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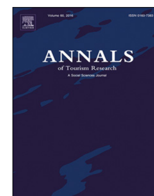

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beyond “culture”: A comparative study of forces structuring tourism consumption

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge informing tourism management originating in Anglo-Western and/or capitalist societies is ill-fitted for understanding consumptive practices of tourists from societies with different socio-economic and political systems. Based on 75 interviews, this cross-national (China, Russia, U.S.A.) comparative research aims to delineate how tourism consumption is reflective of the broader social reality. Results shed lights on influential factors beyond personal agencies that include four society- (Economic development, Political shifts, Ideology, Wars/disasters) and three individual-level (Family, Life course mobility, Religion) consumption forming forces. We discuss the extent of these influences across the national contexts. Although the *modus operandi* in tourism is to understand tourism markets as *global* affecting a *local* environment, we argue that tourism consumption remains ingrained within a tourist's local societal contexts.

Introduction

Sociologists tend to understand tourism consumption as the process and social organization of activities, through which tourism is offered, consumed, and made sense of (Warde, 2015). In this conceptualization, the logic of tourism consumption is not in tourists' destination choices and visit intentions but in daily practices, within which such actions are performed. Consumption is seen as central to daily life, identity, and cultural and social order of contemporary societies. Sociologists of consumption propose to overthrow the prevailing model of the sovereign consumer and replace it with the idea of the socially conditioned actor as a bearer of practices (Warde, 2015). Such a re-think requires attention to a wide range of social relations, processes, and institutions, rendering any act of tourism consumption as socially patterned (Holt, 1997; Kirillova, Wang, & Lehto, 2018). From this perspective, understanding tourism consumption has to transpire through the view of tourists as independent agents and treat tourists as actors whose consumption patterns, such as travel-related choices, cultural values, and sense making, are developed under distinctive conditions of the broader social reality. With this research, we foremost aim to incorporate the sociological knowledge of tourism consumption.

Although much is known about consumption and consumer behavior in tourism, what currently inform tourism management practices tends to originate in Anglo-Western scholarship (Cohen & Cohen, 2015; Winter, 2009). There have been persistent calls for more diverse lenses to remedy the imbalance since the Anglo-Western perspective may be inadequate in understanding increasingly diverse tourism markets (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015; Cohen & Cohen, 2015; Li, 2016; Tucker & Zhang, 2016). Winter (2009), for instance, notes that nearly all of the key concepts in the tourism field are grounded in political, societal, and cultural changes that

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occurred in Western Europe or North America, and even in their analyses of non-Western consumers, researchers tend to interpret phenomena "through a tool-bag of theories conceived and re-conceived in the socio-cultural particularities of Euro-American societies" (p. 23).

The Anglo-Western tradition has the predisposition to understand tourism phenomena from the lens of capitalism—the dominant economic system in certain world regions. Capitalism relies on (to varying degrees) private ownership of means of production, private property, competitive markets, voluntary exchange of commodities, wage labor, price structure, and other capital-based features. Although latent in tourism, capitalism bias is evident in, for example, the widely accepted conceptualization of travel as a commodity, an experience for sale that is subject to voluntary exchange at a market price (Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994). Although this idea enjoys the *status quo*, particularly (and naturally) in areas of tourism management and marketing, we argue that framing tourism phenomena from a capitalism standpoint is not always sufficient in understanding consumptive practices of tourists coming from societies with different socio-economic, political and cultural systems, or/and those with histories of epistemological disruptions (Cohen & Cohen, 2012, 2015; Tucker & Zhang, 2016).

A related issue is the tendency of cross-culturally framed tourism scholarship to explain away the discrepancies in the same phenomenon across two or more countries as culture-based. The typical justification for such comparisons is Hofstede's (1983) famous cultural dimensions with the view of cultural values as inherent to one's national and traditional culture. Inglehart (1977), however, proposed that national values may evolve as a result of improvements in existential security. In his theory of *intergenerational value change*, he argues that people place the highest value on the most pressing needs. When sustenance and physical security, which are directly linked with survival, are scarce, people prioritize these "materialistic" values. Under the condition of prosperity, people are drawn to "postmaterialistic" goals such as aesthetic and intellectual satisfaction, esteem, social equality, and tolerance. However, the relationship between existential security and value adjustment is not of immediate change, and a person's basic values reflect the conditions that dominated in one's pre-adult years. The view of Inglehart and other sociologists (e.g. Brym, 2016) suggests that nations with a history of epistemological disruptions, which threatened citizens' existential security, may not only have less stable cultural values but also that the values can converge with those in societies with similar historical paths, even though their traditional cultural values may differ. Although cross-cultural studies attempt to de-center the Anglo-Western research tradition, we maintain that existing approaches neither expose nor reflect on the Anglo-Western bias in research on tourism consumption.

In this study, we aim to uncover formative forces that shape tourism consumption in non-Western nations. We intend to delineate how tourism consumption is reflective of the broader social reality and how their workings may differ from those in Anglo-Western nations. Answering to Winter's (2009) call for alternative discourses and avoidance of a mere "transplantation of ideas" (p. 28) from Anglo-Western scholarship, we adopt a cross-national comparative research design to generate substantive theoretical insights (Baum, 1999). It is also for this reason that we do not employ any theoretical lens to guide the methodological approach or data interpretation, but rather allow patterns to arise as guided by grounded theory. The research is grounded in three national contexts - China, Russia, and the U.S. These are societies with distinct cultural, political, and economic histories, yet have some similarities when it comes to representation on global political and economic arenas as well as the tourism market. Although currently all three nations more or less subscribe to the principles of the market economy, they vary greatly not only in their respective form and extent but also in their historical paths to this economic system.

Methodology and method

We conducted personal interviews with residents from China, Russia, and the U.S. We were interested in how citizens of these three countries make sense of leisure travel and how the larger social, economic and political forces influence their meaning-making. Data collection was conducted in the period July to November 2016. Market research companies in Russia and the U.S. were contacted to recruit participants in the cities of Samara (25 participants), Russia and Orlando (25 participants), Florida, respectively. Participants residing in the Chinese cities (25 participants) of three tiers (Shanghai, Zhuhai, and Kunming) were identified by means of personal contacts and referrals. The reasons for data collection in these cities were to capture the aspects of tourism consumption of typical citizens. For example, in the case of Russia, residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg enjoy much higher living standards than Russians residing in other regions (Kirillova et al., 2018). We recruited participants who 1) were born between 1955 and 1975 and 2) grew up, and are currently residing in their country of origin. We chose to focus on this age cohort as they are believed to have witnessed a number of macro events, transformations, and still physically able to travel (Wang, Kirillova, & Lehto, 2019).

Data were collected by researchers in participants' native language, by means of face-to-face biographical grid in-depth interviews, which is a constructivist-narrative, retrospective longitudinal, mode of data collection (Huber, Milne, & Hyde, 2016). Participants were first presented with the timeline of events of national significance (identified and validated for each country, based on historiographic literature) (see Supplementary data 1) and were asked to place personally important life events on the parallel line. Then, interviewees were instructed to draw the "travel line," on which all leisure trips were taken thus far, and arrange them, in chronological order. Particulars of each trip as well as questions such as "What did that travel mean to you at that time?" "Why?", were used as prompts to discuss participants' travel histories. Interviews lasted 60–120 min. Data analysis was based on Huber et al.'s (2016) biographic analytical framework, with elements of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Transcribed data from each country were analyzed separately, in their respective native languages. Methodologically, our study is based on the principles of *weak constructionism*, by which the facts of the physical world are acknowledged as objective (e.g. historical facts) while the facts of social reality are subjectively constructed (Pernecky, 2012). In our context, although we treated destinations visited, travel dates and duration as facts of objective reality, trip motivation, tourists' experiences, and subsequent recollection of events were seen as subjectively constructed.

Contexts

China

In the 20th century, China witnessed a number of significant political and economic changes. In 1949, the Chinese Civil War resulted in the Communist Party taking control of the country and a planned economy and mass collectivization replacing the pre-existing economic system. A series of campaigns, collectively known as the Great Leap Forward, also led to a massive wealth re-distribution process and the demise of private land ownership. The subsequent Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) was aimed to preserve communist ideology by riding the remnants of "capitalist" and "bourgeois" elements. That period was followed by significant reforms of 1978–1992 where the Chinese government somewhat eased its control over citizens' private lives and opened the country's markets to the rest of the world (Wang et al., 2019). The subsequent economic growth spur resulted in a significant increase in living standards and greater disposable income for urban citizens. In 1998, the Central Government declared the tourism industry to be a new growth pillar in the national economy and established the "Golden Week" holiday system, although tourism development domestically tends to be planned in a top-down fashion (Wang & Wall, 2007). Since then, China has become one of the largest and fastest growing tourism markets for both domestic tourism and outbound tourism (Jin & Wang, 2016).

Russia

Given its communistic past, Russia witnessed much of its 20th-century political and economic history in a parallel pattern with China. However, in Russia, the governance of the Communist party ceased by the early 1990s. This period was also a stage when unsuccessful economic reforms resulted in political and economic turmoil, leading to a drastic downturn in living standards. Russia had witnessed a substantial economic growth in 2000–2014 until the annexation of Crimea provoked a series of economic sanctions by disapproving Western nations, resulting in the decline in ruble value. The latter, coupled with diplomatic disagreements with Turkey and Egypt, which are typical vacation destinations for the majority of Russians, resulted in a decline in Russian outbound tourism (Lossan, 2015). Since 2017, international outbound tourism has been again on the rise (tourism-review.com, 2019). As a communist state, the U.S.S.R. was an early adopter of social tourism, which was developed, organized, and administered by various official governmental bodies (Assipova & Minnaert, 2014). The decentralization of the economy in 1985 provided room for investment decisions by individual enterprises, which, however, had not become prominent in the tourism sector till late 1990s. The political course on economic openness allowed Russian tourists to travel abroad, although few did so because of deteriorating living standards. Currently, the Russian tourism industry has a strong outbound focus stimulated by competitively priced holiday packages offered by destinations such as Turkey, Egypt, and China (Andrades & Dimanche, 2017).

U.S.A.

Unlike China and Russia, the United States has had a long tradition of a capitalist-laden economic system and has been a society with a relatively stable political and economic environment. From the 1950s, the U.S. economy grew rapidly, with increase in wages, rise in the number of suburbs, and growth in the middle class. The nation gradually took a dominant position in the world's economy, despite a few drawbacks such as the recession of 1982, the dot-com bubble in early 2000s, and the collapse of housing prices in the late 2000s. The country underwent its share of economic and political transformations, albeit none on the same scale as China and Russia. The U.S. is one of the world's largest outbound tourism markets. The government is a regulating and policy-setting body, rather than one that directly intervenes in tourism activities (Platzer, 2014).

Results

Our three-country interview data are informative and contain two layers of presentation. We first identified the longitudinal tendencies revealed within each country and then juxtaposed the findings for comparison purposes. It must be noted that tourism consumption in each context was broken into periods and themes that were indicative of tourism consumption pattern shifts organically present in the data for each country, rather than imposed by the researchers.

At a global level, we identified two levels of factors influencing tourism consumption: a societal level and an individual level (see Fig. 1). Attesting to the working of societal institutions, the society-level consists of four major factors: *Economic development*, *Ideology*, *Political shifts*, and *Wars and disasters*. The individual-level comprises of three factors which are enabled and simultaneously constrained by the four societal forces yet manifest at the consumer-level. These include *Life course mobility*, *Family*, and *Religious beliefs*. The two levels of forces were juxtaposed on initial findings in a way that each presented piece of data is simultaneously linked to a 1) historic time period, 2) country, and 3) formative force (See Supplementary Data 2). We must acknowledge that the seven identified forces are grounded in the collected data from three sampled countries under study. Thus, the forces we revealed may not be exhaustive to represent all tourism consumers from the three countries.

Society-level: economic development

As in the case of other consumer goods, economic development was found to significantly influence tourism consumption. This is expected. However, the mode of such an influence differed drastically between Russia and China on one hand, and the US on the

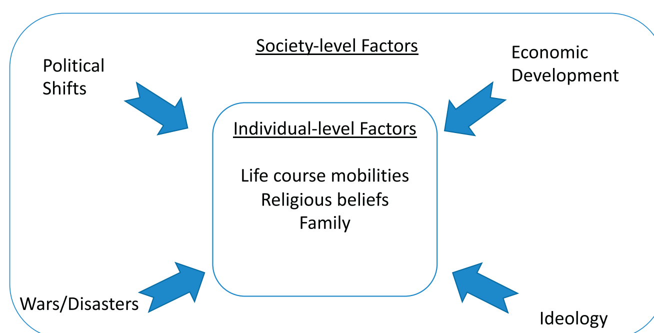

Fig. 1. Factors influencing tourism consumption.

other hand.

While between 1955 and 1991 the Soviet citizens enjoyed full benefits of social tourism and U.S. citizens were undertaking a variety of regional family vacations (e.g. camping, family reunions), the Chinese had only rudimentary ideas of leisure. Before the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. in 1991, when the country was supported by a well-structured social welfare system, most working people were entitled to social tourism. In fact, the right to leisure, of which tourism was a part, was written in the U.S.S.R. Constitution (Assipova & Minnaert, 2014). Through traveling, people witnessed firsthand how the government supplied U.S.S.R. regions and republics with consumer products and foodstuffs (both were in deficit) unevenly. U.S.S.R. republics other than Russia, together with Moscow and St Petersburg, enjoyed almost unrivalled presence of consumer goods (e.g. clothes) and food. These uneven economic privileges influenced tourism consumption trends in that people from other U.S.S.R. regions would travel to the "privileged" places to purchase goods and food. One such participant, who travelled to Moscow in 1974, recalls:

Not everyone could do it. It was impossible to rest in Moscow. Only 2–4 days – but you have to visit all stores that may have goods you need. Every trip was like that because it was impossible to purchase anything here [in Samara]. Particularly, I used to buy shoes in Moscow. (RU13)

In the period of 1950–1975, while the Russians were entitled to rest and enjoyed leisure activities, the Chinese were experiencing major economic struggles induced by a few social movements (e.g. the Three Years of Difficulty, Great Leap Forward, and Cultural Revolution). The interviewees commented that there was no concept of leisure travel as it was something unknown earlier and there was a lack of tourism infrastructure. In fact, the development of domestic leisure tourism in China coincided with the country's course on political openness and market economy in 1975–1990, when benefits of leisure travel for educational purposes started to get appreciated and enjoyed. In China, tourism consumption was created by economic transitions (as opposed to the disruptive transformation like in Russia). Under a system with central control over economic and financial planning, Chinese consumers were left with almost no disposable income. In this period, leisure tourism, bearing the meaning as we understand today, was close to non-existent (although sporadic trips to visit family were reported):

Tourism was an alien term that no one heard of. On the one hand, no one could afford the transportation cost between cities. There were no hotels to stay in. On the other hand, the prevailing value in the society prevented you from thinking of leisure and enjoyment. I guess no one knew the meaning of tourism as we do today. (KM1)

From 1976 to 1990, China experienced the transition from the Mao era to the Deng era. With Deng Xiaoping as the leader of China, the country started to reform the planned and centralized management of the macro-economy and improve relations with western countries. After a period of readjustment (1979 to 1981), China witnessed a decade of rapid economic ascent (1981 to 1990). Domestic commerce was developed and people's income steadily increased, prompting the first wave of self-motivated domestic tourism consumption in the 1980s.

The economic advancement, coupled with the ideological shift towards tourism consumption, state-owned enterprises and the government, jumpstarted social tourism as welfare for employees.

Unlike China, the Russian national economic transition was abrupt and exhaustive with the onset of perestroika in the early 1990s. After 1991, there was a sudden decrease in standards of living, across the country. As a result of the country's new course towards a market-driven economy, most participants lost their white-collar jobs (engineers, economists, etc.) and were "surviving" perestroika by relying on produce grown by their relatives in villages. Although tourism, particularly international, became an abundant commodity, the sharp decrease in the standard of living prevented Russian interviewees from participating in leisure tourism. Tourism consumption was an unaffordable luxury. Leisure travel of any sort had stalled:

I had my second child at that time. (…) I was on maternity leave, no breast milk, it was impossible to buy baby formula due to shortage, no money. It was such a terrible period. For many years to come, it was not about travel. (RU18)

Since 2001, after a decade of market-driven economic development, travel has started to be recognized as a commodity. In Modern Russia, tourism mobilities are directly related to respondents' economic standing, as expected in more capitalistic regimes. More disposable income means greater tourism consumption. In many cases, international travel is seen as a measure of one's success in life:

With my foreign travels, I proved to myself that I can, that I matter. If I want to go somewhere, like to Spain or Italy, or to see the ocean, I will travel there. It is just a matter of time for me. (…) I set the goal, and I work towards it. (RU10)

Moreover, travel is now seen as worth spending the money on. Many participants noted that during the period 1991–2000, leisure and travel were at the bottom of their priorities, yet, with a steady increase in income, they now realize how travel, especially for rest and relaxation, is important.

In the early 1990s, the economy regained momentum in most provinces in China. As stated by Deng, China's key task in the 1990s was to create a "socialist market economy", a broader reform of the economic system was activated. From the mid-1990s to 1999, China's annual GDP grew at a rate of 7.5% on average. By 1999, China became the second largest economy in the world after the U.S. In the meantime, the 1990s is a decade during which the Chinese consumers started to undertake "real tourism"- trips that are self-motivated and self-funded. The interviewees saw travel as purposeful sightseeing, sampling different foods, learning about different cultures and customs. From year 2000 onwards, the Chinese economy continued to grow steadily, enjoying a stable political environment. Domestic and international tourism has become an essential consumption component for the Chinese:

After my trip to Macau in 2000, I was thinking I would travel around the world once I could afford. Then I became relatively rich in around 2005. I started from countries in Asia, then Europe, America, Australia. Anyway, we plan to visit a different country every year. (ZH05)

The U.S. context provides little evidence for the association between its national economic state and tourism consumption. Comparing with both Russia and China, the United States is a country with a relatively stable political and economic environment. This could be the reason why the U.S. participants tended to discuss their travels in relation to their own earning potential and subsequent changes in social status, as opposed to travel being an affordable diversion due to the country's growing economy. For example, US8 and her husband were able to retire early due to successfully made financial investments and to dedicate their lives to the son's career in sports. Now they enjoy going on cruise trips: "This year we've gone on three. Sometimes we'll take, I mean that's not what we always do but sometimes we'll take the shorter cruises, the three or four days because when we're going with our son (…). U.S. participants tended to reflect on tourism consumption as a commodity worthy of spending money on, especially when it comes to family vacations.

Society-level: ideology

Ideology has played a great role in tourism consumption in China and Russia, an unsurprising finding, given the nations' history with communist political ideology, in which tourism, mostly domestic, used to serve its purpose in terms of politics and people's welfare (Kreck, 1998). Ideology affected tourism consumption in two major ways. First, state-sponsored travel provided the first tourism opportunities for the Chinese and Russian respondents—the aspect manifesting particularly strongly in Russia (then U.S.S.R.) with its long history of social tourism (Assipova & Minnaert, 2014).

Ideologically, leisure travel in U.S.S.R. was not intended for relaxation or hedonic pleasures, but rather, for the citizens' physical endurance, health, ideology-laden education, and moral development (Noack, 2006). State-subsidized trips were more common for wellness treatments, to participate in sports competitions or mountain trekking, and visiting war/revolutionary sites and museums were common. Participants reflected that such trips gave a sense of being a good (Soviet) citizen, who had a constitutional right to leisure travel, to stay cultured, and to maintain health.

Leisure travel in China was not particularly advocated as an individual right during 1950–1975, nor was there an established social tourism system similar to Russia. However, early travels in China were still marked by ideological pursuits. The "Da Chuan Lian" ("大串联") travel, in which young red guards (16 and older) were encouraged to visit Chinese cities to exchange revolutionary ideas and to meet president Mao Zedong in Beijing. It was the first opportunity for many interviewees to travel outside their hometown. The Central Government completely subsidized public transportation and local governments provided accommodation and subsistence for the "red guards." Those who joined Da Chuan Lian interpreted this travel not only as a "political campaign," but also as a chance to learn about other places and make new friends: "I made lots of friends from everywhere in the country…after that, we maintained correspondence for years…" (KM10).

The second effect of ideology on tourism is related to participants being confronted with an alternative viewpoint. In Russia, such a confrontation occurred after 1991 when the government-instructed communist ideology had ceased to exist, and the reorientation towards neoliberal and market values had begun. No longer subsidized, leisure tourism transitioned from being a right for all citizens to that of a largely unaffordable economic commodity, a situation most Russian participants tended to view as unfair. A few interviewees who made their first international trips during this transitional period were confronted with a qualitatively different worldview, which forced them to reconsider their ideological stance. RU23 reflects on her first international travels in the mid-1990s:

When I started traveling abroad, my worldview has changed. You know, I am a Soviet girl, and I was told that I lived in the best country in the world, and the West is all about the capitalistic danger. But here, in USSR, we were having a fine life, I was told. I vividly remember that in 1989, I was at work and was talking to my friend about how all of us were lucky to have been born in the USSR and not in the West. I was saying "Imagine if we were born in the USA. How terrible that would have been!" I was absolutely certain that all Americans were unhappy and unlucky people… (RU23)

Chinese respondents were also "educated" within the antagonistic frame of capitalism and socialism, yet, unlike participants in Russia, they reflected mostly on the sense of curiosity about Western capitalistic countries:

I always wanted to visit the developed countries, since we had been told a lot about them. We were told that they are capitalism countries and they are bad for the working class and socialism countries. Meanwhile, we were told that they are rich and developed countries. So I was really eager to visit them and verify lots of things we'd been told. (ZH 5)

This difference between Russian and Chinese is likely attributable to the differences in political and economic development. China took a gradual course towards transformation into an open economy, resulting in increasing standards of living and purchasing power for the Chinese, whereas Russians experienced a sudden crash of ideological values with a sharp drop in standards of living and overall well-being. Chinese participants had an economic advantage over the Russians to travel while interpreting their experiences in light of the ideological upbringing, yet with necessary corrections:

> *When I was young, I was educated that Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan is not a good guy. He launched the civil war and split the motherland. Therefore, I wanted to know more about Taiwan and what kind of life people were living there. So I made the trip…I found that Taiwan is different from what we learned from the textbooks before. (…) Chiang is a great leader. [Interpretation and judgment of a person] really depends on which party is in power. I even started thinking: What if* Chiang Kai-shek *led China at that time, what could have happened? (ZH3)*

With the absence of official ideology and a gradual improvement in economic conditions in Russia, Russian respondents also developed an understanding of leisure travel as a commodity. Commonly mentioned, all-inclusive seaside vacations were mostly understood as “relaxation for sale” when respondents took this as an opportunity to be in a warm climate, an interpretation that is in line with a conventional understanding of mass tourism in the existing tourism literature.

Although understanding of leisure travel as a commodity is a fairly recent phenomenon in China and even more novel in Russia (2000-present), it has enjoyed a *status quo* in the U.S.A. throughout the studied period. With the absence of drastic political regime transformations, the U.S. participants neither questioned nor reflected on leisure travel based on ideology.

Society-level: political shifts

Political shifts played multiple roles in influencing tourism consumption in terms of whether, how, and where to travel. This was particularly true in the case of Russia and China, two countries that underwent significant political changes from the 1950s to 2000. In these contexts, understanding the effect of political changes should not be isolated from the confounding influences of the other three society-level forces: ideology, economic development, and wars/disasters.

In Russia, 1955–1990 is the era of relative political stability, marked by one-party political system, long-standing Communist Party leaders, stable rates of economic development, and clear ideology. For this period, the overall lifestyle of Soviet citizens and the aesthetics of the surroundings were often referred to as “greyness”, “life here was grey”, “everything was grey here – buildings, factories.” Many Chinese respondents also shared such sentiments regarding the 1955–1975 period but, due to poor economic conditions and the absence of well-developed social tourism, they did not possess any means for leisure travel. Russian interviewees, however, tended to travel by the means of subsidized vouchers (typically provided by the workplace) to counties of the Soviet Block (e.g. Bulgaria) and Baltic Republics (modern Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia). The impressions of their native land were in strong contrast with the visited destinations, where they observed a different society and lifestyle: “When I went to Riga [Latvia, 1979], I felt that I was in a different country, not USSR anymore. I was impressed. I felt like I was in Europe: different country, different people, different attitude towards life” (RU17). Thus, tourism consumption was contingent upon the contrast between the routine, subtle differences in political systems, relatively closed living environment, and the unusual, more liberal destination environment.

From 1978 onwards, China's political and economic transitions towards a market-like economy and the “open door policy” shifted the nation's development strategy from self-sufficiency oriented to active participation in the world market (Nyíri, 2011). The years of gradual political transformations in China created fertile grounds for international tourism consumption, as interviewees commented on their sense of curiosity about lifestyles and people of developed countries and the desire to see those with their own eyes. In 1975–1990s, the political shifts also influenced tourism consumption through the so-called “trips in passing.” During the movement of “Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement (上山下乡运动),” in which Mao Zedong encouraged a temporary relocation of urban youth to mountainous areas or farming villages to learn from the workers and farmers. “Trips in passing” were detours on the way to such localities to “take chances to have fun” as well as subsequent visiting friends in other rural areas: “the seed of travel and tourism was planted in the mind” (KM7).

Unlike China, political transformations in the 1990s' Russia were swift and earth-shattering (Kirillova et al., 2018). The dissolution of U.S.S.R., political unrest, and armed conflicts in newly independent states forced many interviewees to relocate and to face an uncertain future in the new country, making tourism consumption deprioritized. It was, however, also the time when the country no longer restricted international movements of its citizens. For the very few interviewees who undertook their first international travel commented on the drastic contrast between their own mindset and that of the external world.

The years 2000–2016 witnessed a series of political conflicts in Russia, many of which restricted respondents' freedom to travel. A political conflict with Turkey in 2014–2016 made it impossible for many to travel to this popular destination as all tour agreements with Turkey were cancelled. Although non-organized travel was still possible, respondents were either afraid to travel on their own or could not afford it due to high costs. Such sentiments seem to parallel hose found among Chinese participants who, in contrast, reflected on how open door policies and the increase in the number of destinations with a government-approved status expanded the world for them.

Political shifts produced nostalgia as a travel incentive that is reflected in both Chinese and Russian data. Since many Chinese interviewees spent their youth in rural areas conforming to Mao Zedong's “Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement,” they both shaped (made friends or married local people) and were shaped by the place (“the places represent many of their beautiful memories about the youth” KM3). In the minds of the interviewees, these rural areas are the places they always want

to revisit. The Russian respondents sought out a different nature of nostalgia. Born and raised during the Soviet times, they felt nostalgic when traveling to another Communistic country or a country with a similar past, e.g. China or Vietnam:

The Vietnamese are very kind-hearted, wishing everyone well. They are just not fixated on money. When I watch old Soviet films, the way our parents used to live – this is how it is in Vietnam now. When you go there, you immerse yourself in another world, the world of our parents, my childhood. (RU22)

This nostalgia is not unlike what Čaušević (2019) refers to as "Yugio-stalgia"(in the context of post-Yugoslavia), which is not just seeking out the past "to find solace from the socioeconomic injustices exacerbated through crony capitalism (…) but rather hauntings from the future which never happened (…) for the hope that tomorrow will be better than today" (p. 23).

Unlike Russia and China, political change and its effect on tourism consumption was not nearly as prevalent in the U.S., aside from one participant who planned but did not travel to Washington, DC, for Barack Obama's - the first African-American's- presidential inauguration.

Society-level: wars and disasters

The influence of war and disasters on tourism consumption is prevalent in Russia where it is also inextricably linked with life mobilities more generally. Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disasters and war conflicts in the aftermath of the U.S.S.R. dissolution forced Russian participants to leave their homelands and to relocate to safer parts of the country. As a teenager, one participant, for example, was evacuated from Chernobyl to the Moldovan part of the U.S.S.R. (presently the independent state of Moldova), while his mother sought an asylum in Russia during the civil war in Transnistria (part of Moldova, presently the unrecognized state). Such events inspire tourism consumption that is a mixture between "diaspora tourism" when people traveling to their ancestral homelands in search of their roots (Huang, Ramshaw, & Norman, 2016), and nostalgia travel when tourists want to relive memories of the past. Yet, in the case of Russian participants, such travels, perhaps due to the painful nature of memories, are rather bitter:

It is an unrecognizable city now. I cannot call it a city; the city is dead. I wouldn't want my loved ones, my daughter, my wife, to see it. (…) Traveling there is about being alone, re-living the memories, and leaving. After my second trip, I no longer want to return. (US14, about Pripyat', the site of Chernobyl disaster)

Wars that did not occur during the participants' lifetime, such as WWII, interestingly carry over its influence to Russians' current tourism consumption. On a number of accounts, interviewees discussed trips to the Great Patriotic War sites (e.g. Volgograd, the city of the historic Stalingrad Battle), war museums, monuments (e.g. Treptower park in Berlin, Germany), or to the burial grounds of relatives who died in the war. More recent armed conflicts in Abkhazia and Crimea did not deter Russian participants from traveling to these popular vacation destinations ("Most Crimeans have lived there since the Soviet times, and they have always been as friendly to Russians as they were to Ukrainians" RU9).

Unlike Russia, wars and disasters seemed to play no role in tourism consumption of the Chinese, while several U.S. participants reflected on the 9/11 attack as instilling the fear of air travel. In fact, perhaps due to the absence of earthshattering wars and disasters on the U.S. soil (aside from the 9/11), the U.S. participants frequently commented on how personal (e.g. death of a loved one, a divorce), as opposed to national tragedies, inspired relocation (as a means for a fresh start in life) and subsequent modification of travel patterns. Overall, wars and disasters colored and continued to considerably color travel practices in Russia, either in the form of re-living individual or collective memories or confronting remnants of wars and disasters on trips. Yet, these tended to be perceived as "givens" of life, not offputtingly risky as would be elaborated in the risk literature (e.g. Williams & Baláž, 2015) and or attractive as suggested by the dark tourism literature (e.g. Stone, 2013).

Individual-level: family

The U.S. family travel has remained central to many families' ideology as "a journey of American family identity in the making" (Rugh, 2008, p. 10), whereas the travel patterns and foci demonstrated evolvement over time in the other two countries' contexts. For the U.S. interviewees, family is their *raison d'être* for taking vacations. As one of the most important aspects of American culture (Rugh, 2008), family vacation seems to be prevalent in almost all of their travel accounts and throughout all periods. Family trips were usually taken as voluntary and discretionary. Generally, family travels were made with family as a unit, albeit in different forms (e.g. father-son trips, mother-daughter trips). When reflecting on those childhood family trips, interviewees consistently commended on such benefits as spending quality time together, creating memories, enhancing communication, and fostering connections. Transitioning to adulthood and maturity in 1985–2000, many placed values of travel on getting to know family, family heritage, and family history. For immigrant families, it was deemed important to travel to seek family heritage, see where their (grand)parents lived, and learn about the local culture. The representation of such trips goes beyond the reach of general family travel and intertwines with the recognition of one's identity associated with where he/she is originally from:

And now that I'm educated a little bit more on my background, and culture, and everything like that, I was able to go see it, and understand it more. He [my father] said, "That was the house I was born in. This is the place where I used to do this. I used to work out here. This is the school I went to." (…) It was a bonding experience and educational in the way of learning about my father's life. It was really cool. (US5)

Family has become even more critical in interviewees' tourism consumptive practices once they had children. Trips taken with children were for better interpersonal communication, bonding, and less contact with electronic gadgets: "no matter how much money you spend, money is nothing. It's the quality time that's spent with the family and the memories that you make, so to me,

family is just really important" (US14).

Unlike the U.S. narrative, the family aspect did not enter the tourism consumption conversation nearly as substantially for the Russians, despite the fact many Russian respondents remarked on taking their small children along for travel. Russian respondents tended to structure consumption practices around the personal dimension. Although the respondents' very first travel experiences were usually made with family members or involved visiting friends and family, family did not structure tourism consumption before 1991. Instead, extended family was generally used as the network to secure places to stay or for sharing accommodations while traveling. Often family was highlighted as a convenience factor in the sightseeing trips rather than the primary motivation. Such a positioning of family may be attributable to the mixed influence of the respondents' desire to see different places, the timing and/or monetary constraint in travel planning: "Or we sometimes went to a village or to other small towns in which we had relatives. Just like that. I think my parents did not have much time for travel" (RU1). When traveling with immediate family (mother, father, sibling), the trips were usually state-sponsored through parents' jobs or as part of a travel voucher. In addition, a collective memory about being sent to grandparents during summer recess was shared among the respondents, once again attesting to the convenience factor. There was mostly no leisure travel with some domestic trips as an exception in 1991–2000. Surviving perestroika also exacerbated interviewees' responsibilities for their own family (e.g. children) as they struggled to provide for them. The year 2000 onward witnessed an increase in overseas travel. However, respondents' trips with younger children and older cohorts' travel with adult children (such as mothers and daughters) were usually due to interviewees' fear of being abroad and not speaking a foreign language.

Chinese interviewees' recollection of childhood travel resembles that of the Russians. Leisure travel in the real sense was almost non-existent in the respondents' childhood memories. Due to the migration of their parents to first-tier cities such as Shanghai, visiting relatives in parents' hometown or other cities for family reunion became the most common practice: "My parents came from Nanjing, so we have lots of relatives there. We usually visited them during the Chinese New Year and stayed with them. I had no concept of 'tourism'. I just know that we visited my uncle" (SH4). For many interviewees, the very first leisure trip took place when they got married. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, "traveling wedding" (旅行结婚) was popular in the cities in China. Different from honeymoon travel, a travel wedding took place in lieu of a real wedding ceremony and reception. Child-centric trips started to become popular in the late 1980. Thanks to the "one-child" policy in China, parents placed a premium on the needs of the only child in a family, and travel was seen as essential for children's holistic development (Lehto, Fu, Li, & Zhou, 2017). Despite limited financial resources, parents tried to incorporate the component of family travel into their business or government-sponsored trips, to show children places:

> *At that time, I was teaching in a railway-related institution. So I could travel with my family with free train tickets. Every summer and winter vacation, we took our daughter for trips to different destinations. The main purpose was for her to know different cultures in China. (ZH1)*

In the present (2000 onwards), leisure trips often became gifts from now-adult children, even though parents and adult children did not necessarily travel together.

Individual-level: life course mobility

Life course mobility refers to both residential mobility, which is changing the place of residence motivated by family factors, and migration, which are relocations to realize economic gains (Geist & McManus, 2008). In all three countries, life course mobility has emerged as a force shaping travel patterns, although the influencing patterns differ. In the U.S., both residential mobility and migration were prevalent throughout the three distinctive periods. As children, interviewees followed their parents who pursued economic opportunities in other parts of the country. Later, relocation for study or work purposes was a common and welcome aspect of participants' efforts to increase their personal earning potential and thus tourism consumption. Being in their 40s and 50s, the participants are still apt to residential mobilities motivated by the need to care for elderly parents or be closer to extended family. Such mobilities tended to reconfigure the U.S. participants' spatial travel patterns, as they explored destinations in geographical proximity to the new residence and learned about a different culture. An extreme case is a participant who frequently relocated to pursue a singing career (e.g. Las Vegas, Orlando) and, at some point in her life, even worked on a cruise ship as an entertainer, which allowed her to visit various exotic destinations.

Unlike the U.S. whose citizens tended not to reflect on restrictions of their mobility, Russia and China historically restricted and continue to restrict their citizens' residential mobilities by the household registration system, termed *Propiska* in Russia or *Hukou* in China. The systems tie access to resources such as food, education, health care, and old-age pensions to specific localities (Nyíri, 2011). Although the Soviet-style *propiska* in Russia was replaced by voluntary resident registration in 1993, living without a permanent or temporary registration continues to be an administrative offense. Thus, the earlier periods in both Russia and China were not characterized by a citizen's migration. The reinstatement of the National College Entrance Examination in 1977 enabled Chinese youths to attend universities. Many people born between 1950 and 1959 had their first travel experience when they left home for a university in another city. The respondents shared collective memory of "hopping-on and hopping-off" with a train ticket, which was usually valid for seven days: "All the places I visited during my university years were along the railway between my hometown and the city where my university was located" (ZH2). The interviewees did not necessarily consider it as tourism but felt that they should take advantage of the train tickets. More recently and specifically to participants residing in Zhuhai, one of China's special economic zones, prior leisure trips to Zhuhai were when ideas of relocation were first entertained.

In Russia, voluntary life course mobility is not prominent as most interviewees resided in the region since birth. Yet some

interviewees reported instances of forced residence relocation due to political changes and disasters (e.g. Chernobyl Disaster). As an example of the former, RU22, as a native Russian, had to pack up and leave her birthplace in Kazakhstan because of "an emerging language barrier, Kazakh's nationalism" and, in her view, there were fewer opportunities for children. Yet, as a Kazakh by citizenship, she had to wait two years to receive Russian citizenship. Relocations such as this led to an occasional trip to former places of residence to visit friends and the remaining family.

Individual-level: religious beliefs

Although all three national contexts are presently secular states, religion tended to structure some tourism consumption in the U.S.A. Several U.S. participants drew extensively on their Christian beliefs to justify their choice of destinations, activities, and meaning of travel in the present. Interestingly, these participants did not reflect on this factor longitudinally but rather commended on religion as an important aspect of their lives. For example, for US4, travel to remote locations in the world (e.g. a Samoa village), was not for hedonic purposes (in fact, it is "a tiring activity") but to record indigenous languages to get "the scripture into the hands of people who would never have had the opportunity to know who Christ is." For him, recording indigenous languages became a full-time job, which brought him to destinations where Christianity is not widely practiced to "spread the word of Christ." For other U.S. participants, the effect of religious beliefs on tourism consumption was in the form of short-term missionary trips, which also brought them to "exotic" destinations (e.g. Philippines). With 65% of U.S. citizens considering religion to be important in their lives (Gullup, 2010), it is not surprising that religion represents an important force structuring U.S. tourism consumption.

For Russian participants, it was not religious beliefs per se that informed present tourism consumption but *dushevnost',* which can be best translated as spiritedness or soulfulness. They frequently commented on religious sites (of various religions) as "soul-touching: "We were leaving India but I was walking and sobbing. We stayed near a temple. As we were walking away, there was music playing in the temple, touching my soul..." (RU7). In fact, destinations such as Israel, India, were also perceived as better places to satisfy the hunger for soulfulness. In contrast, Chinese participants tended not to reflect on neither religion nor spirituality in their interviews. As a Communist-ruled nation-state, the Chinese government officially has been endorsing atheism since the Cultural Revolution, even though many Chinese remain religious (Ashiwa & Wank, 2009). After decades of similar atheist regime, Russia has witnessed a steady growth in religiosity in the last 30 years, with Orthodox Christianity leading the way in most Russia's regions. Yet, according to the 2009 Gallup survey (Gallup, 2010), only 34% of Russians consider religion important in their lives. This could explain why Russian participants longed for a spiritual connection but did not deliberately incorporate it into their tourism consumption practices.

Discussion and conclusion

This study was motivated by the need to disconnect from the "tool bag" of existing theoretical frameworks underlying tourism consumption, which are informed by the Anglo-Western scholarship, and remedy the tendency to describe findings from non-Anglo-Western contexts that do not conform to theoretically predicted hypotheses as culture-based. We recognize that the Anglo-Western perspective is far from uniform (e.g. European vs. North American research traditions, various degrees of reliance on capitalist ideas, recent attention to de-colonizing and post-colonial approaches). However, we join Winter (2009) and Li (2016) in the argument that because all these angles originated in the socio-cultural particularities and the capitalist economic system, they are inadequate in explaining tourism consumption in markets with alternative histories.

Longitudinally tracing tourism consumption of one generational cohort in Russia, China, and U.S.A., we interrogated the extent to which broader social reality informs how people relate to tourism. As such, the study is a window onto the past mirrored through one generation. The findings resulted in a two-level system of tourism consumption shaping forces, including four society-level factors (Economic development, Ideology, Political shifts, and Wars/Disasters) and three individual-level factors (Life mobilities, Family, and Religious beliefs). The ways these factors influence tourism consumption, however, were not uniform across the nations.

In Russia, tourism consumption closely mirrored the changes in the economic regime, political ideology, and wars/disasters in the country, with a much lesser degree of involvement of individual-level factors (e.g. life mobilities is mostly forced). In China, tourism consumption first had been "imprisoned" by the state ideology and macro-economic status and then released with the changes in economy and ideology. The tourism consumption in China has been shaped by factors at the individual level such as family values and life mobilities nowadays with increasing impact of globalization and the assimilation of China into the global economic system.

Unlike the Russians and the Chinese, U.S. participants' tourism consumption did not directly correspond to the developments in economic and political environments but rather is closely related to individuals' life mobilities, religion, and family. This is of course not to say that U.S. tourists are not influenced by the broader reality, but due to the relative lack of epistemologically disrupting events for the U.S. generation under study, U.S. participants could perceive this social reality as baseline and as structuring tourism consumption in a more latent form. Interestingly, post-1995 leisure travel in China and the U.S. converged on an increasing influence of individual-level factors and particularly family values (e.g. education for children for the Chinese and family bonding opportunities for the U.S. participants). Despite oft-cited filial piety as a marker of the Chinese culture, a family unit has not always been the central point of tourism consumption but is enabled by improved economic conditions and shifted political dynamics. In this sense, China shared more commonalities with the U.S. than it did with Russia. Meanwhile, economic development continues to be a more dominant influential factor in modern Russia.

Our study empirically illustrates that factors structuring tourism consumption are not universal across nations, which corroborates with Winter's (2009, p. 23) observation that "[H]anging their theoretical support on the hooks of replication and predictability, such approaches [consumer profiling models, case studies among others] have commonly provided the basis for misguided claims of

universality." The current modus operandi in tourism research is to understand tourism markets and industry as *global* and affecting a *local* environment. The present research, however, shows that tourist originating markets can be hardly seen as global or universal: tourism consumption in Russia, in China, and in the U.S. is influenced by distinctive factors and to varying degrees. Admittedly, the increasing globalization of the world economy is creating similar markets and consumption styles. Yet, the existence of nation-states with a diversified political stance, ideologies, religions, and culture in the world underlines the limitations of the Anglo-Western scholarship in interpreting tourism consumption and the value of social-level factors identified in our study. Along with several scholars who acknowledged and called out on the capitalist and neoliberal bias in tourism research and education (Ayikoru, Tribe, & Airey, 2009; Gibson, 2009; Mosedale, 2016), the present study suggests that tourism consumption remains very much ingrained within a tourist's local context.

A retrospective look allowed us a glimpse into where Russian, Chinese, and U.S.A. tourists "come from" when it comes to whether, what, and how they choose to consume leisure tourism. Comparative insights show that similarities/differences in these patterns are not necessarily because of similarities/differences in national cultures but also because of similar/distinctive paths of economic and political development as a nation. For example, a shared communist history along with the top-down approach to tourism development in Russia and China produced tourists who travel for nostalgic reasons, as a way to go back to the past- their childhood. The economic prosperity of the U.S. and the rapid economic advancement of China enabled the capitalist idea that travel is a commodity, modern-day accessory, a lifestyle that comes with increased personal earning potential. In this sense, Chinese tourists have more in common with the U.S. than with Russian tourists.

Similarly, we can see that the presence of official ideology in Russia and China provided tourists from these countries with a lens through which they consume destinations. Even though official ideology ceased to exist in Russia, the interviewed cohort of tourists continue to employ this lens when making sense of their travels. The absence of ideological transformation in the U.S freed the U.S. tourists from associating this reflective frame with tourism consumption. These convergences and divergences challenge the common practice of attributing cross-market differences to cultural and value differences. Commonly applied frameworks, such as Hofstede's (1983) cultural dimensions and Schwartz's (2006) cultural value orientation theory, do not explain how individuals form the observed patterns. For instance, it remains unclear to what extent the similarities in cultural dimensions such as power distance and long-term orientation between China and Russia are due to the relatively recent and brief (historically speaking) phenomenon of official ideology. Similarly, it is not clear as to what extent the differences in individualism between Russia/China and the U.S. are caused by the presence or absence of communistic ideology. Further, it is also uncertain, to what extent the true influence of traditional Chinese/Russian culture exists. These invite further empirical exploration. Jointly, the findings from this study point to the need to re-examine cross-market differences from a macro, dynamic perspective, which considers not only horizontally but also vertically, the broader life realities of consumers and the historical paths of their respective societies.

Our study joins the scholarly debate regarding the limitations of existing cross-cultural and cross-national studies. The validity of the practice to compartmentalize societies into Hofstede's dimensions or Schwartz's grids can be questionable. Recent publications have posed more questions than answers regarding the urgent need to address today's highly globalized world (e.g. Li, 2016; Mattila, 2019), evolving consumer culture in a society known for its traditional values (Hsu & Huang, 2016), and also more refined dimensions of current cultural and value frameworks (Huang & Crotts, 2019). It is in this light that this study advances the understanding of tourism consumption in a comparative setting by providing insights inadequately explained by current tourism theories.

Limitations

The study possesses several limitations. First, while striving for a streamlined and systematic analysis, we ignored historical intricacies in each national context. For instance, because significant historical events in the U.S. (e.g. the end of segregation (1954)) occurred prior to the birth of the cohort under study, its influence may be less evident to participants yet still significant. Second, the delineation among the seven influencing forces is rather artificially imposed for ease of presentation, while, in reality, the forces are working jointly. Further, the results are limited to the three samples under study and, as such, cannot be generalized to the wider populations of the respective countries. Even though we have diversified the samples in terms of gender, age, family status, and race (in the U.S.), we purposely did not examine similarities and differences attributable to these backgrounds. A related limitation is the inconsistency in participant recruitment approaches between Russia and U.S.A. (market research companies), and China (personal referrals), which violates the principles of methodological equivalency for comparative studies. Yet, we maintain that such a trade-off was necessary to ensure data quality. Finally, although the macro-forces that we highlight here are slow to affect consumption in the sociological sense, we must acknowledge the ever-growing influence of technology on tourism consumption. A critical look at how technological innovations not just affect but structure tourism consumptive practices comparatively is one area of future research.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

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