

## THE IMPACT OF COMMERCIALIZATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

VICOL Doina

Moldova State University, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

[doina.vicol@usm.md](mailto:doina.vicol@usm.md)

ORCID iD: 0009-0008-6379-596X

**Purpose of the article:** This paper aims to explore the commercialization of cultural heritage, focusing on its implications for cultural assets and traditions across Europe compared to other regions. The goal is to define the concept of commercialization and understand its impact on cultural heritage.

**Methodology:** The study employs a theoretical framework, utilizing Psychological Essentialism Theory to analyze the commercialization process. It examines various parameters and considers measures to mitigate the negative consequences of commercialization on cultural heritage. The research incorporates insights from diverse stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, cultural institutions, and private enterprises, to provide a comprehensive view of the issue.

**Conclusions:** The findings highlight the need for a balanced approach to the commercialization of cultural heritage. Effective safeguarding of cultural assets requires collaboration among all stakeholder groups to ensure that the commercialization process respects and preserves the integrity of cultural heritage while allowing for innovation and sustainable tourism practices.

**Originality:** This paper contributes to the existing literature by providing a nuanced understanding of how cultural heritage can be commercialized without compromising its authenticity. It emphasizes the importance of stakeholder involvement in creating strategies that reconcile the benefits of commercialization with the need to protect cultural identity.

**Keywords:** Cultural heritage, commercialization, tourism, innovation.

### Introduction

The current period has evidenced a steep rise in the commercialization of culture, and heritage sites, due to the efforts of the tourist agencies to attract visitors and eastern lucrative profits. Zhang et al. (2021) stated that tourist commercialization helps to promote the experiences of tourists about a cultural site and further regulates the behavior of the general masses about whether they want to visit the site. Commercialization can have a positive impact on authenticity and tourist satisfaction and the parameters that are associated with cultural heritage tourism. The current article aims to explore various facets associated with the commercialization of cultural heritage across Europe and other countries (Light and Prentice, 2013). It is very important to understand that tourists perceive the cultural sites as authentic places of attraction, which drives them further to visit and experience the richness of history associated with that site. However, this aspect tends to vary in different contexts.

Cultural heritage is an economic asset for every country that can be enhanced and promoted on global markets. Promotion strategies based on cultural heritage can achieve innovative and sustainable goals in cities and rural communities. This paper will review the meaning of "cultural heritage" and "commercialization, followed by introspection into the theories associated. Also, the study will explain why and under what situations there is a need to commercialize the cultural heritage, or the products and services associated, and how such aspects can be further regulated.

- Meaning of Commercialization on Cultural Heritage:

The current period has been characterized by the commodification of culture that has left a profound impact in terms of adverse consequences to less regard for indigenous rights and culture. The use of cultural icons to seek commercial interests has further grown in recent years. The process involves transitioning cultural assets and traditions into products and services that can be "marketed" as per Palka et al. (2017). However, this aspect leads to positive and negative implications that must be completely considered. For example, Borissova (2018) mentioned the intellectual property issues that are associated with the sites possessing cultural heritage. The theory associated with the commercialization of cultural

heritage essentially highlights the various tenets associated with tourists and other stakeholder groups who consider commercialization due to multiple factors such as the preservation of cultural heritage, representation of one country's culture before the world and people from different cultures, and associated values connected with cultural heritage.

By referring to the context of the commercialization of cultural heritage within China's cultural sector it was understood that cultural commercialization has attained the stature of the latest development trends in the cultural circles of China (China Organization, 2024). Cultural commercialization has further fostered the development of cultural production as well as its careful integration into the information industry to enhance the economic as well as social upliftment of the country. Cultural commercialization is associated with putting a special focus on culture-related products for the market. Therefore, the Government of China has understood the need to integrate all business operations and commercial activities aligned with cultural products and to further comply with the stringent norms and regulations of the country. This will help to foster the traditions of the country.

In Britain (UK) the overall place at which cultural commercialization development has taken place has almost doubled. In the USA, cultural commercialization is one of the primary pillars that drive almost all sectors toward experiencing economic growth. This has simultaneously facilitated other industries such as the television industry that are interlinked with "culture". To administer the cultural market effectively, there has been the development of stringent laws developed in terms of better business performance regulation of audio-visual products, promoting culture, and other important aspects. These aspects have helped to regulate cultural heritage within the country and the extent to which it could be utilized for commercialization purposes.

Azmi (2012) stated about the various efforts made towards commercializing the cultural assets in the Malaysia region, being researched as an example. This sheds sufficient light on the fact that Malaysia is intricately multicultural, multiracial, and multireligious and is innately maintained and represented through its rich cultural heritage and heritage tourism (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002). Most of the tourists who visit the country are very keen to know about the cultural heritage that is associated with the country. This is represented by the food, dance, songs, arts, and crafts, and other important cultural parameters of the country. The Malaysian formal bodies have developed several measures in recent times to ensure that the cultural sites continue to maintain their popularity among tourists. Hence, promotional brochures are being created such that people can develop ideas about the positive aspects associated with the site. Hence the traditional arts, culture, and heritage have highly been prioritized in the country. Some of the main forms of performance arts that have been prioritized are Main Puteri, Mak Yong, and Manora amongst many others.

There has been popularity in terms of the promotion of community, religious, and popular music that are used to promote the culture of the country before people from other countries of the world as further investigated by Martin et al. (2019). One example of this is the Malay music tradition such as that of the gamelan nobat and ghazal. This is mainly pertinent in cases wherein there has been commercialization of culture in multiple forms such as sales of cultural items such as souvenirs. In some cases, the tourists are lured to visit tourist spots not out of their sole interest, but under the encouragement of the tourist agencies, who intend to enhance their business products through such tourist visits.

-Theoretical underpinnings:

According to the traditional parameters associated with the commercialization of cultural heritage, it is believed that tourists and other stakeholder groups consider economic development as the primary objective behind enhancing cultural assets such that they can generate more profits through cultural activities, souvenir sales, and associated cultural aspects. Bortolotto (2021) stated the harmful aspects of over-commercialization within countries, in which commercialization of the cultural heritage is regulated by activities that help in economic development, as well as lead to sustainable funding, and global exposure of such products to the world. However, it leads to the over-dependence of the stakeholder groups and the local cultural groups of a country upon profit generation through such activities. It even leads to commodification and loss of associated intrinsic values.

Lyu et al. (2023) explained the consequences of commercialization in historical towns. The historical towns uphold the culture of cities or countries, and they are gradually becoming more accessible in the current period. By connecting such facts with Psychological Essentialism Theory, Lyu et al. (2023) indicated the implications of the commercialization of cultural heritage. It was further reviewed concerning field surveys and experimental studies that indicated that commercialization tends to exert a negative effect on tourist preferences. This is mainly in terms of the attitude and intention towards particular sites holding cultural heritage of that country, and how far they are important for the tourists, especially concerning the historical towns. Therefore, cultural heritage tends to have cast detrimental effect on the development of a country, which is profoundly evident in terms of exogenous or Indigenous mode associated, terms of individual characteristics associated with visiting that place of cultural heritage, associated nostalgia towards that place by the tourists amongst some of the main factors.

The sociological parameters of the commercialization of culture essentially impact the ways by which cultural assets and heritage are managed. In this respect, it needs to be understood that encouraging tourists to visit these cultural sites helps revive that country's culture, and cultural exchange between different cultural groups in various countries. It even fosters pride among the cultural groups that form a part of the country where the cultural site is located. However, such promotion of culturally enriched tourist spots is often explored by the tourist agencies and other associated stakeholders who tend to distort facts associated with that site before the tourists only to draw their presence, for further business profits. Tang et al. (2019) mentioned the prospects of tourism in China's cultural heritage that has developed over time. However, such sites have faced in terms of poor visiting experiences of the tourists, over commercialization by the commercialized groups solely to earn a profit, and loss of cultural authenticity. Therefore, the main tenets of culture are aligned with the green development of tourist experiences and commercialism of the world heritage sites such as the Confucius Temple located in the Nanjing region.

In terms of political and ethical parameters, the commercialization of cultural heritage involves certain political and ethical ramifications based on their ownership, and representation of culture. Deacon (2021) stated the example Sami is an Indigenous cultural group belonging to the Sapmi region across Northern Scandinavia in Norway, and Finland. The main concern that was indicated through the text was based on the fact that the assets that had cultural and religious parameters associated somewhat infringed the rights of the cultural groups within the communities of Sami and their access to cultural and religious symbols, while Qurashi (2019) mentioned about Macca and Medina to detail about similar aspects. For example, the positive impact of enforcement of regulations leads to better prospects of empowerment for the local stakeholder groups and hence instills a sense of empowerment among the groups. It effectively underlines the effectiveness of policies developed to promote cultural heritage within the country.

-How commercialization of culture can be balanced:

The conceptual model entails the parameters that need to be carefully considered to make the process of commercialization of cultural heritage effective. Zhang et al. (2021) referred to using the conceptual model to examine how tourism commercialization can have a positive impact on the extent of tourist satisfaction towards cultural heritage sites and in turn bind tourist loyalty towards that cultural site. This involves efforts of all associated stakeholder groups such as the local communities representing culture, governmental agencies, cultural institutions, and associated private enterprises. Therefore, the first means should be stop foster effective regulation such as ethical practices are well maintained in safeguarding the cultural heritage of a country, such as in Europe as well as UNESCO-based cultural sites (von Schorlemer, 2020). There is a need to devise ways to foster sustainable practices toward sustainable culture and tourism (Gražulevičiūtė, 2006).

Palumbo (2006) mentioned the trends of privatization of the sites associated with cultural heritage. This will redirect the focus of the stakeholders towards developing ways, that can ensure that the cultural aspects are not harmed by any human activity. Further, one important measure should be to ensure sufficient community participation such that the local cultural groups can engage in decision-making

processes and regulate the extent to which the cultural assets can be used further for seeking economic gains and promoting that culture widely. There is a need to initiate educational programs that can help generate sufficient awareness among stakeholders about the value associated with cultural heritage. This needs to be carried out through the development of interpretive programs that can inform tourists about the importance of cultural heritage sites and the cultural practices that are unique to that country or community. Moreover, there is a need to enhance training about cultural sensitivity.

### Conclusion

The current article casts sufficient light on the aspects associated with the commercialization of cultural heritage. Firstly, it could be inferred that the basic aspect of commercialization is a complex process that involves certain positive and negative implications that need to be considered. On the positive front, the commercialization of cultural assets helps the associated stakeholder groups to contribute to economic development, by generating more revenues when the tourists visit places of cultural interest. Such factors are even associated with contributing towards cultural development in the country. However, it was also understood that high reliance on commercialization leads to a lack of integrity of culture and the interests associated with a site. Hence, it is the urge of the cultural groups to seek sufficient education and training about why they need to regulate their commercial interests, besides ignoring cultural preservation. Hence education and awareness of the prime factors that decide the extent to which the commercialization of culture can be realized positively.

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