanings; Sustainable Tourism Development

### **Introduction**

Local visitors (people engaging in acts of domestic tourism close to their place of residence, in other words, local inhabitants who visit tourist sites in their immediate vicinity) should play an important role in making the cultural tourism sector more equitable and sustainable. To improve tourism-related outcomes, local inhabitants should be satisfied with how tourism is

developed in their surroundings. Therefore, their perceptions of the sector's impacts, and the place meanings they associate with nearby tourism attractions, matter if tourism is to contribute to an area's liveability and sustainability. In fact, local visitors' perceptions of the positive impacts of cultural tourism can influence their support for tourism development and, ultimately, their place attachment and well-being (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Ramkissoon, 2020; Ramkissoon, in press). Widely noted positive impact perceptions of tourism that could generate the support of local inhabitants for the sector include talent enhancement, increased self-sufficiency, and reduced labour exploitation and economic leakage following on from engagement in tourism activities (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014; Wang & Mirehie, in this volume).

However, in addition to focusing on positive tourism-related impact perceptions of local inhabitants, several recent studies have investigated deleterious visitor impacts at tourism sites, in particular within the context of the heated debate on overtourism (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Goodwin, 2017; Nepal & Nepal, 2020; Phi, 2020). Scholars continuously debate on how to strike the balance between positive impacts of visitation and optimizing visitor satisfaction, mostly focusing on fostering sustainable visitor behaviour at nature-based attractions (Ramkissoon et al. 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; Sæþórsdóttir & Hall, 2020). Relatively recently, researchers have been calling for more research on responsible visitor behaviours at cultural sites to also align this sub-sector of tourism with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Hassan & Ramkissoon, 2017; Ramkissoon, 2016; Seyfi et al., 2020). Considering the often-strong place meanings that residents associate with (urban) cultural sites and the potentially conflicting situations that can arise because of tourism development, this attention to visitor behaviour and modes of cultural tourism development has long been overdue.

Until COVID-19 was declared a global health pandemic in March 2020, tourism consumption in urban destinations had become increasingly popular (UNWTO, 2020), leading to the contentious impact perceptions described above. Several observers saw overtourism as an imminent threat to cultural heritage especially in situations of extreme overcrowding in popular sites (Adie et al., 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). These authors called for immediate action from policy makers, scholars and other actors such as NGOs to mitigate negative tourist impacts. Specifically, within this broader debate, studies looked into residents' perceptions of cultural tourism impacts (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019; Wang & Mirehie, in this volume) and their support for cultural heritage tourism development (Megeirhi et al., 2020). Several studies also zoomed in on tourists' perception of tourism impacts (Joo et al., 2019; Moyle et al., 2013). Yet, despite this scholarly attention, local inhabitants have not often been involved in urban cultural tourism development processes in practice, even though they have often been severely impacted by the negative consequences of tourism development. Feeling deprived of even a just share of revenues from tourism, and other impacts such as tourism commodification and exploitation of resources, can lead these inhabitants to become hostile and unsupportive of tourism. This has been evidenced by several examples of antagonistic behaviours of local inhabitants (Fan, 2020; Maa et al., 2020; Suharyanto et al., 2020). Therefore, it remains crucial that: (i) local inhabitants' views are considered for tourism to be developed in a sustainable and socially compatible manner; (ii) commodified tourist products and associated place meanings of visitors align as neatly as possible with those of inhabitants (Nunkoo et al., 2013).

What is lacking in the literature dealing with host-guest relations and sustainability is an understanding of how local (domestic) consumers can contribute to the cultural tourism sector so as to establish innovative tourism products that are paired with an equitable distribution of the revenues generated. Yet, focusing on local domestic visitors – i.e., local inhabitants who

visit tourism sites in their direct vicinity, who I describe as ‘local visitors’ in the remainder of this chapter – has clear analytical and practical value. By looking into local visitors’ impact perceptions and the place meanings they associate with local tourist attractions, the analytical gap between ‘residents’ and ‘tourists’ is bridged. As such, insights can be generated regarding how tourism should be organized so as to avoid clashes between hosts and (international) guests. For example, local visitors can contribute to enhancing place distinctiveness and awareness of culturally sensitive processes (Ramkissoon et al., 2018) by pushing for the communication about meaningful cultural attributes while making a case for not promoting images that can potentially be perceived as contentious. This, in turn, can influence local visitors’ support for tourism and contribute towards their and other tourists’ well-being and quality of life.

In this chapter, I use the context of place meanings to discuss how local visitors’ engagement in cultural tourism planning and development could contribute to establishing a more cohesive tourism sector, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. By doing so, in this chapter, I construct three arguments: (i) local visitors’ perceptions of the impacts of cultural tourism can influence their attachment to cultural tourism offerings in the current global health pandemic context, thereby strengthening their place bonds and ultimately their well-being; (ii) domestic tourism could sustain at least part of the tourism economy that is under severe pressure during the pandemic; (iii) attention to local visitors’ place meanings associated with tourism attractions in their surroundings can help generate insights into how tourism should be organized so as to avoid future conflict between residents and external (international) visitors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has evidenced the need to promote the domestic tourism market and support tourism dependent communities (Anup, 2021; Higgin-Desbiolles, 2020; Ramkissoon,

2020a). Attachment to place in such challenging times can further contribute to establishing meanings and sense of well-being. Consequently, domestic cultural tourism development has the potential to enhance community pride and contribute further to cultural and economic empowerment (Ramkissoon, 2016). This is evidenced in a study in Spain showing that domestic tourism can still generate 33% of pre COVID overnight stays (Altuntas & Gok, 2021). In this sense, the pandemic provides an unexpected opportunity to deal with adverse tourism impacts such as cultural commodification, labour exploitation, and economic leakages by specifically focusing on the needs and desires of local visitors. Ultimately, discussion of people's – tourists' and local inhabitants' – place meanings should be central when re-starting tourism-dependent economies in order to create a more equitable situation after the pandemic (Ramkissoon, 2020a). In this chapter, I build this argument by first zooming in on how the COVID-19 pandemic provides a window of opportunity to assess domestic cultural tourism impact perceptions, followed by a discussion on how domestic tourism could contribute to people's place attachment and well-being. I end with a conclusion in which I synthesize my call that focusing on domestic cultural tourism during the pandemic brings both psychological and economic advantages.

### **Local visitors' perceptions of cultural tourism impacts in post-pandemic times**

Cultural tourism consumption has brought a range of both positive and negative impacts, which have been well documented in literature (e.g., Smith & Richards, 2013). Researchers have centred their attention on visitor behaviour at cultural heritage sites to concurrently mitigate negative tourism impacts and provide an enriched cultural experience to consumers of heritage (Buonincontri et al., 2017). For example, on a destination level, scholars have showed heightened interest towards addressing overtourism in cities such as Barcelona, Venice and numerous world heritage sites (Van der Borg, in this volume). On an individual tourist

attraction level, Hassan and Ramkissoon (2020; 2021) have recommended the use of augmented reality in museums to enhance the visitor experience while also minimizing the negative impacts by controlling visitor flows. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has significantly reduced visitation to many of those sites through various restrictions, not to mention international border closures, aimed at limiting the spread of the virus (Ramkissoon, 2020a). Research on how local visitors' perceptions of impacts of cultural tourism could help to further develop and promote the domestic cultural tourism sector more sustainably is, therefore, particularly timely. This research can help promote cultural empowerment and hence reduce labour exploitation, and economic leakage. Promoting the domestic cultural sector can foster a sense of place attachment and pride, which can bring well-being benefits to local visitors but, in time, also to tourists from the outside by encountering a welcoming destination. This is an important and desired outcome sought by policy makers, destination marketers and managers as well as the local community and visitors in quest of an enriched cultural experience with minimal nuisance.

Ramkissoon (2020a) and Song et al. (2019) argue that most studies dealing with this balance between visitors' impacts and experiences have tended to focus on international tourists. Studies investigating perceptions of tourism impacts, among domestic cultural tourists visiting locations close to their place of residence and how these perceptions can influence their attitudes, behaviours and consumption of place are scant in literature. Yet, this has emerged as a fundamental issue to address, especially in the global health pandemic context, since this has generated the pressing desire for local stakeholders to keep their tourism sector going, especially in places which, prior to the pandemic, had a tourism-dependent economy with limited alternative economic opportunities. To deal with the restarting of tourism-dependent economies in a more equitable way than before the COVID-19 pandemic, scholars have been

recommending a multi-stakeholder engagement approach (Ramkissoon et al., 2020a; 2020b; Ramkissoon et al., 2020) where several actors, including residents but also local (domestic) visitors play an active role in revitalizing local tourism businesses (Atlutas & Gok, 2021) and promote residents' empowerment (Aleshinloye et al., 2021).

Local visitors' perceptions of the impacts of cultural tourism may include cultural exchanges, personal and community benefits, enhanced knowledge, and reviving memories of the past. Several studies show that the perceived positive impacts can revitalize arts and culture in the community, thereby fostering cultural empowerment (Mostwete & Lacey, 2015; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010a; 2010b; Nunkoo et al., 2013; Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2011). This explicit awareness of the interesting things that their direct surroundings have to offer, and the recognition that (cultural) tourism is valuable also to them in this regard, however, may have been neglected by the local visitors themselves in normal times. In challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic, local visitors may become more conscious of the value and meanings associated to the cultural offerings in their direct daily surroundings and may be more likely to understand how these contribute to a better quality of life (Kim et al., 2013; Gursoy et al., 2002; Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2014; 2018).

Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided a window of opportunity for behavioural change at different levels (Ramkissoon, 2020b; Ramkissoon, in press) among community members and businesses, to respond to the health emergency and its associated vulnerabilities including the mental well-being and quality of life of local inhabitants. Studies suggest that attachment to place settings can generate a sense of well-being and contribute to better health and wellness in societies by enhancing community pride and encouraging re-visitation to contribute to the economy (Majeed & Ramkissoon, 2020; Ramkissoon, 2020a; Townsend et al., 2018). Not many studies have looked at how local visitors' place attachment in a time of

crisis can help support their domestic cultural tourism sector and help sustain livelihoods, with a just balance between visitation and protection of cultural sites. Local visitors' place attachment can avoid an over-exploitation of resources associated with the commodification of culture. In this context, I argue that place attachment forms an important concept that can help us make sense of how focusing on domestic visitors can contribute to developing a more equitable and sustainable tourism sector after the pandemic.

### **Place attachment as a main concept to understanding people-place bonds**

People develop emotional bonds with places. This emotional bond between people and place is commonly known as place attachment but is also commonly referred to as sense of place, and neighbourhood or community attachment. Place attachment originates from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1962; Bowlby, & Ainsworth, 2013) depicting the infant-mother bond which develops into other social relationships over time. The concept reflects that similar emotional binding processes happen between people and the places they live in and visit. The common definition of place attachment is the emotional bonding between people and place (Ramkissoon et al., 2012) where the meanings people create may often be immersed in values and feelings (Jiang et al., 2017; Kyle et al., 2004). Tourists and local inhabitants alike associate meanings with tourism settings, thereby contributing to establishing an attachment to place (positive or negative). These place attachments are relevant to our discussion on impacts and community well-being since the meanings people associate with a place can help foster pride and place distinctiveness and collective (cultural) empowerment (Ramkissoon et al., 2018). Furthermore, when place meanings of hosts and guests do not align, overt or more covert conflict may arise, resulting in both challenges to the liveability of places and ambiguous tourist experiences. As such, place attachment is a crucial component to consider when attempting to alleviate negative



impacts of tourism such as economic leakages, exploitation of resources and tourism gentrification.

Scholars have recognized that place attachment is multi-dimensional in nature (Ramkissoon, 2020a; 2020b; Ramkissoon et al., 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; 2014; 2017), attracting further interest on the operationalization of the term. Observers in the environmental psychology domain commonly conceptualize place attachment as consisting of two elements: place dependence and place identity (William et al., 1992). Place dependence is about a place's opportunities to fulfil an individual's functional goals (Ramkissoon, 2020a; 2020b; Stokols & Schumaker, 1981). Place identity is about the symbolic meaning of a place's settings to an individual (Prohansky, 1978; Ramkissoon et al., 2013a; 2013b; 2013c).

Other strands in the tourism literature such as studies of destination marketing and management, residents' attitudes, and visitor behaviour have also applied the concept of place attachment across a range of contexts (Artmann et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2018; Ramkissoon, 2020a; 2020b; Ramkissoon et al., 2012; 2013a; Žlender & Gemin, 2020). In the process, many different conceptualizations of place attachment have appeared, which is not unique to tourism studies but a recurring observation in the larger 'place meanings' literature. For example, some scholars have included place familiarity (Tan & Chang, 2016), place memory (Lewicka, 2011) and place expectation (Chen & Dwyer, 2018) in their definition of place attachment. Ramkissoon et al. (2013a) included place affect and place social bonding in addition to place dependence and place identity in their operationalization of the concept. They argue that people develop a sense of place dependence, place identity, place affect, and place social bonding as their relationships to spatial settings continue to expand over time. Place affect refers to the emotional bonding of an individual with a spatial setting (Ramkissoon, 2015). It is about

people's emotions when visiting a specific place, such as feeling happy being in a certain location (Ramkissoon, 2020b). Place social bonding refers to the social bonds people form with others in a spatial setting, recognizing that place attachment also depends on the social relations that people have in certain areas (Ramkissoon, 2015). Examples include children connecting with other children in a park or playground setting (Ramkissoon et al., 2013a; 2013b) but also the social relations that emerge between backpackers in remote locations.

In the tourism development and planning process, aligning the meanings that local inhabitants and tourists associate with the spatial settings of tourist venues is crucial if positive interactions between both groups are to emerge; hence, my argument in this chapter that focusing specifically on local visitors can help avoid potential conflict. Below, I zoom in on how such domestic cultural tourism could fuel the establishment of local people's place meanings and, consequently, their well-being. I reflect on this through the different components of place attachment as conceptualized by Ramkissoon (2015): place dependence; place identity; place affect and; place social bonding.

### **Cultural place attachment, well-being and re-visitation to cultural heritage sites**

#### *Local visitors' place dependence associated with cultural tourism sites*

People can develop a sense of dependence on cultural tourism settings in their direct vicinity (Ramkissoon, 2015). They can associate meanings with the commodified cultural attributes to not just meet their visitation goals but to also establish a sense of purpose. For example, people have demonstrated a keen interest in museums allowing them to go back in time and relive history (Ramkissoon et al., 2011a). Such visits may give rise to a sense of well-being and contribute to people's overall quality of life (Kim et al., 2013), thereby potentially fuelling re-visit intentions to heritage attractions (Majeed & Ramkissoon, 2020; Ramkissoon & Uysal,

2011). This may give rise to a sense of cultural place dependence. For example, one may want to continue visiting a specific museum to learn further about its artefacts and its relation to a place's current appearance, especially in cases when the visited place is in the direct vicinity of people's place of residence (Ramkissoon & Uysal., 2018). Consequently, an examination of local visitors' place dependence associated with close by cultural sites is important to study how cultural tourism can contribute to community pride and place distinctiveness so as to support, and even potentially revitalize, local cultures.

#### *Local visitors' place identity associated with cultural tourism sites*

Local visitors may establish meanings in spatial settings that offer a distinctive cultural environment. Consumption of those places allows them to reflect on their beliefs and their sense of identity with the spatial settings of the place (Ramkissoon, 2020a). Place meanings can be constructed and translated into cultural meanings at cultural attractions including towns and cities, which reflect the visitor's sense of place identity (Qian & Zhu, 2014; Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2011). Connecting local visitors' place identity with cultural settings remains important in place attachment and cultural tourism research because place identity can enhance local visitors' (thus, local inhabitants') pride of place (Gerson, 2018). This is especially relevant in areas struggling with socio-economic and demographic pressures, since pride of place (potentially fuelled by tourism) could help establish more positive outlooks towards the future and people's happiness to continue living in these places. As such, local inhabitants' place attachment, and specifically their place identity and associated pride of place, is a relevant psychological-existential process that should be considered when pursuing the SDGs (UNWTO, 2020). Assessing how local visitors' personal meanings align with commodified images at nearby cultural tourist attractions, and assessing how visitation contributes to one's self-representation (or lack thereof), can be used to further develop and promote the cultural tourism and heritage sector so that it does not clash with local inhabitants' place meanings. For

instance, a local visitor's place identity can be enhanced through active participation in and support of the cultural tourism sector since this sector can promote a sense of pride and cultural empowerment. This can promote value co-creation, where inhabitants and external tourists alike contribute to tourism product development (Suntikul & Jachna, 2016). Conversely, when commodified cultural images clash with the place identity of local inhabitants who visit the cultural tourism sites that are close to their place of residence, tension could arise when these sites attract hordes of international tourists again when the tourism economy reopens after the pandemic-related travel restrictions, or when further, unbridled tourism growth occurs.

#### *Local visitors' place affect and well-being associated with cultural tourism sites*

Place affect is about emotional feelings that appear through the affective bonds, which visitors share with the spatial settings of tourist venues (Chanchaichujit et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2017). The associated meanings may allow a sense of emotional well-being (Majeed & Ramkissoon, 2020; Ramkissoon, 2021; Townsend et al., 2018). As such, place affect emphasizes the bonding visitors develop with the place. The affective component of place attachment finds support in the aesthetic-affective theory (Ulrich, 1983), which posits, that natural and cultural environments provide the stimuli to restore an individual's self-evaluation. For example, strong connections to visited spatial settings could help people to feel more positive than prior to their visit, also for local visitors who may not have realized what their living environment has to offer. Consequently cultural tourism consumption may enhance local visitors' levels of place affect impacting on their well-being and happiness to live in a certain area. Ulrich (1983) contends that humans are biologically inclined to live in natural environmental settings, which helps to combat stress and foster more positive emotions. Having more positive emotions is also associated with decreased stress levels and, as such, people's well-being (Grahn & Stigsdotter, 2010), contributing to overall life satisfaction (Ramkissoon, 2020a).

### *Local visitors' place social bonding associated with cultural tourism sites*

Cultural tourism venues allow local visitors to meet with others (both external, international tourists and fellow local visitors) and, as such, establish social relations that could contribute to the creation of collective meanings in the shared space (Hargreaves, 2011; Ramkissoon, 2020b; Ramkissoon et al., 2018). Some examples of cultural tourism venues where visitors create and further develop place meanings include museums, art galleries, industrial heritage sites, gastronomic restaurants and local cafes at cultural attractions (Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011; 2014; 2018), which can all function as meeting grounds for people. In positive cases, visitors coming together may collectively lead to place protective behaviours (Akshiq et al., 2020; Nye & Hargreaves, 2010; Townsend et al., 2018). Meeting different types of visitors, including other local inhabitants, could facilitate people's (local visitors' and external tourists') awareness of the importance of responsible cultural behaviours at heritage attractions to protect the site from (future) over-crowding and to avoid conflicts between groups. Such positive exchanges find support in the attention restoration theory positing that people's fascination leads to actions that overcome stressful situations in everyday life (Stigsdotter et al., 2010). An example can be at a museum where the offerings could match the (local or external) visitor's desire to learn about artefacts and, hence, contribute to establishing positive emotions. Consequently, cultural attractions can serve as restorative environments where local visitors experience a comfortable environment with a sense of connectedness to the place and to others, including people ('outsiders') they would normally not meet in daily life.

### **Conclusion: using visitors' place attachment to create more just destinations after COVID-19**

During the health pandemic, we have not only been fighting the virus itself. Governments, businesses, policy makers are also struggling to find ways and means to restore and improve the mental well-being of their people (Ramkissoon, 2020a). People's livelihoods have been

severely impacted as several businesses, not in the least those related to the tourism economy, have closed down. The psychological distress caused by the pandemic and its resulting economic crisis has led to a decline in mental health for many (Ramkissoon, 2021; 2022). Consequently, both psychological/emotional and economic issues have become pressing in the context of the pandemic, in particular in places whose economies had already become dependent on tourism before the appearance of COVID-19.

In this chapter, I made a case for focusing on domestic tourism, in particular the visitation of tourism sites by people living in the vicinity of these places ('local visitors') to: (i) deal with well-being issues of these local inhabitants; (ii) stimulate at least part of the tourism economy; (iii) provide insights into how tourism should be organized so as to avoid future conflict between local inhabitants and external (international) visitors when the global tourism economy re-starts. A focus on domestic tourism, ideally, supports the retaining of jobs for the locals to sustain livelihoods despite the pandemic. It also protects cultural heritage, enhances residents' place attachment (place dependence, place identity, place affect and place social bonding) despite these challenging times, and contributes to community flourishing and quality of life. In particular, I argue that the cultural tourism sector has the potential to contribute significantly to the economic and cultural revitalization of place when it re-orientates itself onto domestic visitations in this pandemic context (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011a; 2011b; Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2014; 2018; UNWTO, 2020a; Zarei & Ramkissoon, 2020). Considering that cultural sites are typically places of high intangible, emotional and existential value to people, especially the local inhabitants, cultural tourism development oriented towards international visitors can be particularly contentious. Focusing during the pandemic on domestic visitation could contribute to maintaining these cultural sites and associated parts of the tourism economy but also generate insights into tourism development

models towards the future that align with local people's place meanings. As such, the lessons learned now through domestic tourism could help build a more cohesive and harmonious tourism sector towards the future.

The tourism sector continues to face tremendous drawbacks as international borders remain closed for many destinations at the time of writing. The pandemic impacts are likely to continue for the next couple of years as predicted by scholars (Cheer, 2020; Ramkissoon, 2021; 2022; Venkatesh, 2020). Several scholars remain hopeful that COVID-19 can reshape tourism by providing a more inclusive model integrating and caring for the local community (Cheer, 2020; Ramkissoon, 2020a). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity for local visitors to reflect on how they can further contribute to their tourism sector as active co-actors, playing a significant role in revitalization of their domestic cultural tourism sector. Local visitors playing an active role in the process may feel valued and generate a sense of well-being (Ramkissoon, 2020a), especially in cases when their livelihoods depend primarily on tourism. However, some scholars have stressed their concern that tourism market reform may not immediately be on the cards, resulting in a 'business as usual' approach to restarting the tourism economy with associated negative social impacts as a consequence (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020). In many locations, especially tourism-dependent ones, this business as usual means high (often negative) social impacts on host communities, who do not have a substantial voice in the tourism planning and development process (Worden et al., 2004). Therefore, we need to urgently think further on how we can develop, re-shape and promote the domestic tourism sector to better serve the needs of the local community in the future.

Policymakers and destination marketers can build on the discussion in this chapter to further develop their local cultural tourism sector. A reorientation to local visitors during the pandemic could not only lead to the retaining of at least some form of income (Altuntas & Gok, 2021)

but should also be used to ensure that potential conflict between residents and international tourists in the future can be avoided. Furthermore, the pandemic is fuelling research on new forms of artificial intelligence to optimize the cultural tourist's satisfaction in the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples include the use of WeChat in the Hunan Provincial Museum in China, where visitors can listen to cultural information (Tuo et al., 2021) and associate meanings to the cultural offerings. It is crucial to use these new technologies to not just appease future international or external tourists but to give a platform for inclusion of local stakeholders and their views in the tourism products as well. In conclusion, the major impacts of COVID-19 on the global cultural tourism sector demand behavioural change at all levels (business, society, environment) with a renewed attention to the fundamentals to promote more sustainable cultural tourism businesses and better societies.

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