Redefining Asian tourism

ABSTRACT

Research examining Asian tourism destinations and markets has burgeoned, paralleling the region's economic and middle-class growth. However, despite this burgeoning, extant studies tend to replicate theories and models from western tourism literature, with few attempts to interpret tourism from and in Asia through an indigenous lens. This editorial provides an overview of the current state of play in relation to past Asian tourism special issues, book publications and research articles as well as papers included in this special issue. Through the broad themes of *deconstructing the universality of tourism knowledge*, *legitimising other ways of knowing*, and *convergence of knowledge*, we borrow the lenses of research articles included in this special issue to critically examine colonised knowledge, offer alternative ways of conceptualising Asian tourism, and reflect on our journey of composing this special issue. Suggestions are provided for future researchers to take on this path of decolonising tourism knowledge.

1. Introduction

The landscape of international tourism has changed tremendously in the past three decades. Consistent economic growth and rise of the middle class has contributed to the emergence of the Asian travel market as one to be reckoned with. The boom of Asian tourism is further enabled by the expansion of low-cost carriers and the proliferation of smartphone usage in travel planning and review sharing. It is estimated that more than 50% of growth in international tourism will come from Asia by 2030 (TripAdvisor, 2016). This boom in Asian tourists has been felt by many destinations and instigated both academic and industry research to better understand and cater to the needs of this burgeoning market. At the beginning, most studies about Asian tourism and tourists were conducted by scholars based in western institutions but in the past 10 years, there has been an increasing number of scholarly publications and collections on Asian tourism by scholars from the region (Liang, Schuckert, Law, & Guo, 2017). Nevertheless, extant studies, including those produced by Asian scholars, on Asian tourists and tourism tend to replicate theories and models from western tourism literature created by white, Anglo scholars without questioning the root and origin of the concept of tourism (Winter, 2009). These studies have not been able to provide profound understandings that truly and fully capture the deep-seated cultures and values underpinning Asian tourism, much fewer studies have attempted to interpret tourism from and in Asia through an indigenous lens. Current tourism research practice reflects an enduring Anglo-western centrism and neocolonialisation of knowledge to some extent (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015; Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Tucker & Hayes, 2019; Winter, 2009). Prior studies have called for a greater diversity in tourism knowledge and rethinking existing understandings of tourism in light of the emergence of Asian tourism (Chang, 2015; Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). This special issue is timely to reflect on, challenge and decolonise the western-centric ways of researching and knowing Asian tourism at the turn of the new decade.

This special issue, commissioned by the editor-in-chief, Associate Professor Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore, is a response to the calls of scholars such as Wijesinghe, Mura, and Bouchon (2019) and Tham (2019). The impetus for this collection comes from the chief editor's frustrations from editing the *Perspectives on Asian Tourism* book series where she identified the need for scholars to steer Asian tourism scholarship into its own waters, away from the Westernised tides of traditional scholarship that dominate manuscript submissions. We share the same frustrations towards the reluctance and, to some extent, fear of embracing local epistemologies and our own identities as Asian scholars. The western-centric ideology has been internalised so deeply that some academics do not view this as a problem. We envisioned a collection that redefines Asian tourism, one that emancipates captive minds. It was a conscious choice to single out and put a label on Asia even at the risk of imposing an essentialist view and *other*ing the West. However, we believe that this strategic essentialism is critical until we reach a level playing field (Yang, Yang, & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). We put out the call for papers and took a leap of faith. This is a radical and rebellious project of two early career researchers.

1.1. Positionality: Who are we?

We are two female researchers from Asian backgrounds with research training that is heavily influenced by western ways of knowing. We obtained PhD qualifications from and are currently working in Australian universities. We have played by the unspoken rules of international tourism academe in which we have published in English-language journals despite English not being our mother tongue. One of us has received desk rejection due to poor command of English. In our previous works, we have privileged theoretical frameworks and methodology emanating from western scholarship in order to produce work that is up to the international academic standard without questioning

this so-called standard. In some cases when we drew on local epistemologies, our work was criticised as descriptive, cultural, context-specific and lacking theoretical contribution, as Mignolo (2009, p.159) critiqued, "the first world has knowledge, the third world has culture". Both of us are on different journeys to engage in dialogues of critical tourism scholarship and the differences are shaped by our personal and professional experiences.

To situate the collection, this editorial will first explore the current state of play in relation to past Asian tourism special issues, book publications and research articles. Through the broad themes of *deconstructing the universality of tourism knowledge, legitimising other ways of knowing,* and *convergence of knowledge,* we borrow the lenses of research articles included in this special issue to critically examine colonised knowledge, offer alternative ways of conceptualising Asian tourism, and reflect on our journey of composing this special issue. Suggestions are provided for future researchers to take on this path of decolonising tourism knowledge.

2. Charting the landscape of existing collections on Asian tourism

Special issues and books as research collections are an indication of contemporary topical relevance. In the past 10 years, there has been an increasing number of special issues and books focusing on Asian tourism/tourists, as well as various destinations within the region. Notably, the journal *Current Issues in Tourism* started a companion issue named *Current Issues in Asian Tourism* (Current Issues in Tourism, 2017) resulting from increasing submissions from authors in Asia and a growing investment in tourism education in the region. These collections are diverse and cover institutional perspectives, the historical, cultural, economic, political and social forces that shape the region (Forshee, Fink, & Cate, 1999; Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 1993), and travel patterns (Mandal & Vong, 2016; Pearce & Wu, 2016). Notable outcomes from special issues include observations of regional distinction in writing and research styles, with papers engaging more in domestic presentation rather than international literature and theories, and encouraged the dissemination of regionalised research to an international (and largely English-based) audience to further enrich tourism studies (Xu, Zhang, & Lew, 2014). These special issues have, at times, wrestled with both conceptual and empirical issues that challenge the Eurocentric focus of tourism studies (King, 2015).

While book collections about Asian tourism started with a focus on Southeast Asia (Forshee et al., 1999; Hitchcock et al., 1993; Teo, Chang, & Ho, 2001), this eventually expanded into broader Asian studies (Cochrane, 2008). Towards the end of the last decade, more research collections have focused on Asian tourists as a market, flipping the script on typical studies of Asia as destination context to acknowledge the critical mass of Asian tourists traversing the world and the ways in which these differ from our traditional understanding of tourist behaviour (Pearce & Wu, 2016). However, to what extent do these collections incorporate Asian lenses? By this, we question the attention paid to Asian epistemology in research and the depth to which social and cultural contexts that shape Asian tourism/tourists.

In recent years, there has been monumental growth in the publication of academic texts related to tourism in Asia. This growth has been largely spurred by the *Perspectives on Asian Tourism* series. The series covers a range of topics, ranging from destination focus (Wang, Shakeela, Kwek, & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018; Yang & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018), subject clusters (Khoo-Lattimore & Yang, 2018; Kim & Reijnders, 2018; Liu & Schänzel, 2019; Park & Yeoman, 2019) to methodologies (Mura & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018; Rezaei, 2019). Chapter contributions to these books (and proposed books) range from the use of Asia as context to the questioning of Asian identities and perspectives in the research process, particularly in the methodology-related books. This represents the series editors' goals to not only examine segments of the Asian population as markets, but to also understand ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that underpin Asian tourism

research. These latter challenges have manifested in the latest publications edited by Mura and Khoo-Lattimore (2018) as well as Rezaei (2019).

It is pertinent to note that Asia as a context of study dominates these earlier publications – regardless journal special issues or books – which foreground the evolution of Asian tourism in conjunction with the region's burgeoning identity as a growing economic power. Even within the *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, which aims to shine the spotlight on major tourism issues within the Asia-Pacific region, studies with Asia as context—as destinations or markets—dominate the publication. The focus on Asia as context only, without specific changes to the *ways* in which such evaluation is conducted, does not fully explore a region that is diverse in its production of and interactions with knowledge, particularly indigenous knowledge. While the special issue edited by Teo et al. (2001) and books on methodologies in the *Perspectives on Asian Tourism* series initiate some of these challenges to knowledge and knowing, this has yet to be systematically explored in the literature. The following section is a systematic qualitative review of journal articles that have been published about Asian tourism in the past 10 years, to identify the current gaps in knowledge. The articles in this review include those identified within the aforementioned special issues, and also standalone journal articles.

3. A systematic qualitative review of Asian tourism research

Systematic qualitative review is a type of systematic review which follows a systematic literature search process with a transparent search strategy comprising specific inclusion/exclusion criteria and a systematic synthesising process (Gingerich & Peterson, 2013; Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2017b). However, a systematic qualitative review differs from the quantitative version, which is more common in tourism (Kim, Bai, Kim, & Chon, 2018), in the ways the review findings are presented. This qualitative version provides an in-depth analysis of past publications around what have been studied and how Asian cultural values have been explored. The systematic and transparent literature extraction marked our boundaries of knowledge while the qualitative thematic findings allowed for deeper insights instead of reducing the literature into generalisable numbers (Gingerich & Peterson, 2013).

The literature search was conducted on SCOPUS database, and "Asian tourism" was used as the search term to locate the relevant publications. The initial search returned 1151 documents containing "Asian tourism" in the abstract, title or keywords. A set of criteria was established the refine the search outcomes by limiting to: business and social science disciplines, English-language publications, peer-reviewed journal articles, and publications from the last decade (2010–2019). After screening, 139 journal articles were retained for analysis. We acknowledge the limitations of systematic review, which include the selective nature and the challenge in achieving search precision and comprehensiveness (Yang et al., 2017b). The selected search term limited the search outcomes. For instance, literature exploring specific Asian countries (see for examples, Butler, Khoo-Lattimore, & Mura, 2014; Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2016) was not included in the review because the term "Asian" was not included in the title, abstract or keywords. Given the vast area of Asia consisting many different countries, it will not feasible to include every Asian country in the search term. Furthermore, while SCOPUS has been identified as an appropriate database with an extensive coverage of tourism journals (Wijesinghe, Mura, & Bouchon, 2019; Yang et al., 2017b), it does not cover all tourism journals and hence, some related articles may have been overlooked.

The full texts of 139 articles were read and coded by both authors to analyse the subjects of investigation, geographical locations, tourism contexts, research methods, evidence of epistemological discussion, and depth of incorporation of Asian lenses. During this process, 10 articles were excluded as they were: research notes, not relevant to Asian tourism, and unavailable as full text. The reviews findings were

Table 1
Publications by regions.

Region	No. of papers	Countries
East Asia	39	China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, South Korea, Taiwan
Southeast Asia	34	Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam
Asia (general)	10	Asia (general)
South Asia	6	Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
West Asia	2	Turkey
Central Asia	1	Kyrgyzstan
N/A	40	Didn't focus on Asia as destination

consolidated into two themes: *Asian Context and Tourist* and *Incorporation of Asian Lenses*.

4. Asian context and tourist

The contexts where Asia was used in the literature matter as they shed light on the means by which research relating to the region has been explored. This section will examine the "who" and "what" of this theme, elaborating on the identities and the corresponding topic areas.

In conducting this systematic literature search, it was evident that there were two main contextual categories relevant to Asian identities: geographic destinations and tourist nationalities. While there is a tendency to regard Asia as a monolithic whole, we noted that within the different regions in Asia, several countries (and subsequently, regions) dominated the research destination landscape while other regions received far less attention (see Table 1). East Asia – comprising China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, South Korea and Taiwan in our sample – was the most commonly researched region, followed by Southeast Asia, which was made up of studies examining Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. By comparison, South Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), Turkey (as part of West Asia) and Central Asian country, Kyrgyzstan, in totality represented the minority of these studies.

East Asian destinations examined in our sample tend towards those with significant cultural influences that subsequently generate tourist demand, such as film tourism in Japan (Strielkowski, 2017) and South Korea (Kim, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Teh & Goh, 2016), and K-pop (Korean popular music) related travel consumption (Kim, Chung, & King, 2018). It is closely reflective of the recent dominance of Japanese and Korean popular cultures through serial dramas, popular music and movie influences; however, the economic and political dominance of East Asian countries within the Asian region is also a significant contributing factor.

On the other hand, research that focused on the Southeast Asian region as destinations tended towards development, particularly in the areas of cultural conservation (Braithwaite & Leiper, 2010; Henderson, 2012, 2017), sustainable development (Cernat & Gourdon, 2012; Mura & Sharif, 2015b; Novelli, Klatte, & Dolezal, 2017; Ong & Smith, 2014) and economic progress (Henderson, 2015; Lu, Chen, & Kuo, 2018; Wu & Wu, 2019). Due to the long-established intra-regional relationships encouraged by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), intra-regional demand also featured prominently within our dataset, largely dominated by examinations of policy and development (Cohen, 2016; Henderson, 2017; Ramos, Untong, & Kaosa-ard, 2017).

Though small in number, South Asian destinations examined in our dataset largely attracted research related to economic modelling and destination development (Baral, Kaul, Heinen, & Ale, 2017; Fernando, Bandara, & Smith, 2013; Mohapatra, 2018; Ranasinghe & Li, 2017). In relation to West Asia, specifically Turkey, the two studies focused on segmentation related to tourist demand (Lin, You, Lau, & Demir, 2019; Ozdipciner, Li, & Uysal, 2012), while the sole Central Asian paper focused on a niche form of horse tourism in Kyrgyzstan (Sturød, Helgadóttir, & Nordbø, 2019).

The relatively small number of South, West and Central Asian publications could be indicative of the general conceptualisation of what is regarded as Asian within tourism scholarship. The dominance of East and Southeast Asian studies could hint at the scholarly perception of these regions as being representative of Asia, inadvertently marginalising other Asian regions, as represented by the paucity of South, West and Central Asian studies. The stark differences in number of publications between regions also points to a limitation of this systematic qualitative review – the presumption that using the broadest term to represent the region would generate results that would be representative of the diversity and heterogeneity of the region.

In relation to the examination of Asian tourists, Table 2 provides an overview of the Asian markets that were discussed in our dataset. Unsurprisingly, given their economic dominance in the recent decades, East Asian countries such as China, Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea were among the most commonly examined markets.

However, beyond simple regional composition, the collection of papers on diverse Asian tourism markets resulted in key observations when examined as a whole. Many studies in our dataset acknowledged the intersectionality of identities in Asia by examining demand in relation to the other aspects of their human experiences. These other layers of identity included gender (Osman, Brown, & Phung, 2019; Song, 2017; Yang et al., 2019; Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2017a, 2018; Ying, Awang, & Bojei, 2017), age (Gao & Kerstetter, 2016), and sexuality (Chang & Chen, 2013; Wong & Tolkach, 2017). This intersectionality presents interesting insights into Asian tourism scholarship by acknowledging that Asian tourists should be studied not just because of the region in which they originate, but because they represent diverse interests.

In addition, Asian students studying abroad and their associated travel behaviour have received a fair amount of attention in recent years (Aquino, Tuazon, Yap, & David, 2017; Deng & Ritchie, 2018; Lantai & Mei, 2017; Lee & King, 2016; Pan, 2017). This observation piqued our interest, because the burgeoning middle class in Asia has resulted in an unprecedented dispersal of young people seeking higher education abroad, a segment which experiences sustained interactions with their host institution's culture for a significant amount of time during their studies, which are often conducted in western universities. With this critical mass of international students of Asian origin, there are greater opportunities to encourage the multi-layered study of Asian tourists from various regions and motivations.

Relatedly, tourism studies in the Chinese context have increased

Table 2
Asian tourists by regions.

Regions	No. of papers	Countries
East Asia	32	China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea
Southeast Asia	13	Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam
Asia (general)	8	Asia (general)
South Asia	2	India, Nepal
West Asia	1	Turkey
N/A	74	Non-Asian tourists

rapidly over the years due to its promising markets and opportunities. Particularly, China is ranked among the top five source markets of outbound tourism in many destinations (Lai, Li, & Harrill, 2013), and continues to be one of the fastest growing international markets. This could well explain the increased attention and interest among the research scholars (Tse, 2015). However, Asia-focused research still lags behind non-Asian research volume in the field of tourism. For instance, studies about tourism in China by foreign researchers are still scarce today (Bao, Chen, & Ma, 2014; Leung, Leung, Bai, & Law, 2011), as much of the research findings related to China tourism are published in the Chinese language, preventing non-Chinese researchers from utilising these resources and exploring further the phenomenon of interest (Bao et al., 2014). So while there are numerous studies exploring different emerging segments within the Asian market and examining tourism development in Asia, most of them do not consider the depth of Asian perspectives beyond physical space and consumer segments. The next section will question whether these studies are merely imposing the established views or whether they challenge depths and boundaries.

5. Incorporation of Asian lenses

The previous section answers the "who" and "what" questions while this theme addresses the "how" question – How were Asian tourists and tourism studied? To what extent have past studies paid attention to the cultural and social contexts that shape the characteristics of Asian tourism? To what extent have these studies sought to understand Asian tourism from Asian lenses? To answer these questions, we analysed the research methodology, findings and discussion sections of the 129 articles. Research methods are a means to an end, with the end being advancing our understanding of Asian tourists and tourism. Instead of merely categorising the studies into qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method camps, we paid specific attention to evidence of epistemological discussion, application of western model/theory and interpretation of findings through Asian cultural lenses.

5.1. Research methods

As illustrated in Table 3, more than half of the studies employed quantitative methods with only a quarter using qualitative methods. Most of the quantitative studies applied western models such as theory of planned behaviour (Lee & Kim, 2018), leisure motivation scale (Mohsin, Lengler, & Subramonian, 2017) and quality of life (Moon, Yang, Kim, & Seo, 2019). Several studies measured cultural distance using Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Gnoth & Zins, 2010; Hsu, Woodside, & Marshall, 2013; Moufakkir & Alnajem, 2017). Others provided segmentation analyses of Asian tourists visiting South Korea (Kim, Bai, et al., 2018; Teh & Goh, 2016) and all-female tours in Hong Kong (Song, 2017). Apart from the typical surveys, a considerable proportion of studies conducted quantitative analysis on secondary data, such as demand data for economic modelling. Less than 10% of the studies employed a mixed-method approach, of which two studies specifically explained mixed method was used to develop the survey scale due to the lack of studies in Asian contexts (Bui & Wilkins, 2018; Deng & Ritchie, 2018).

Most qualitative studies employed interviews or a mix of qualitative methods with the most common combination as interviews supplemented with observation. Numerous studies conducted content analysis on websites (Horng & Tsai, 2010; Moghavvemi et al., 2017). Three studies reported the used of ethnography (Coetzee, Liu, & Filep, 2019; Mura & Yuen, 2019), autoethnography (Coetzee et al., 2019) and netnography (Mura & Yuen, 2019; Roos, 2017) approaches, while two studies employed visual methods (Bhati & Pearce, 2017; Hung, 2018; Yang et al., 2018). More than half of the qualitative studies did not engage in any epistemological discussion. Numerous studies declared the use of interpretive or constructivist paradigm in passing, and only a few provided an in-depth discussion of the positionality of the researcher(s) (Coetzee et al., 2019; Gao & Kerstetter, 2016; Mura & Yuen, 2019; Pan, 2017; Wijesinghe, Mura, & Culala, 2019). Among the small proportion of qualitative studies that had moved beyond descriptive narratives to a more critical investigation of Asian tourism, postcolonial theory/lens was often cited (Mura & Sharif, 2015a; Mura & Yuen, 2019; Ranasinghe & Li, 2017; Tan, 2014; Yang et al., 2018).

5.2. Attention to Asian cultural and social contexts

The empirical studies were coded on a scale of 1 to 3 in terms of the attention to Asian cultural and social context (see Table 4). Articles coded on "1" made no or superficial reference to Asian culture. These studies used Asia as a context for study without meaningful interaction with the context itself. As illustrated in Table 4, most of these studies employed a quantitative method. In some cases, the studies identified differences between Asian and western tourists without providing further explanation. In other cases, some cultural comparisons are observed with differences explained but without in-depth discussion. For instance, Deng and Ritchie (2018) and Tseng (2017) used Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance and culture distance to explain Asian tourist behaviour without taking into consideration the social forces and local values that shape these behaviours.

Articles coded on "2" acknowledged the importance of understanding Asian tourism through an Asian perspective and offered some insights on the social and cultural contexts that influence Asian tourist behaviour and tourism development in Asia. For instance, instead of assuming Asian as a homogenous market, Teh and Goh (2016) addressed different ethnicities within the Malaysian market and how these nuances affected the needs of Malaysians visiting South Korea. Hung (2018) highlighted the importance of understanding cruise experiences from a Chinese perspective but offered limited discussion on Chinese cultural values. In a similar vein, Pan (2017) pointed out the lack of Asian voices in volunteer tourism and compared Asian and non-Asian studies in the literature review, but the findings and discussions did not foreground the uniqueness of the Asian perspective. This is a general observation among studies coded on "2" in which the lack of Asian

Table 3
Methods and research approaches used.

Methodology	No. of Studies	%
Quantitative	*68*	*52.7%*
Survey	38	
Secondary data	26	
Mixed of quantitative methods	2	
Experimental design	1	
Experimental design	1	
Qualitative	*34*	*26.4%*
Interviews	10	
Secondary data	7	
Mixed of qualitative methods	6	
Case Study	4	
Ethnography/Autoethnography/Netnography	3	
Visual methods	2	
Focus group	1	
Review/conceptual paper	*16*	*12.4%*
Mixed methods	*11*	*8.5%*

Table 4
Attention to Asian cultural and social contexts.

Research methods / Depth of attention	1	2	3
Quantitative	61	4	4
Qualitative	11	9	14
Mixed methods	3	4	3
Total	75	17	21

Note: 1 = little to no attention, 2 = some discussion, 3 = in-depth discussion.

voices and the significance of investigating Asian perspectives, such as the growing importance Asian destinations and markets, were commonly used as the rationale for these studies, but few followed through this line of argument in findings and discussions.

On the other hand, articles coded on "3" were those that provided in-depth investigations of Asian perspectives, considering the historical, political, social and/or cultural contexts that shape the *Asian*-ness. Most of these studies utilised a qualitative approach which enabled deeper explorations. For instance, in Wong and Tolkach's (2017) study that investigated the travel preferences of Asian gay men, two sections in the literature review were dedicated to the history of homosexuality and the meanings of being gay travellers in Asian context. In particular, the review revealed that homosexuality was acceptable in early Asian history but was condemned by Confucianism and colonialism, and shed light on the differences between Asian and western gay men in relation to body image and travel preferences. As one of the few quantitative studies coded in this category, Nguyen and Cheung (2016) recognised that the existing literature on authenticity is highly western-centric. To address this gap, an open-ended question was built into the survey to gauge Chinese tourists' interpretation of authenticity. Numerous studies in this category employed a postcolonial lens to criticise western-centrism in tourism knowledge production (Mura & Sharif, 2015a) and cultural hegemony (Ranasinghe & Li, 2017). Using a postcolonial lens, Tan (2014) theorised transgender tourism in Thailand through the concept of Orientalist tourist gaze. Rittichainuwat and Chakraborty (2009) went one step further to investigate the beliefs in ghosts between Asian and western tourists, and the impact of cultural differences in deterring tourists from visiting disaster-hit destinations. Nonetheless, such nuances in beliefs might not always come as intuitive without a good grasp of the deep-seated cultural values and local customs.

As observed in the review findings, few studies have engaged in local epistemologies, which echoes with several conceptual papers included in the review. In particular, it resonates with Tham's (2019) astute observation that there is clear demand for knowing about Asian perspectives but a great reluctance to accept indigenous Asian methodologies and epistemologies; the product of colonialism and the persisting neocolonialism in knowledge production has led Asian scholars to favour western ontologies and models. Wijesinghe, Mura, and Culala (2019) aptly pointed out that "Eurocentric ideologies, deeply embedded in capitalist structures, consciously or un/sub-consciously still shape the minds of non-western academics." (p. 178). As a result of the "captive mind" (Alatas, 2004 cited in Wijesinghe, Mura, & Culala, 2019), objective ontology, detached methodology and quantitative methodology still dominate the reviewed articles, which inevitably leads to little theoretical advancement about Asian tourism and tourists. Based on the review findings, the following research gaps were identified (see Table 5).

6. Redefining Asian tourism through a critical lens

This special issue takes a critical lens to challenge the dominant discourse of Asian tourism research. By critical lens, we commit to "provide and legitimize a space for more interpretative and critical modes of tourism inquiry" (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005, p. 9). Critical tourism scholarship emerged at the beginning of the 21st century as tourism matured as a field of enquiry (Aitchison, 2006;

Pritchard & Morgan, 2007). Critical Asian tourism scholarship, however, is a relatively new addition (Chang, 2015). This special issue endeavours to carve a space to engage in emerging dialogues about the power and discourses underpinning Asian tourism scholarship, and representations of Asian hosts and guests. This special issue consists of 8 articles, which broadly addresses three themes: decolonising the Anglo-western centric tourism knowledge, legitimise other ways of knowing, and convergence of knowledge. The following sections provide the context of the themes along with a brief introduction of the collection.

6.1. Decolonising the Anglo-western centric tourism knowledge

Most Asian countries were once colonised by western (e.g. British and French) imperialism with a few exceptions. Thailand, for example, was never officially colonised and Japan was a coloniser itself but is still considered by the West as the *Other* (Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006). These former Asian colonies, coloniser as well as countries that have never been officially colonised are experiencing neocolonialism through westernisation and global capitalism (Teo & Leong, 2006). Despite their colonised/non-colonised statuses, western philosophies, knowledge and ways of knowing seem to have prevailed in many Asian countries through education systems and popular culture (Mura, Mognard, & Sharif, 2017). This includes the critical turn to tourism knowledge production, which is initiated by scholars from Anglo-western backgrounds (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015).

Postcolonialism offers a critique of western domination and a way of thinking that consciously decentres western orientation (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015; d'Hauteserre, 2004). A key aspect of postcolonialism is to unveil the social and political power relations that shape the culture. Postcolonial perspectives have been adopted in several tourism studies to give voices to non-western subjects, including Asian tourists (Chang, 2015; Teo & Leong, 2006; Yang et al., 2017a; Zhang, 2018). While postcolonialism has been pivotal in identifying the (neo)colonial discourse, scholars have proposed a more radical decolonial thinking, which aims to deconstruct the universality of western knowledge and to legitimise other ways of knowing (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015; Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2009). The call for decolonising tourism knowledge production and promoting indigenous knowledge is consistently noted in several papers in this special issue – see for example, the works of Aquino, Ooi, and Mura and Wijesinghe. Ooi's paper, in particular, critiques that "essentialist culture is just an example of how tourism research may inherently carry a postcolonial tinge" and calls for the indigenisation or Asianisation of tourism scholarship.

An increasing presence of Asian tourism scholars does not mean that the field has been decolonised. Just because one is located on the oppressed side does not mean that one will be thinking from the subaltern epistemic location (Grosfoguel, 2007). The complexity and nuances of western knowledge influences on the Asian tourism academics must be taken into account. Mura and Wijesinghe's work in this special issue specifically examines how westernised education systems and curricula have moulded Asian tourism scholars' ways of thinking, researching and teaching. The research is inherently activistic as it has provided a space for participants to engage in critical self-reflection, which is the starting point of decolonisation.

Table 5
Research gaps identified.

Category	Gaps
Asian context and tourist	1. Lack of studies on South, West and Central Asian destinations; 2. Unrealised potential for intersectionality in Asian tourist identities.
Incorporation of Asian lenses	1. Lack of in-depth discussions about differences between Asian and western vis-à-vis social forces and local values; 2. Lack of explication regarding Asian voice and perspectives in findings and discussion; 3. Few studies engaged in local epistemologies.

6.2. Legitimising other ways of knowing

The contributions to this special issue similarly seek to highlight and legitimise other ways of knowing, not just through critical examination of practices in tourism development and knowledge production, but also in proposing methods by which such different techniques could be implemented in practice. Two articles in this special issue extend Mura and Wijesinghe's project into practice by engaging in varying degrees of decolonisation of research methodology. Both articles focus on Filipino epistemology; Santa and Tiatco propose critical ethnography as a means of indigenisation of knowledge regarding cultural heritage development while Aquino takes one step further to introduce Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology), a native epistemological perspective as a decolonised solution to researching and developing concepts on Philippine tourism and hospitality. Santa and Tiatco propose critical ethnography as a means of deeply seeking conceptions of heritage and culture from local community members, instead of relying on imposed interpretations that are driven by governments, local tourism offices and academia. Aquino, in using Sikolohiyang Pilipino, extends beyond researcher positionality into theoretical and methodological recommendations of using native means of understanding knowledge, promoting reflective and reflexive research of and by Filipinos.

Tan and Teoh, on the other hand, utilise their identities as Peranakan Chinese (people with mixed Chinese and local ancestry in Southeast Asia) in deconstructing their experiences of nostalgia, authenticity and diaspora. Calling upon their knowledge of traditional practices, and local architecture and food, Tan and Teoh provide depth in picking apart their respective encounters with various elements of their visit to Melaka, Malaysia, challenging the means by which cultural heritage representation in the region is constructed, presented, and subsequently, leveraged. This theme of interpretation is continued with Ye, Hughes, Walters and Mkono who employ high-engagement methods as means of unravelling cultural nuances of Chinese tourists visiting Uluru in Central Australia. By combining high-engagement data collection methods with traditional ones, the authors elicit deeply nuanced understanding of Chinese visitors' landscape perception, capturing the culturally-anchored meaning-making that challenges western-centric normative biases about tourists.

6.3. Convergence of knowledge

Decolonising the Anglo-western centric tourism knowledge does not mean that one should void everything that has been done using western epistemologies and theories. Rather, decolonisation project should engage in meaningful convergence of knowledge with equal weights and not privileging any (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015; Grosfoguel, 2007). As guest editors, we share the view of decolonial thinkers, including many authors in this special issue, in advocating for parallel centres of knowledge outside the global North and West that celebrate pluriversality instead of universality of knowledge.

In this collection, Zhang, Wang and Cheng converge existing knowledge on peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation with Chinese cultural values and beliefs, including *renqing, mianzi, guanxi* and *yuanfen*. The article provides an informative overview of the development of peer-to-peer accommodation in China, and sheds light on the connections between Confucianism, Buddhism and Chinese host-guest relations. Comparable western theories, such as attribution theory, provide bases to compare and contrast the uniqueness of Chinese host-guest interactions in the P2P space. Similarly, Talawanich, Jianvittayakit and Wattanacharoensil examine the appropriateness of the reverse culture shock framework originating from the West in explaining the home returning experience of Thai youth tourists. Their study reveals a left-shifting curve among Thai youth tourists who travel to developed host countries, which differs from findings based on western tourists traveling to developing countries. While referring to power distance as an explanation, the authors provide further insights into such distance

through the sociocultural and socioeconomic dimensions, and cautioned that the W-curve proposition (established in western studies) may not be generalised across different cultural contexts.

Qi explores the conceptualising and understanding of volunteering from the perspective of those who volunteer in touristic settings. While there was convergence with existing understandings of volunteering, the areas of divergence – payment, free will and mutual beneficence – point to subtle but important departures in understanding that impact volunteer management practices in China. The importance of these differences reinforce the point that different conceptualisations of activities can lead to diverse management practices.

7. Conclusion

Nearly 20 years have passed but the turn to critical has made little progress in engaging indigenous and local peoples and their epistemologies in tourism knowledge production (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). On one hand, mounting funding pressures on universities operating in the neoliberal capitalist systems favour research grants and consultancy contracts. Consequently, tourism research that is policy-oriented and industry-focused are prioritised at the expense of research that is crucial to breaking new conceptual grounds (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007). This prioritisation could impact developing regions such as Asia, which is experiencing rapid growth in tourism; hence, research that is confirmatory and reproductive with direct policy and managerial implications take precedence over critical conceptual development. On the other hand, the continuing "global arms race of publication" (Altbach, 2015, p. 6) has compelled scholars to produce cookie-cutter research that fits favourably with the dominant rules of tourism knowledge production (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007). Journal editors and their reviewers are the main gatekeepers but remain dominated by those in Anglo-westernised education systems. The sheer lack of diversity may hinder alternative voices and ways of knowing (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007). The commissioning of this special issue itself manifests why we need to have diversity among knowledge gatekeepers and journal editors as it influences how we "do" publications. The importance of alternative voices is also reflected in the review process of this special issue.

We made a conscious decision when selecting the reviewers to ensure cultural and gender diversity, and a balance between early career and established researchers. We acknowledge the collegiality of all reviewers and their constructive feedback. The editorial observations below are made with the intention to engage in on-going dialogues of critical tourism scholarship. A reviewer from an Anglo-western background criticised a submission, dismissing the existence of an "Asian paradigm" and subsequently questioning if it can be considered "good scholarship" when it relies on such a paradigm; this form of criticism is precisely the impetus for this special issue, which acknowledges that "It is this dismissal of other ways of knowing that provided the fundamental logic which informed the colonial project" (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015 p.3). The authors responded adeptly, questioning the criteria for who determines "good scholarship" and calling for other ways of knowing. This dialogue was discontinued when the reviewer declined the second review. In another paper, the authors described culture as a fluid and ambiguous concept but the reviewer found such description "gives the tone to a more negative and critical approach about the concept"; the comment seemed to associate criticality with negativity. In other instances, the authors were advised to refrain from using first person in academic writing. However, the distance of self and the lack of reflexivity are perhaps the barriers that slow the progress of critical turn in tourism knowledge production (Khoo-Lattimore, Mura, & Yung, 2019). These observations from the review process of this special issue further strengthen the need for this collection, which aims to decentre and decolonise the Anglo-western centric traditions in tourism research and to carve an ontological and epistemological space for alternative and in this case, Asians' (plural form was used

intentionally to recognise the diversity within Asia) ways of thinking, knowing and being.

This special issue set out to carve new epistemological space for Asian tourism but we inadvertently preached to the converted pool of researchers – most of the contributors to this collection have previously contributed to the *Asian Tourism Perspectives* book series and are authors of articles in our systematic literature review. Concerted efforts were made to solicit contributions via various channels, including disseminating the call for papers on TRINET (an international tourism research information network), at international conferences in Asia and Australia, and approaching potential contributors personally. Nevertheless, this special issue was not successful in soliciting contributions from scholars in Asia. One possible explanation is the neoliberal influence in Asian institutions where practical research with grants are highly prized compared to critical inquiry. Likewise, the publication standard determined by western tradition has compelled Asian scholars to accept and reiterate dominant discourse with approaches that are "unpositioned, unlocated, neutral and universalistic" (Grosfoguel, 2002, p. 209). This has led us to question the neutrality and universality of research when "the first world has knowledge, the third world has culture" (Mignolo, 2009, p.159).

In hindsight, we also reflected on our bias in evaluating what is good critical Asian tourism knowledge, as Zhang (2018) aptly pointed out the problem with equity when "local perspective must be communicated via the global platform" (p. 122). The narrowed, and to an extent "Western-centric", understanding of critical tourism scholarship resulted in the rejection of several submissions from Asian scholars by Western reviewers as well as Asian reviewers who have received Western education. As Zhang (2018) lamented, "how could a Chinese [Asian for this special issue] researcher's original/alternative/creative ideas be respected when she/he hasn't gained acceptance for the research competence valued in a Western academic system?" (p. 122). On the other hand, we had scholars who were interested in contributing but refrained from doing so in deference to the neoliberal system of rewarding only highly-ranked journal publications as dictated by their institutions.[1] This collection exemplifies that it is not a gap in ability to conduct critical scholarship; instead, it is the lack of awareness and willingness as a consequence of the subordination and internalisation of western-centric ideologies so deeply that it inhibits acknowledgement of the issue.

While we approach this special issue with a critical lens stemming from western academe, it is dangerous to consider other forms of scholarship as lagging when compared to this form of critical scholarship. Western dominance in knowledge production has allowed it to set the agenda and standards by which scholarship – including critical scholarship – is measured, a first mover advantage we reflected on in our editing of this special issue. Our aim is not to dictate criticality; by this, we hope to avoid falling into the trap of being neocolonisers. Instead, we encourage the critical, yet constructive and forward-thinking, examination of Asian tourism scholarship by not just acknowledging the depth of what we research, but also by revealing the layers of complexity that contribute to this scholarship.

In going forward, we seek to be constructive in how we support the burgeoning Asian tourism scholarship. A decolonial approach, as advocated in this collection, that celebrates pluriversality and legitimise other ways of knowing might be a way forward. We see this occurring in two stages – raising awareness and the convergence of knowledge. If speaking for others is "epistemic violence" (Spivak, 1988, p.280), we believe that the lack of awareness of the influence of western-centrism on our own thinking is epistemic ignorance and this wilful ignorance is complicit to epistemic violence. This special issue raises awareness about the value of local epistemology and methodology, and shined a spotlight on means by which scholars have elucidated and achieved this. We envision a future special issue that facilitates the convergence of knowledge through a dialectical approach with research collaborations between local researchers who understand native knowledge and researchers who practice other forms of scholarship.

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[1] When the call for papers was disseminated, Tourism Management Perspectives was not SSCI-indexed and was ranked as B in the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List.

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