Behind the research beliefs and practices of Asian tourism scholars in Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the power structures behind the research beliefs and practices of tourism scholars based in three Asian countries, namely Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand. More specifically, through qualitative interviews, this study gives voice to a group of Asian tourism scholars to cast light on the historical (colonial/postcolonial) and contemporary (neocolonial) forces influencing their research beliefs and practices. Conceptually, this work mobilises the notions of "intellectual imperialism" and "captive mind", developed by the Malaysian sociologist Syed Hussein Alatas. Overall, the empirical material supports Alatas on the idea that Asian tourism scholars are influenced by power structures that tend to reiterate Western-centric ideologies. However, an important aspect emerging from the interviews was that regional/national research agendas and the influence of other Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea and China, also play a role in shaping the research beliefs and practices of scholars based in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

1. Introduction

In the last 20 years, critical arguments have reiterated the neocolonial nature of tourism knowledge (Church & Coles, 2007; Hall, 2004, 2011; Hall & Tucker, 2004; Platenkamp & Botterill, 2013; Wijesinghe, Mura, & Culala, 2019) and the need for "epistemological decolonisation" of tourism studies (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). Based on multiple arguments (Hall, 2004; Tribe, 2006), which mainly support the idea that knowledge is situated and shaped by unequal power structures, a new generation of scholars has risen to initiate the so-called "critical turn in tourism studies" (Ateljevic, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2007), followed by conceptualisations of new "hopeful tourism" perspectives (Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011). In this respect, a diverse group of critical theorists has voiced its dissatisfaction with a "largely masculine practice of western thought" (Pritchard et al., 2011; p. 944) and invited the tourism academy to explore "other" forms of knowledge/ways of knowing. Within this line of thought, it has been argued that *other knowledges* (and the alternative research beliefs and practices that inform them), usually produced and disseminated outside English speaking centres (Mura, Mognard, & Sharif, 2017; Tribe, Xiao, & Chambers, 2012), are often marginalised (Ateljevic et al., 2007). Some scholars have also pointed out that the neoliberal academic practices governing the production and circulation of tourism knowledge (e.g. journals' impact factors, KPIs, and academic rankings) contribute to

reiterate this *status quo* (Cohen, Cohen, & King, 2016; Hales, Dredge, Jamal, & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Hall, 2004; Wijesinghe et al., 2019).

Although the tourism academy has been quite critical of concepts like the "critical turn" and "hopeful tourism" (see Higgins-Desbiolles & Whyte, 2013), these agendas have marked a significant moment for tourism research as they have allowed scholars to reflect upon and question existing dominant theoretical and methodological frames. By doing so, they have also facilitated the acceptance of alternative ways of knowing (Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015). Despite this, Mura and Pahlevan Sharif (2015) contend that while debates concerning the dominant assumptions behind tourism research have resonated loudly in western/anglo-saxon circles, sadly these voices have been less incisive within the "non-western"/"colonised" tourism academic world, including Asia. As such, there exists a relative lack of empirical material about the scholarly work of Asian academics and their research beliefs and practices. Recently, some authors have attempted to address this lacuna (Bao, Chen, & Ma, 2014; Chang, 2015; Jorgenson, Law, & King, 2017; Law, Sun, Fong, & Fu, 2016; Mura et al., 2017; Mura & Pahlevan Sharif, 2015; Zhang, 2015). However, whether and how Asian tourism academic systems have been shaped by "dominant" (mainly Eurocentric) straightjackets is a subject of debate and deserves further attention. As such, we contend that additional in-depth qualitative investigations concerning the research beliefs and practices of Asian tourism scholars, and the multiple colonial/postcolonial/neocolonial

forces underpinning knowledge production in Asia, are needed.

Based on these premises, this article explores Asian tourism scholars' research beliefs and practices. More specifically, through in-depth, qualitative interviews, this study gives voice to a group of Asian tourism scholars based in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. We believe that allowing Asian scholars to share their views about their research journeys is important, as little empirical evidence exists about the forces – both at micro and macro levels – that affect the tourism knowledge production, especially within the context of Asian academic circles.

Conceptually, this work mobilises the notions of "intellectual imperialism" and "the captive mind", developed by the Malaysian sociologist Syed Hussein Alatas. We employ this theoretical lens in a critical fashion to assess whether and how both historical (colonial, postcolonial) and contemporary (neocolonial) forms of power have shaped tourism knowledge in academic circles in Asia.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Colonialism and imperialism – a brief overview

The term "colonialism" usually refers to a specific period of modern history (approximately between 1500 and 1950) in which European powers acquired control of territories in different continents, including Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas (Levy & Young, 2011). By expanding their national boundaries through the incorporation of new lands, European states turned into "empires", namely major political conglomerations of lands and peoples ruled by a central political force. The colonial powers that emerged since the 16th century surely did not represent the first form of imperial forces in history. Indeed, socio-political concentrations of power have frequently occurred since ancient (e.g. Roman and Persian empires) and medieval European history (e.g. the Seljuq Empire). Yet, the expansionist forces emerging in the global arena since the 1500s played (and are still playing) a significant role in (re)shaping the world's geographical/epistemological boundaries and political thought in the last 400 years.

While there is no agreement on a universally accepted definition of "imperialism", Webster (2006; p. 4) points out that it generally refers to "the exercise of superior power by a nation-state over weaker nations or territories". The negative consequences of colonialism and imperialism have been amply debated by social scientists. Among the various detrimental effects, perhaps one of the most significant ones concerns the establishment of unequal relationships of power between colonisers and colonised. Drawing on Gallagher and Robinson (1953), Webster (2006) contends that during British colonial times, imperialist forces acted to exert power not necessarily formally – namely through military control – but mostly informally – through economic and psychological dependence. In other words, the colonised (usually indigenous peoples) were often forced to co-operate with the colonisers and in most instances convinced to accept their subordinated role in a passive fashion. In this mechanism of psychological subordination, which attempted to "normalise" structures of subjugation and submission, the British Empire avoided the risks and costs of physical/military confrontation (Webster, 2006). Formal and informal displays of power also included the imposition of specific linguistic practices, such as the establishment of the use of English as *lingua franca* in the British colonies or French in the French colonies. Overall, the relationships of power imposed on the colonised by the European empires were based on exploitation, domination, subjugation and inequality (Alatas, 2000a,b).

Although in the aftermath of the Second World War many of the former colonies gained political independence from the colonisers – propelling a phenomenon of decolonisation in previously subjugated lands – postcolonial and neocolonial legacies (political, socio-cultural and psychological) still represent crystallised realities in the former colonies. Intellectual imperialism encapsulates one of these legacies.

2.2. Intellectual imperialism and the captive mind

> The West is held high while the rest of the world is denigrated. Some views are subtly expressed while others are crudely presented. Basic to intellectual imperialism is the underlying racism or ethnocentrism. (Alatas, 2000a; p. 33)

In analysing the different shapes of imperialism – namely political, economic and social imperialism – Alatas (2000a) introduces the notion of "intellectual imperialism". Departing from the general definitions of imperialism formulated by historians and sociologists, Alatas (2000a, p. 24), refers to intellectual imperialism as

> The domination of one people by another in their world of thinking. Intellectual imperialism is usually an effect of actual direct imperialism or is an effect of indirect domination arising from imperialism.

The argument developed by Alatas since the 1960s (see Alatas, 1969, 1972, 1974, 2000a,b) is based on the idea that the political and economic dominance of the colonisers led to what he refers to as "a parallel structure in the way of thinking of the subjugated people" (Alatas, 2000a; p. 24). More specifically, the theory of intellectual imperialism highlights the existence of parallelisms between forms of economic/political imperialism and the psychological subordination of the peoples colonised. Among the various parallelisms, Alatas (2000a) discusses the similarities between the colonisers' exploitation of raw materials and their exploitation of local intellectual knowledge. Indeed, in way similar to raw materials – which were usually taken from the colonies, processed in the metropole and then sold in the colonies' markets – Western intellectuals (e.g. ethnographers) were used to "collect" knowledge in the colonies, produce/write it in the motherland and then circulate it among the colonised. This led to a process of exploitation of indigenous knowledge, which often did not represent locals' voices but only Western stereotypical perceptions of the "Other".

Likewise, the educational systems of the colonies were structured and developed under the tutelage of the motherland. By doing so, the European empires did not allow the colonies' education systems to flourish based on their own local ontological and epistemological beliefs. Rather, the beliefs of the colonisers were (directly and indirectly) transmitted to/imposed on the colonised peoples, who were forced to conform to these rules and practices. Overall, intellectual imperialism silenced local scholars' voices and local beliefs, which were regarded as "irrelevant and outmoded" (Alatas, 2000a; p. 27), and contemplated the supremacy of European ways of knowing and knowledge/s.

The justification for European empires' needs to exert intellectual control over their colonies was propelled by several arguments orchestrated during the Enlightenment. Pitts (2011) discusses how a cognitive-development concept of progress was often employed by Scottish and English thinkers to support the necessity of intellectual imperialism. Drawing on Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, such as William Robertson and Henry Home, cognitive-development theories assumed that as individuals progressively develop their cognitive skills, societal groups become capable of conceiving more complex abstract phenomena and concepts, such as the notion of property. Importantly, this theory posited that while European societies were perceived as groups that had developed more elaborated conceptual thinking abilities over time, non-European peoples had to be labelled as "primitive" due to their individuals' limited cognitive development. According to this line of thought, European societies' intellectual control was a necessary support to develop the colonies' primitive cognitive skills. However, in Pitts' (2011, p. 22) words, "the cognitive-development approach thus had a tendency to infantilize and, indeed to some degree, to dehumanize members of "primitive" societies".

Said (1978) critically assesses the additional arguments produced to justify European intellectual imperialist ideology, which often tended to conceal the exploitative economic gains underpinning the empire's

expansionist and mercantilist agenda. In *Orientalism* (Said, 1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (Said, 1993), he argues that European colonisers tended to construct stereotyped negative images of the "orient", which was mostly portrayed as uncivilised and barbarous. More specifically, non-European peoples were conceived (in detrimental terms) as the "different others", mainly due to their different cultural and religious beliefs (see Webster, 2006 on the role of religion in imperialistic agendas). As Webster (2006, p. 98) points out, this "created a European mindset which made imperial conquest of such peoples less morally problematic, and for some easily defendable". Although Said and post-colonial theorists' ideas have been a subject of heated debates among scholars (see MacKenzie, 1994), they still represent important conceptual frames to understand how the colonised were turned into "captive minds".

A captive mind is "a way of thinking [that] imitates, and is dominated by, Western thought in an uncritical manner" (Alatas, 2000a; p. 37). Captive minds, which are usually unconscious of their captivity, lack creativity and tend to reproduced acquired (Western) ways of thinking and knowing without taking into account local situations and contextualised issues. Importantly, captive minds play an active role in (re)producing and reinforcing imperialist structures of power and Western intellectual dominance. Within this scenario, a vicious circle occurs – Western dominance contributes to shape "captive minds" in the non-Western world, which in turn represent fertile soil for the implantation of Western values.

2.3. Intellectual imperialism and tourism knowledge in Asia

Intellectual imperialism and captive minds have played a main role in producing and shaping knowledge in Asia (Heryanto, 2002), and tourism knowledge in particular (Wijesinghe et al., 2019; Winter, 2009). Yet, in the last 15 years, critiques to this status quo have begun to emerge in the tourism literature. In this regard, one of the most incisive initiatives questioning Western assumptions in the production of tourism knowledge has been represented by Pritchard et al.'s (2011) notion of "hopeful tourism", propelled by the "critical turn in tourism studies" (Ateljevic et al., 2007). More specifically, hopeful tourism encourages an approach to tourism studies that "aims for co-created learning, and […] recognises the power of sacred and indigenous knowledge and passionate scholarship" (Pritchard et al., 2011; p. 929). Likewise, other tourism scholars, such as Alneng (2002) and Edensor (1998), have questioned the Western-centric epistemological foundations behind tourism scholarship, especially Asian tourism scholarly production. In this respect, Winter (2009) points out that since all the key concepts in tourism, such as the "tourist gaze", "mass tourism" and the "grand tour", reflect societal changes and phenomena confined within Western contexts, they hardly can be applied to Asian settings. As such, much of the tourism scholarly production on Asia mobilising these concepts is biased by Western frames of inquiry (Cohen et al., 2016).

Besides instances of mere criticism, epistemological solutions to overcome Eurocentric and Western epistemological assumptions have also been proposed by tourism scholars. Drawing on Syed Farid Alatas' (2006) call for non-Western "alternative discourses" and Urry's (2000) conceptualisations on mobilities, Cohen and Cohen (2015), for example, contend that a theoretical shift from tourism to a "mobilities paradigm" could pave the way for less Eurocentric approaches to tourism studies. Their stance is mainly grounded on the idea that a mobilities paradigm "is largely free of Eurocentric assumptions" (Cohen & Cohen, 2015; p. 163) and could thus allow the tourism academy to go beyond Western modernist binaries dominating tourism studies (e.g. centre/periphery; hosts/guests). However, King (2015a; p. 512) criticises Cohen and Cohen's (2015) proposal as "it fails to provide the tools to examine what is happening in the everyday worlds of social and cultural engagement: power struggles and battles for empowerment, conflict and tension, unequal exchange, reciprocity, intercultural

engagement, emulation and others". Instead, he recommends the concept of "encounter" or "interaction" as a vehicle to cast additional light on Asian tourist experiences and overcome crystallised binaries (e.g. Western/Asian; insider/outsider; tourists/locals) (King, 2015a,b).

Overall, although the tourism academy has propelled critical debates and solutions to promote "other" forms of knowledge (see Ateljevic et al., 2007; Cohen & Cohen, 2015; Pritchard et al., 2011), the production of tourism knowledge in Asia is still highly influenced by Western knowledge traditions (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015; Mura & Pahlevan Sharif, 2015; Winter, 2009). This is not surprising as most of the current Asian tourism scholars have been educated in systems that directly and indirectly have tended to promote Western values (Wijesinghe et al., 2019). Furthermore, as King (2015a, p. 518) has rightly noted, "ironically, the call for the indigenization of Asian tourism research has come primarily from Western social scientists or social scientists working in Western institutions".

It needs to be emphasised that the influence of Western thought vary among the nations constituting "Asia" due to different colonial histories (Mura & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018). Countries like Malaysia and Singapore, for example, have educational systems more aligned to Anglo-Saxon values and practices than others (e.g. Thailand, China) due to their colonial past. Yet, all Asian countries need to confront post-colonial/neocolonial legacies and globalising structures of power, which directly and indirectly may reiterate Western thought and dominance (Wijesinghe & Mura, 2018).

3. Methodology

This work is guided by an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, which ontologically contemplates the existence of multiple, socially constructed and politically constrained realities. From an epistemological perspective, this study contemplates the subjective and 'situated' nature of knowledge. Importantly, as we value reflexivity in the process of knowledge production, we emphasise the need to situate ourselves in the text. The first author, a European scholar based in Malaysia whose work has focused on epistemological issues concerning tourism knowledge, is the second author's PhD supervisor. The second author is a Sri Lankan scholar who is currently exploring neocolonial structures of power in the production and dissemination of tourism knowledge in Southeast Asia. We believe that the composition of the team – an Asian PhD tourism scholar (early-career) and a European tourism scholar (mid-career) allows us to have and share etic and emic perspectives on the topic. The empirical material for this work is grounded on qualitative interviews conducted with a group of Southeast Asian academics working in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam (see Table 1). The selection of the three countries was driven by the idea of considering different historical, political and social contexts in Asia in order to have a better understanding of research beliefs from multiple perspectives. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were privileged based on the belief that "when participants are provided with opportunities to narrate and (re) construct stories, they are more likely to be effectively making sense of their experiences and the world at large" (Barton, 2004, p. 521).

In total, 24 semi-structured interviews were conducted across Malaysia (10), Thailand (7) and Vietnam (7). Participants were selected using a purposive and snowball sampling method. First, a list of academics working in tourism programmes or writing about tourism was created via multiple platforms. These included the ASEAN Tourism Research Association (ATRA), the International Centre for Research and Study in Tourism (CIRET), the Malaysian Citation Index, the Thai Citation Index, LinkedIn, Researchgate, and university websites. In order to encourage in-depth discussions, the participants were always provided with the option of being interviewed in their own native language. As Ndimande (2012, p.216) points out, "one way to eliciting in-depth responses and perspectives from participants is to involve them through their most proficient language…in which people formulate their thoughts as they respond to questions". However, all those

Table 1
Participant profile.

Country	University type	Age	Gender	Seniority	Research specializations	Preferred language (writing)	Preferred methodology
Malaysia	Public	50–55	Female	Senior Lecturer	Product Development and Destination Marketing/Tourism Policies and Incentives/tourism planning	English	Quantitative
Malaysia	Public	45–50	Male	Professor	Tourism Management/consumer behavior/service marketing	English	Quantitative
Malaysia	Public	35–40	Male	Senior Lecturer	Heritage Management/Forestry/Tourism routes	English	Quantitative
Malaysia	Public	40–45	Male	Senior Lecturer	sustainable rural tourism and local community development, regional and rural planning	English and Malay	Quantitative
Malaysia	Public	35–40	Female	Senior Lecturer	Environmental sociology, Indigenous community, sustainability, Island tourism	English	Qualitative
Malaysia	Public	50–55	Female	Associate Professor	Consumer behaviour, sustainable tourism	English	Quantitative
Malaysia	Public	55–60	Female	Associate Professor	Heritage trails/tourism, urban design	English	Mixed Method
Malaysia	Private	60–65	Male	Professor	Brands Management, Curriculum Development, Employee Development, product innovation	English	Quantitative
Malaysia	Private	40–45	Female	Senior Lecturer	employment law, human resource management, occupational health and safety	English	Qualitative
Malaysia	Private	60–65	Female	Senior Lecturer	Strategic Human Resource Mgt, Diversity Mgt, HRM Practices in Hotel Industry	English	Quantitative
Thailand	Private	50–55	Male	Associate Professor	Tourist behaviour, marketing, Cross-cultural studies in tourism, sustainable tourism, Hospitality and tourism management	English	Quantitative
Thailand	Private	65–70	Male	Associate Professor	Tourist behaviour, cultural tourism management	English	Quantitative
Thailand	Public (Open)	45–50	Female	Lecturer	tourism planning, health tourism, eco-tourism, cruise tourism	English & Thai	Mixed Method
Thailand	Public	45–50	Male	Assistant Professor	Strategic Management, Entrepreneurial development, Customer loyalty	English	Mixed Method
Thailand	Public	35–40	Male	Lecturer	Genetic algorithms / Applied financial econometrics / Portfolio theory / Optimization in finance	English	Quantitative
Thailand	Public	35–40	Female	Lecturer	Marine & Coastal tourism, sustainability, local community	English	Mixed Method
Thailand	Public	45–50	Female	Assistant Professor	Consumer behaviour, tourism planning & management	English	Quantitative
Vietnam	Private	35–40	Male	Lecturer	Not involved in research	N/A	N/A
Vietnam	Private	30–35	Female	Senior Lecturer	Sustainable tourism behaviour, young traveller	English	Quantitative
Vietnam	Public	45–50	Female	Professor	Destination marketing, event and festival tourism	Vietnamese	Quantitative
Vietnam	Private	30–35	Female	Lecturer	Not involved in research	N/A	N/A
Vietnam	Public	65–70	Male	Professor	Sustainable & eco-tourism, community-based tourism	English & Vietnamese	Mixed-Method
Vietnam	Public	50–55	Male	Professor	Ecotourism, sustainable tourism, tourism policy and law, state management of tourism.	English	Quantitative
Vietnam	Private	45–50	Male	Senior Lecturer	Corporate Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Tourism Development, Social Interface, Leadership and High Performing Culture	English	Quantitative

who had agreed to participate in the study opted for English as the language for the interview. Although the option of an interpreter/translator was made available, the participants' need to converse directly with the author, instead of a third person, may have influenced their decision to undertake the interview in English.

A consent form and a list of interview questions were emailed to all participants before the interview (see Appendix A). The semi-structured interviews were organised around six themes, namely: (1) personal background and education; (2) work experience; (3) research interests, specializations and disciplines; (4) paradigmatic beliefs, methodologies and methods; (5) institutional structures of power; and (6) colonialism and neocolonialism. The interviews were only audio recorded with the full consent and acknowledgement of the participants and then transcribed verbatim. Notes were taken during the interviews and one of the authors maintained a reflective diary after each session. Only minor language corrections and alterations were performed to the transcriptions and the co-produced narratives to maintain the originality of the opinions expressed as much as possible.

The thematic analysis process of this research involved three levels of manual coding and further categorising to enable us to understand and interpret collectively the realities encapsulated in the narratives. We followed the three levels of coding proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The thematic analysis in this study was inductive in nature and the authors strived to suspend any predetermined assumptions and beliefs. Moreover, participant checks were carried out to increase the trustworthiness of the emergent themes.

The empirical material presented below is organised around three main themes. Firstly, a profile of the participants is presented, with a particular emphasis on their educational backgrounds (and whether/how these played a role in influencing their teaching/research beliefs and practices). Secondly, an overview of participants' research beliefs is offered, with a discussion concerning their perceptions of theories developed by Western and Asian scholars. Finally, the neocolonial power structures that may influence Asian scholars' research beliefs and practices are discussed.

4. Presenting the empirical material

4.1. Participants' profile and their educational backgrounds

Of the total 24 participants (12 males and 12 females), 15 currently teach and conduct research in tourism in public universities while 9 are affiliated with private institutions (see Tables 1 and 2). Interestingly, although most of the participants (15) refer to themselves as "tourism scholars", they did not complete undergraduate studies in tourism but in other fields, including finance, business, management, forestry, urban and regional planning, engineering, geography, sociology, literature, linguistics, international relations, law, and medicine. When inquired about their postgraduate qualifications, a similar scenario emerged as 14 participants earned degrees in business and management. Among those who completed both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in tourism and hospitality (9), the main area of interest was on tourism management.

An important aspect that emerged during the interviews was that the majority of participants earned at least one of their academic degrees from universities based in the United States of America or the United Kingdom. The choice of North American or UK universities was very common among Malaysians, whose studies (either undergraduate or postgraduate) were often sponsored by governmental scholarships.

I got a scholarship and the scholarship required us to go to the US and the UK. Priority was US. We thought that UK degrees have similarities [to Malaysian degrees] because we are a former British colony. So, at that time US was the upcoming country inviting international students and that is why I chose the US, other than the

UK. (P8/Malaysia/Private/Male/60–65)

I got a scholarship from the Cambridge Commonwealth trust, that's why I continued to do my masters there (P9/Malaysia/Private/Female/40–45).

So my PhD is in urban design and I did it in London. I got a scholarship from *omitted* (local university) so I had to do it overseas. (P7/Malaysia/Public/Female/55–60)

The fact that most of the Malaysian interviewees were educated in the UK or North America can be explained by the country's colonial past and neocolonial (capitalist) present. Malaysia is a Southeast Asian country that was colonised from the beginning of the 1500s by three European countries, namely Portugal, the Netherlands and Britain. Since gaining formal independence in 1957, the country's main political and social structures/activities have been shaped by former colonial (mainly British) structures. As Ibrahim, Muslim, and Buang (2011) point out, the handover of power from Britain to the predominantly foreign-educated Malaysian elite tended to reiterate the governance models established by the former colonisers in all the organizational structures, including education. Indeed, "Malaysia upon independence in 1957, inherited a British-oriented national infrastructure, including an education system, ranging from grade schools to higher education with its Western intellectual, ideological, and political conventions" (Subramani & Kempner, 2002; p. 233). Post-independence years marked a time when a significant number of young scholars were sent abroad (mainly to the UK and USA) for higher education, a phenomenon that influenced the way local universities were developed once Malaysian academics returned home (Ismail & Musa, 2007; Lim, 1993).

During the interviews, one of the Malaysian participants expressed his views about how the British system shaped post-independence education in Malaysia, with a particular emphasis on the use of English as language of instruction in local schools and universities:

I remember, even when I went to university during 1979 and graduated in 1981, it was all in English. In the 80s lecturers were still teaching in English. Everything was in English, except for the national language. Even when I did my MBA in University of Malaya and then my PhD in Multimedia University, it was all in English. Generally, it is still in English. (P10/Malaysia/Private/Male/60–65)

The idea that dependency structures from the British persisted after independence was also discussed by other participants:

Well, I think in terms of structure, when I was studying in the university, because everything was in English, a lot of the lecturers had their education either in the US, UK, or Australia. Whichever books we were using, they were basically from these countries. We didn't have local books. It was very British and American oriented and I was very much influenced by that (P10/Malaysia/Private/Female/60–65)

From my experience, we inherited the town planning system from the British. That's why many of the senior professors, those who set up the planning schools, they studied in England, from various universities. So, we are maintaining the system. (P4/Malaysia/Public/Male/40–45)

In general, despite their particular field of study, Asian tourism academics' learning experiences (at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels) were heavily influenced by British and American texts. This contributed to shape their worldviews on phenomena (including tourism) according to Western-centric beliefs and internalise concepts and theories in English that not necessarily can be applied to their local cultures/beliefs/languages. As Connell (2013) points out, the adoption of a foreign language tends to alienate individuals from their own culture and society. Indeed, as a carrier of culture and knowledge, language is embedded with the various aspects of a society (wa Thiong'o, 1981). In other words, when adopting a specific language,

Table 2

Participants' academic and work profile.

Degree & location	Master & location	PhD & location	Non-academic work experience
Transportation, Tourism & Travel (United States-**S**[a])	Tourism Planning & Development (United Kingdom-**S**)	PhD in Hospitality and Tourism (United Kingdom-**S**)	No (minor internships)
Degree in Medicine (Malaysia)	Masters in Tourism Geography (New Zealand)	PhD in Tourism (health) (New Zealand)- **S**	Medical Field (7 years)
Degree in Management & Recreation Services (Malaysia)	Masters in Park & Outdoor Recreation (Malaysia)	PhD in Heritage Management (United Kingdom)-**S**	No (minor part-time work)
Bachelor of Urban & Regional Planning (Malaysia)	Masters in Urban & Regional Planning (Malaysia)	PhD in Planning (Sustainable Tourism) (United Kingdom)- **S**	No
Degree in Chemistry (United States)	Masters in Environmental Studies (Australia)	PhD in Environmental Studies (Malaysia)	Scientific Officer (NGO)
Bachelors in International Relations (United Kingdom)	Masters in Business Administration (Malaysia)	PhD in Tourism Economics (Malaysia)-**S**	Public Office and Banking
Degree in Town Planning (United Kingdom)-**S**	Masters in Town Planning (Malaysia)	PhD in Urban Design (United Kingdom)- **S**	No
Degree in Hotel & Restaurant Management (United States)-**S**	Master's Degree of Professional Services (MPS) in Travel and Tourism Management (United States)-**S**	PhD in Food & Leisure (United Kingdom)-**S**	Hospitality Industry
Bachelor of Law (United Kingdom)- **S**	Master of Law (United Kingdom)-**S**	PhD in Tourism (Law & Governance)	Legal Office (20 years)
Degree in Economics (Malaysia)	Masters in Business Administration (Malaysia)	PhD in Management (Malaysia)	Public Office (30 years)
Degree in Hospitality Management (Thailand)	Masters in Business Administration (United States)-**S**	PhD in Tourism Management (Australia)-**S**	Hotel Industry (6 years)
Degree in Public Health Science (Thailand)	Masters in Sociology (Thailand)	PhD in Sociology (Australia)- **S**	English Teacher (5 years)
Degree in Hotel Management (Japan)-**S**	Masters in Hospitality & Tourism (United States)	PhD in Tourism (United Kingdom)	Airline Industry (2 years)
Bachelor in Hotel & Tourism Management (Thailand)	Masters in Hospitality Management (Italy)- **S**	PhD in Corporate Management (Tourism) (China)-**S**	No
Degree in Mechanical Engineering (Thailand)	Masters in Finance (Thailand)	PhD in Applied Finance (Malaysia)-**S**	Engineer (7 years)
Degree in Tourism Development (Thailand)	Masters in Ecological Management (United States)- **S**	PhD in Tourism (Thailand)	No
Degree in Finance (Thailand)	Masters in Business Administration (Thailand)	PhD in Tourism (United States)	No
Degree in French Literature (France)	Master in Education & Pedagogy (France)	No	French teacher/Travel Industry (8 years)
Degree in Hotel Management (Singapore)	Masters in Service Management (Netherland)	No	Travel Industry (6 years to current)
Degree in Tourism (Vietnam)	Masters in Tourism (Vietnam)	PhD in Cultural Management (Vietnam)	No
Degree in Business Administration (Vietnam)	Master's in Hospitality Management (United States) Postgraduate Diploma in tourism (Switzerland)	No	Hotel & Travel industry (3 years)
Degree in Geography (Ukraine)-**S**	No	PhD in Geography (Vietnam)	Teacher (4 years)
Bachelor of Tourism Studies (Vietnam)	Masters in Tourism Administration (Malaysia)	PhD Tourism (Japan)-S	No
Degree in Foreign Studies (Vietnam)	Masters in Business Administration (Australia)	PhD in Management (Switzerland)	Travel Industry (7 years)

[a] S = With scholarship.

individuals also adopt the set of beliefs and practices underpinning that society (epistemic thinking). This also affects one's understanding of the world (wa Thiong'o, 1981).

> When it comes to knowledge that is confirmed as legitimate, we follow English literature, because it is reliable and of good quality, and eventually we follow all the [English] theories. Most of our staff were educated in English-speaking countries, such as the UK, US and Australia, so eventually we follow that (P2/Malaysia/Public/Male/45-50).

> There are things that I don't know how to express in Malay. I am more comfortable with writing in English (P7/Malaysia/Public/Female/55–60).
> I prefer to write in English, my Thai is getting worse now, especially Thai for academic writing, because I have been using English in the international environment so when I think of the appropriate word, the word in English comes first. I cannot think of the proper word in Thai (P16/Thailand/Public/Female/35–40).
> I think that articles written in English and articles that are published outside have a broader idea, so I tend to look for articles published in English. I have a lot of critiques and questions about articles written in Vietnamese (P24/Vietnam/Private/Male/45–50).

The interviewees also discussed how their education training in the UK or the USA influenced their approaches to teaching and conducting research on tourism upon their return to Malaysia:

> During my master's studies, we used this book by John Glasson (the participant shows the book). For those who study regional planning, John Glasson is like a guru in regional planning. His book became our text book in urban and regional planning (P4/Malaysia/Public/Male/40–45).
> Having being in the UK influences some of my approaches towards work and towards teaching as well (P9/Malaysia/Private/Female/40–45).
> Because I was educated in that way, now I am brainwashing my students to think in that way. So yeah, it's really part of me (P7/Malaysia/Public/Female/55–60).

Likewise, in Thailand academics were provided with scholarships to study abroad, especially in countries like the US, UK or Australia. Thai participants explained that even though Thailand was never colonised by Western powers, its educational system has been influenced by some Western countries. Indeed, during the time several parts of Southeast Asia were subjected to European colonization, one of the strategies utilized by the Thai Monarchy to prevent colonization was to self-modernize the country (Bhumiratana & Commins, 2012), and to prove that Thailand, as a perceived civilised land, was unsuitable for colonization (Rhein, 2016). As such, starting with King Rama IV, and later King Rama V, the kings and their children were sent to Europe (mainly to France and England) for educational purposes. After returning home, King Rama V introduced major reforms to the existing Thai educational structures, including "centres for higher education incorporating elements of Western influence" (Bhumiratana & Commins, 2012, p.3). Before the cold war, Thailand was thus predominantly structured

around the British educational model. This point was also discussed by some of the Thai interviewees:

> Before we adopted the American system, the Kings from Rama 5 sent their children to be educated in Europe, like in France and in England. At that time, we used the British system. This is the result of the modernization of King Rama V, who was the grandfather of the late King Rama IX. The king was very fond of European culture and education and he sent their children to be educated in Europe, like in Germany, France and England. But after World War 2, when American had more power, we changed to the American system (P12/Thailand/Private/Male/65–70).
>
> To be honest we have no education knowledge. Even if at the time we were not colonised, many western countries came to check Thailand. The British came, the Dutch and Portugal. King Rama 5 studied abroad and came back. So, he went overseas and came back here and initiated many things that westerners have. He set up universities, the railway system and you know freedom of the slave. These things come from western thinking. I know that King Rama 5 studied overseas and so did 6, 7, 8. All studied overseas (P15/Thailand/Public/Male/30–35).

The participants also pointed out that even those studying in Thailand were highly exposed to curricula, teaching material, academic texts and theories mainly developed by Western authors:

> I was young and I studied using English books. In school we used Oxford (P13/Thailand/Public/Female/45–50)
>
> We had to rely on the commercial texts from Europe or from America (P11)
>
> I had to learn the idea of French sociologists like Émile Durkheim. I also read Max Weber, who was a German sociologist, and also Talcott Parsons, the American sociologist, amongst others (P12/Thailand/Private/Male/65–70).

However, during the Cold War, as Thailand became an American ally to fight communism, it became increasingly close to American values and practices. Within this scenario, the American government provided scholarships to Thai students to be educated in American universities. This facilitated the incorporation of American values into the country's educational structures, which were subsequently partly transmitted to the wider local community. Therefore, although Thailand was never officially colonised, it was subject to dependency patterns similar to those experienced by other colonised countries.

> Even though we have not been colonized, the education system is dominated by Western powers, especially the ideas of the American education system. Because most of the scholars who work in the Ministry of Education were educated in American universities. Many lecturers in most universities were educated in America. So, the American way of thinking is transmitted through these scholars. So, I feel that we are not different from other neighbouring countries that have been under colonization. We are under the Western influence (P12/Thailand/Private/Male/65–70)
>
> We send scholars overseas, mainly US, and they come back and work for Governmental Universities. So, these people many years ago had influential power to decide and to construct the way of thinking in Thailand. So even if we were not under colonization, somehow we got influential power from US thinking. This was like 60–80 years ago. Thailand decided to send people to study in developed countries (P15/Thailand/Public/Male/35–40).
>
> In Thailand, the higher education was developed by a lot of professors who graduated from abroad. Like this faculty, more than 80% graduated from abroad (P14/Thailand/Public/Male/45–50).

As the interviewees pointed out, in Thailand the social theories developed by Western scholars have become the unspoken reference point for tourism educators. Importantly, one of the participants argued that often these theories are applied without taking into consideration the socio-cultural, economic, and political local contexts:

> This is from the US, what people teach here. They just take the power points given by the publisher and just read them. But they never compare them to real empirical findings. Whether this applies to Thailand. They just teach them the mother paper in each class. Just read. The mother paper could be from 1980 (P17/Thailand/Public/Female/45–50).

Among the three countries considered for this study, Vietnam perhaps represents the most peculiar context as the country was influenced by different nations, including China, France, Russia, and later the USA. Educational patterns of mobility in Vietnam were predominantly to France and other European nations, such as the Netherlands and Switzerland, and later to the former Soviet Union and the USA. Both local and foreign (France and Russia) governments used to grant scholarships to Vietnamese scholars:

> I got a scholarship to study in France (from the French Consulate in Vietnam) and I went to study in France for 7 years. I got a master of education and pedagogy (French Linguistics) and also another one about French literature and language (P18/Vietnam/Private/Male/35–40)
>
> I was chosen to go to Kiev University in Ukraine to do my studies in a university, in the faculty of geography (P22/Vietnam/Public/Male/65–70)
>
> In our country, during this time, many people graduated from Russian universities (P19/Vietnam/Private/Female/30–35).

One of the participants (P22), a senior Vietnamese scholar, recalled his contribution in establishing the faculty of tourism studies in a national Vietnamese university. Having gained his education from Ukraine, he emphasised how much of the curriculum (which involved the geography of tourism), referred to Russian authors. Under the former Soviet model between the 1960s and 1980s, Vietnam's higher education was highly influenced by the Soviet system, "with large number of Vietnamese lecturers trained in Eastern Europe" (Dang, 2009, no page). Other Vietnamese participants explained that in the 1980s a shift in intellectual influence began to emerge, with forms of knowledge not only imported by countries under the former Soviet Union's hegemony but also by Western countries:

> For my first lecture, I translated almost everything from Russian and Bulgarian. The book is in Russian but I translated it for my lecture. It is all in Russian (he shows the book). After that, my references were on authors like Bonne Brian and Roman Surry. They write geography of tourism in English. I went from Russian to Western texts (P22/Vietnam/Public/Male/65–70)
>
> I think that the only thing is the French impact on education and educational programmes in Vietnam. We copied the exact programme from the French. Another thing is, I don't think we are affected by the French anymore because as you know, after the French decolonisation we were in the Vietnam War with the Americans, so we adopted again a new culture, a new system, which is the American system. So French influence yes. They [the French] affected us a little bit but not much, not as much as the Americans. The university system is more American than French. I think the elementary school and high school are more French but universities are more American (P18/Vietnam/Private/Male/35–40).

Influenced by various ideologies, each generation of Vietnamese scholars has tended to reiterate the myths embedded in (neo)colonial ideologies, the last of it being the American ideology. Since the 1990s, many Vietnamese students travelled to the USA for educational reasons as they perceived the American educational system to be of higher quality than that transmitted in local universities (Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008). After returning home, several tourism scholars contributed to transmit the ideologies learnt overseas to the next generations:

Yes, it [the Vietnamese educational system] is similar to the American system. We use American textbooks because I studied from America so the way that I teach also adopts the American way (P21/Vietnam/Private/Female/30–35)

We use American textbooks (P23/Vietnam/Public/Male/50–55)

We try to adapt whatever we learn from our professor (abroad) and we are teaching that way for our students (P19/Vietnam/Private/Female/30–35)

Most of us studied in Vietnam for some time and after that went abroad. So that made us change. Now we come back and we want to make that change. (P24/Vietnam/Private/Male/45–50)

Overall, the interviewees conducted with Malaysian, Thai and Vietnamese scholars seem to highlight that participants' educational backgrounds and experiences (mostly in Western institutions) played a role in shaping their research/teaching beliefs and practices.

4.2. Participants' beliefs of theories developed by Western and Asian scholars

A theme emerging from the interviews concerns participants' beliefs of foreign (predominantly Western) theories. The discussion on the use of theories was centred on the development of tourism, by referring to theories concerning its development, planning, management, and governance. In general, the interviewees seemed to privilege the use of foreign theories, mostly developed by Western scholars, over theories developed by Asian academics:

Foreign theories, I would say, especially those coming from more developed countries like America and the UK, tend to be more advanced. So, from this part of the world, we tend to adopt them. This happened from the time when the first ministers or whoever went abroad to study. Because we are new, in a sense we are not very advanced yet. They [Western scholars] came up with theories earlier than you, you know. A lot of things earlier than you. So, you want to study how they did it (P7/Malaysia/Public/Female/55–60)

In Asia, we are behind compared to what they are doing. When you look at modernization for example, they go first (P8/Malaysia/Private/Male/60–65)

Compared to advanced countries like the UK, for example, we are yet to get to that level (P6/Malaysia/Public/Female/50–55)

They are more advanced in their sense of thinking… So yeah, try to think of it as something positive and not negative (P9/Malaysia/Private/Female/40–45)

When we think about tourism, you see Thailand also has a lot of the diversity in the tourism attractions but why we don't have not much people coming. Why is France number 1? So they have something that is very good for management right? So that's why. I think we should contact Europe and should contact France because there is something that we should learn from them (P13/Thailand/Public/Female/45–50)

We have to thank them for creating that thinking (P12/Thailand/Private/Male/65–70)

I think that we keep applying western theories and knowledge as we realize that they have already moved way forward compared to Asia. So, we should learn from them, we should learn the best from them (P19/Vietnam/Private/Female/30–35)

If we can really follow the theories from an international level (Western) then we will have a very successful tourism industry in the future. (P23/Vietnam/Public/Male/50–55)

Importantly, the scholars interviewed referred to foreign theories as

"more developed" and "more advanced" while theories developed by Asian scholars and local knowledge were labelled as "at its infancy" and "not very advanced yet" (again this is mainly because of economic power and political ideologies). This seems to support Alatas (2000a, p. 27), who claimed that captive minds tend to regard local scholars' voices and non-Western beliefs as "irrelevant and outmoded". The reason such perceptions exist is mainly due to the economic focus of tourism itself. What should be noted here is that the Asian tourism academics' choice of dependence upon Western-centric frameworks or theories for the development of tourism in Asia is driven by a perception that the West represents the epitome of the 'developed' and 'modernised' world in business/economic terms. This in turn is translated as an 'advanced' sense of thinking or better cognitive abilities. Hence, both industry and education stemming from the West are, in essence, perceived as of high importance to drive tourism (or the nation state in general) to a 'developed' stage, the Western stage. However, few interviewees also questioned this line of thought and recognised the importance of adapting foreign theories to local beliefs:

Westerners… they don't talk about spiritual or religious aspects in development or in modernization or in market driven economy. So, in this study we came up with this framework where we tried to insert three relationships, namely man and man, man and environment, and man and God (P4/Malaysia/Public/Male/40-45)

For example, the UNWTO set a global worldwide standard for heritage, how to preserve and how to conserve the originality of a specific site. But that is very broad. It may work for one area but it may not work for another area. So, I think you should see yourself as a base first and then see what you may need, and what may work for you based on your own roots, your own knowledge, the way that you live and see if that is suitable for you and then you try to adapt that to your needs. I think you should see yourself first and then outside, not outside and then yourself (P16/Thailand/Public/Female/35–40).

Indeed, epistemic values and beliefs are very much diverse across cultures. However, as national and regional agendas are highly aligned with visions of becoming 'developed like the West', knowledge structures and academic knowledge production are largely driven by Western thought.

Some participants recognised their academic dependency upon Western theories. Yet, when inquired about the reasons behind their perceptions, they pointed out that to cite work produced by Western scholars is necessary to publish in "top journals". As such, forms of knowledge present outside of journals perceived as "top" are often overlooked/dismissed and theories developed by non-local scholars are preferred. In general, since the first generation of scholars, tourism academics in the three Asian countries have been detached from the need to uproot conceptualisations of tourism (and later development of tourism) that are grounded on local ontologies and epistemologies. As the needs of tourism in the three countries remain largely economic in nature, the knowledge research bases are guided by Western concepts of development. As generations of scholars have been trained in this particular way, younger scholars are even further detached from local and indigenous epistemologies (see Wijesinghe et al., 2019).

4.3. Asian tourism scholars in current neocolonial times – looking West or looking East?

An important point emerging from the transcripts is that besides historical reasons (mostly related to colonialism and postcolonialism), contemporary neocolonial power structures (propelled by capitalistic and globalising forces) influence global academic circles, including Asian scholars. As current higher education institutions in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam strive to pursue 'internationalisation' strategies, they tend to follow global evaluation criteria. Among them, university rankings have become a reference point for assessing the perceived

quality of an institution (Cohen et al., 2016; Fennell, 2013; Hales et al., 2018). For example, one of the most important documents directing the future developments of education in Malaysia – "The Malaysian Education Blueprint" – reports that "at least one Malaysian university is to be ranked among the top 25 in Asia, two Malaysian universities in the global top 100, and four Malaysian universities in the global 200" (Wan, Sirat, & Razak, 2015; p. 271). The emphasis on rankings has in effect created an environment where certain forms of published scholarly work (e.g. articles published in journals indexed on Scopus or Web of Science) are perceived of higher value than others (Cohen et al., 2016). This point was often reiterated by the interviewees, who explained that the universities they are affiliated with have progressively encouraged/forced them to publish in Scopus/SSCI journals:

> It used to be Scopus but now it's extended to ISI & Scopus as well. So, if we don't publish there, then it means that we don't publish. It's not counted. Now they also consider Tier 1 & Tier 2. Like, for promotion or higher promotion, certain numbers of Q1 & Q2 or Tier 1 or Tier 2 ISI articles need to be published. So, certainly some persons will target those journals (P2/Malaysia/Public/Male/45–50)
>
> Now this year they want Q1 & Q2 journals. It's quite tough (P4/Malaysia/Public/Male/45–50)
>
> They also have incentives. If any faculty can get published in an international journal, they can get a big reward. Yes bonus, a big bonus. For any international publication Maybe about 3000USD (P11/Thailand/Private/Male/50–55)
>
> They will give a reward to people if they publish in ISI journals, articles in ISI journals. I am not sure how much. I don't remember the amount of the reward but I think it is maybe equivalent to 2 or 3 times my monthly salary. My salary in total is about 900 US dollars (laugh) (P22/Vietnam/Public/Male/65–70).

Many interviewees seem to reiterate a point already discussed by Hall (2011), who has claimed that tourism academics are often forced to target a limited number of journals to publish their work. However, it is also important to note that the dissemination of knowledge is not only governed by national and institutional structures of power but also by individual psychological ties. In this respect, Asian academics referred to publishing in English in 'top' journals as a matter of 'self-satisfaction' because it enables them 'to feel closer' to Western scholars. It is indeed a deep-seated psychological conundrum that is further propelled by historical and contemporary political, economic, social and institutional structures (see Fanon, 1952).

Importantly, most international journals, which only accept work written in English, are situated (with few exceptions, e.g. *Tourism Recreation Research* and *Asia-Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*) in Western countries. As such, the policies related to tourism research dissemination are shaped and negotiated by "narrow cultural/linguistic groups" (Canagarajah, 1996; p. 440). As Naidoo (2003) notes, authors from all over the world (especially those based in non-Western institutions) have to shape and negotiate their research according to the accepted norms diffused by Western journals in order to gain international recognition and subsequently boost national and institutional competitiveness. As some of the participants pointed out:

> The Journal of Travel Research, Annals of Tourism Research are Q1 journals. If you are in the area, you must know. But the thing is that everyone wants to publish in these top journals. It's also more for self-satisfaction. One is self-satisfied and also recognised by others (P1/Malaysia/Public/Female/50–55)
>
> I need to challenge myself to write for journals with an impact factor (P5/Malaysia/Public/Female/35–40)
>
> Most of my articles are published in 'Tourism Management'. So that is the main target because that is the number one journal in Tourism. If you think about tourism knowledge, the most reliable sources are from 'Tourism Management', so we have to follow that.

> So, I have about 10 or more publications in Tourism Management (P2/Malaysia/Public/Male/45–50)
>
> This is my first publication in Tier 1 ISI so it is my pride (P15/Thailand/Public/Male/35–40)
>
> Scopus is not good enough already. I am already supposed to publish in ISI. Not because the other journals are not good journals but because the university wants to play this ranking game (P22/Vietnam/Public/Male/65–70).

One aspect observed here was that there exist differences among the three countries considered for this study. More specifically, tourism academics in Malaysia placed more emphasis on the idea and need to publish in "international" journals than the scholars based in Thailand and Vietnam. In Thailand, the interviewees explained that they also publish in journals indexed in the 'Thai Citation Index'. In this respect, few scholars pointed out that local indexed Thai journals carry much respect among local academic groups:

> Oh yes, because in Thailand we have both national journals, which are very good, and international journals. Most faculties and students publish in national journals because national journals are certified as "good journals" and they represent many universities in Thailand. So, scholars have two choices. Most of the Thai scholars go for national journals and only a few go for international journals (P11/Thailand/Private/Male/50–55).

However, in general there was agreement among the scholars of the three countries that publishing in international journals was still perceived as more prestigious than disseminating research outcomes through local outlets:

> At that time I published in TCI, I was very new so I went for the TCI, but it was a very good experience. It is already difficult for me to submit and to wait, even in TCI, so I don't want to go for the Scopus or the high ranking first because it will take time. Of course, everyone wants to go for that, that is more difficult because it takes longer time and they reject your paper easily, but I just went for something simple and good so I decided to have TCI (P17/Thailand/Public/Female/45–50)
>
> I hope that one day I will get my paper published in an international journal, but at present I tend to look for Thai journals that can accept my papers very quickly. But it must be in the category that has the Ranking number 1, or having the highest impact (P12/Thailand/Private/Male/65–70).

Importantly, the transcripts also suggest the idea that tourism research traditions in these three Asian countries are shaped by the interplay of both international standards and national/regional strategies. In this respect, our empirical material seems to support Huang (2007, p. 423), who discussed how Asian scholars' research beliefs and practices are influenced by both national policies and global structures. However, one important aspect that emerged from the discussions was that international research standards and beliefs were not only dictated by Western countries but also by other Asian nations, such as Japan, China and South Korea. In this regard, Malaysian participants often emphasised the different types of collaborations they have had over the years with other Asian countries and how these exchanges have influenced their perceptions of research and knowledge:

> Now I am still in rural development, doing rural planning. Because I am staying here in the Malaysia-Japan Institute and we have a professor from Japan. He is one of the original founders of the OVOP (one village- one product). So OVOP is developed in Japan and now it has become famous in many countries, I think in over 100 countries in Africa and Asia. In Thailand they call it OTOP (one Tambun one product). In Malaysia, it is one district one product. So, you find this one distinctive product and you develop it (P4/Malaysia/Public/Male/40–45)

Recently we received many international grants from Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Currently, we are working with South Korea to develop this community-based ICT system for early detection of landslide. We apply for a Korea grant and we received the grant. Korea says that it just selects a small area to test the system that you develop to see if it gives you results or not (P5/Malaysia/Public/Female/35–40).

Although research collaborations among Asian nations seem to be predominant in Malaysia, similar patterns emerged from the interviews with Vietnamese and Thai scholars (e.g. exchange programs). Overall, it can s argued that although Alatas (2011) claims that captive minds "were held captive by dominant Eurocentric orientations", "other" Asian countries also play a role in shaping the research beliefs and practices of scholars based in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

5. Conclusion

Overall, this paper supports the idea that in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam tourism scholars' research beliefs and practices are still framed by colonial and postcolonial power structures, which ultimately tend to reiterate Eurocentric/Western-centric theories and ideologies. Indeed, the voices of the Asian scholars interviewed for this study often resonated Alatas' "captive minds", which continue to imitate Western thought in an uncritical manner (Alatas, 2000a,b). In this scenario, the Asian tourism scholars based in the three countries considered for this study seem to play an active role in reproducing imperialist discourses and maintaining hegemonic Western epistemic values. This suggests that although political decolonization has occurred in almost all the Asian countries previously occupied, the epistemic conquests of European colonization have remained largely unchallenged in the current socio-political scenario. However, our empirical material also supports the idea that local agendas and other Asian countries also play a role in (re)shaping partially crystallised hegemonic power structures. In this regard, this work contends that Malaysian, Thai and Vietnamese tourism scholars' research beliefs and practices are shaped by a complex interplay of past colonial/postcolonial and current neocolonial forces.

From a conceptual/theoretical point of view, one of the main implications of this work concerns the relevance of the theories developed by Alatas. From a rather optimistic perspective, one may believe that since the notions of "intellectual imperialism" and "captive mind" were conceived 40 years ago, they should not be able to cast light on the power structures characterising the existing (tourism) academic scenario. Unfortunately, the voices that constitute our empirical material only partially contradict Alatas. Rather, in most instances they seem to portray regimes of power very similar to those experienced during and immediately after political decolonisation. Recently, other scholars, such as Korstanje (2018), have supported this argument. More specifically, by focusing on Chinese tourism scholarship, Korstanje (2018) has claimed that it has "adopted an economic-centric paradigm in tourism research" and that tourism research institutes in China "mimicry the same steps of American and European universities in applied research" (p. 174).

We believe that this an important point to reflect upon as recent claims concerning the decolonisation of knowledge and the presence of "other" voices in the global academic scenario have portrayed overly optimistic scenarios, in which captive minds were assumedly able to liberate themselves from mental straightjackets. We contend that while the "critical turn in tourism studies" has undeniably paved the way for a "regime change", the recognition of alternative ways of knowing and forms of knowledge has remained unheard outside Western academic circles. Undoubtedly, Asian scholars have also played a role in promoting the "Other" in tourism knowledge (Fullagar & Wilson, 2012). Yet, in several cases, our empirical material shows that forms of resistance were not able to transcend Western beliefs and assumptions.

Rather, our work echoes Chambers and Buzinde (2015, p. 13), who have pointed out that "while it might well be the case that traditionally excluded subjects are now having a presence in academia in the West this is not the same as saying that academic research has been decolonised".

We also acknowledge that the study is not without limitations as it only focuses on tourism academics in three Asian countries, namely Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. As the subjugated beliefs existing in the psyche of the "captive mind" are subliminal and can only be brought to attention via critical dialogues, we encourage additional research capable of giving voice to "other" Asian tourism scholars. More specifically, future studies could explore how different colonial pasts play a role in shaping research beliefs in other Asian countries. Moreover, as one of the points emerging from our study concerns the interplay between colonial and neocolonial forces, future research could focus on the role of non-Western countries (e.g. Asian, South American, African) in shaping tourism research beliefs and practices in specific Asian contexts.

Appendix A. Interview questions sheet

The interview is semi-structured thereby other than the questions on this sheet, certain themes would be explored during the interview that would be based upon your individual answers. The following themes (6 in total) are the main themes that would be explored during the conversation. However, the questions are NOT limited to the following.

1. **Personal Background and Education**
   a) **Can you speak a bit about your upbringing?** (In this question, we are exploring the belief systems around which you were bought up in your own economic and socio-cultural settings-The main theme here is to explore how your upbringing may have affected your choices in the wider scale).
   b) **What were the main reasons for pursuing your higher education?**
   c) **In which field did you pursue your higher education in?**
   d) **Was your higher education undertaken in your respective countries or outside of your native country?**
   e) **What would you say were the main motivators for your choice of country and choice of University for your higher education?**

One of the main reasons for this choice of questions it to understand the Eurocentric/or colonial ideological nature of our upbringing. There is a persistent argument as written in the text of Frantz Fanon "Black Skin, White Mask" that we are subjected to dominant structures from birth till adulthood that affect the choices we make. This is primarily claimed to be related to the colonial histories or now neocolonial societies.

2. **Work Experience**
   a) **Please explain the progress in your work experiences** (i.e. at what age did you start working, was academia your first choice or did you work in the industry before, what was the main motivation behind your career choices, has your upbringing

influenced your career choices, if so how)

b) **If you have worked in the industry before, what would you say was your primary motivation to join academia? (**This question is only for those who have worked in the industry prior to joining academia).

c) **Was your choice to work in academia influenced by your upbringing?**

d) **What are the main reasons for your choice of University and also choice of type of University (**i.e. public/ private/ semi private) **in pursuing an academic career?**

e) **Currently, which faculty do you work under?**

f) **Do you feel that your "gender, ethnicity, race, religion, and other demographic factors" have affected your career choices?**

3. **Research interests, specializations, discipline**

   a) **Please state what your main research interests and specializations are. (**Was it a personal choice or was it influenced by an outside source, such as mentors?)

   b) **How have your research interests and specializations progressed through time? (**from the time of higher education to current).
   B1) How much of this was a personal choice and influenced by outside factors?

   c) **Could you explain what the reason behind these interests was? (**Please explain stage by stage, starting from your choice of research during higher education to current)

   d) **Has your choice of university for your higher education and your experience there affected in anyway your research interests and specializations?**

   e) **Has your personal upbringing affected your research interests in anyway? (**the idea here is to understand if your personal economic and socio-cultural settings while growing up have affected your interests in research areas currently)

   f) **What would you say are the main reasons behind your interest in studying "tourism"? Please first state what your understanding of "tourism" is and how you view it.**

   g) **Which aspects of the phenomenon of "tourism" do you study and why?**

   h) **If you do not belong to a tourism faculty, do you feel that your approaches to studying tourism is affected by the respective disciplinary boundaries and beliefs? (**i.e. John Tribe argues that many who write about tourism approach the study of tourism from multidisciplinary angles due to their various educational backgrounds that are not set in tourism or due to the different faculties of thought they belong to)

4. **Paradigmatic beliefs, methodologies & methods**

This theme is one of the primary sections of this research. The prevailing argument here remains, as Syed Hussein Alatas states that Asian paradigmatic beliefs (their ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies) are situated within Eurocentric boundaries. Asian social scientists are recorded as being "poor cousins of western social sciences". The reason for the subjugation of paradigmatic beliefs that affect the way we produce knowledge in Asia is systematically situated in the way we are bought up, the way we studied, the socio cultural norms, and more. The questions under this section are primarily situated within this argument to understand the stories behind your paradigmatic beliefs.

a) **What are your general paradigmatic beliefs?**

b) **Are your general paradigmatic beliefs different from those that guide your research? (**Ontologies, epistemologies and methodology), **If yes, why?**

c) **What would you say are the primary reasons behind your paradigmatic beliefs?**

d) **Do you think that your upbringing (**with its own set of socio

cultural and economic belief systems) **has affected the way you view the world (**your paradigmatic views)?

e) **Do you believe that the way you view the world has an impact on the way you conduct research?**

f) **What kind of a researcher do you recognize yourself as?** (Quantitative, qualitative, mixed method) **and why?**

g) **What is/are the primary methodology/ies you use in your research studies?**

h) **How has your choice of methodology progressed over time?** (from the time of education to now)

i) **Please explain the process you follow when conducting research (**i.e. how do you select your research topic, which part of the research do you first write usually, do you prefer to write systematically or in a story telling format, do you write yourself into the research or do you detach yourself, do you explain your position in your research papers)

j) **What are your choices of methods for research writing? Why?**

k) **What is your choice of language for research papers? Why?**

l) **Please explain your publication patterns (**i.e. choice of language for publications, publication outlets, choice of methodology, choice of methods)

m) **When writing research, where would you say you usually gather your reading material from? (**which journals, any specific authors, local knowledge or Western knowledge?)

n) **Do you refer to local knowledge systems or indigenous knowledge systems for understanding tourism phenomenon? why?**

o) **What would you say are the main reasons behind these choices? (**continuation of previous question)

p) **How do you feel that these different belief systems and choices affect the way you study the phenomenon of "tourism"?**

q) **Do you feel in any way that your choice of University and country for higher education have had an impact on your paradigmatic beliefs and choice of methodologies and methods?**

r) **Do you feel that your "gender, ethnicity, race, religion, seniority, and other demographic factors" have affected your paradigmatic beliefs and other choices you make for your research?**

5. **Institutional Structures of Power**

   a) **From what we have discussed prior to this, how much of your beliefs, choice of methodology, methods, readings materials, publication patterns, are influenced by institutional expectations?** (In this question, we are exploring how or if your choices and patterns in research are influenced by the expectations of the university you currently work at or what is required of you).

   b) **What are the main challenges you have faced working in academia?**

   c) **Being in academia, what are the main challenges you face in terms of knowledge production or research?**

   d) **What are your requirements (**according your academic position*) **in your current university? (**i.e. KPI's, preferred list of journals, research demands).

   e) **What is the reward system functioning in your university? (**with regard to publications and research outputs or research in general).

   f) **Do you feel that your gender, ethnicity, race, religion, seniority, and other demographic factors have an impact on the institutional and societal structures of power that you face in academia?**

   g) **In your own perception, what aspects of academia do you think needs change in terms of creating an identity for "Asian Knowledge"?**

   h) **How do you navigate yourself through these challenges?**

6. **Colonialism and Neo-colonialism**

The discussion here would be on a wider scale (Southeast Asia) and also specific to the country (either Malaysia, Thailand or Vietnam). Neocolonialism refers to continuing forms of global imperialistic power structures in the forms of capitalism, globalization, privatization, multi and transnational corporations, etc.

a) **What are your thoughts on the statement that "Asian academics work within a Eurocentric ideology"?**
b) **Do you feel that our "colonial histories" or current "neocolonial capitalist & globalized" structures in academia have an impact on the way knowledge is produced and disseminated in Southeast Asia.** Please feel free to speak from own experience.
c) **What role do colonial or neocolonial structures of power play in the university structures in Southeast Asia?**
d) **How do you think colonial structures of power have affected your choices in and outside of academia?**
e) **What are your thoughts on the effects of globalization on Asian knowledge production and dissemination?**
f) **There have been rising voices towards "decolonizing Asian academia or universities", what is your perception towards this?**
g) **In your own terms or in your university, what has been done to promote decolonization of knowledge?**

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