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Eurocentrism, capitalism and tourism knowledge

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ABSTRACT

Global hegemonic structures of power have been a subject of debate among social scientists for decades. However, issues addressing the 'subjugation of the intellect' and forces shaping knowledge production – globalisation, capitalism and neo-colonialism – remain understudied in tourism. Drawing upon critical theories of Eurocentrism and capitalism, in this paper we explore and address the ideological impacts of existing global power structures on the next generation of tourism 'knowledge producers' in Asia. More specifically, this work critically discusses the ontological and epistemological beliefs – and subsequent methodological choices – of a group of Asian PhD scholars. The empirical material presented in this paper highlights that persisting forms of Eurocentric ideology embedded in capitalist structures of power permeate non-Western academic circles.

1. Introduction

Although tourism as a scientific field of inquiry has evolved in the last forty years (Airey, 2015), there remains a lack of research on tourism doctoral students' experiences. Since the first study conducted by Jafari and Aaser (1988), there have been studies focusing on tourism postgraduate research (i.e. Chung & Petrick, 2011; Carr & Hayes, 2017; Hall & Pedrazzini, 1989; Ruhanen & McLennan, 2011). However, much of the research conducted has been limited to examining completed theses in order to explore disciplinary and subject trends, publication patterns and motivational factors (i.e. Afifi, 2009; Meyer-Arendt & Justice, 2002; Weiler, Moyle, & McLennan, 2012). Little has been written on the experiences of tourism doctoral students during the PhD process (i.e. Pansiri, 2009; Cohen, 2013), and so, an in-depth understanding of tourism doctoral students' ontological, epistemological and methodological choices and the structures of power shaping their postgraduate journeys is lacking in the tourism literature. This is particularly true within the context of Asian PhD tourism scholars, a group that deserves particular attention as it embodies subordinated epistemologies (Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015), which have not always been represented in the tourism literature. As Carr and Hayes (2017, p.31) argue, "Recognising that the PhD students of today are the potential research leaders of tomorrow, exploring their experiences has the potential to indicate the possible future direction of tourism research".

This study was conceived as an attempt to give voice to Asian PhD students in tourism. As such, the current study explores the ontological and epistemological beliefs of Asian PhD students in order to understand whether and how they influence their methodological choices in research. More specifically, we aim to cast light on students' experiences, philosophical understandings and research journeys against the backdrop of academic and global power structures. This is aligned to what Bianchi (2009, p.484) has advocated, namely that "tourism research needs to further engage with some of the major themes and theoretical debates related to process of globalisation, capitalism, and structural power if is to engage with issues of substantive import related to critical scholarship." Drawing on Bianchi (2009) and the call for the *critical turn in tourism studies* (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005), this study presents a discussion of Eurocentric and capitalist academic structures of power that have been influencing and moulding the next generation of Asian tourism scholars. As Wijesinghe, Mura, and Bouchon (2017) have pointed out, there remains a lack of understanding concerning the colonial (and neo-colonial) power structures that continue to subjugate the intellect of the former colonised. As such, at a time when critical discourses are being called for within the tourism academy, this study enhances our understanding of these power structures as it focuses on the PhD scholarship conducted in a region that was formerly colonised (and still subjected to global neo-colonial structures of power). Overall, this work aims to highlight the ways in which Eurocentric ideologies, deeply embedded in capitalist structures, consciously or un/sub-consciously still shape the minds of non-Western academics.

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2. Theoretical background

2.1. Eurocentrism and capitalism - an overview

In the so called 'globalised' world, ideological thinking and doing permeate every aspect of our existences. The liquid nature of globalisation has been debated within academic circles (Bauman, 2000); still, the dominant ideologies of the West/Western thought/Westernisation hold a strong position in the making and breaking of trends. As Amin (1989, p. 107) explains, "The Westernisation of the world would impose on everyone the adoption of the recipes for European superiority". These recipes include the adoption of specific systems, such as free enterprise and market, democracy and capitalism. The tenets of the assumed 'European superiority' are encapsulated in the theory of Eurocentrism, which began during the European enlightenment, and rapidly spread to the rest of the world through colonisation. Eurocentrism contributed to transform and shape the "coloniser's model of the world" (Blaut, 1993, p. 14) radically, and designed ethnocentric views of the world and its people, knowledge, and culture. The term 'Eurocentrism' denotes a view of the world that, overtly and covertly, suggests that European history and values are superior to others. Based on this assumption, it aids to produce and justify a Western/European dominant position in the global capitalist world system.

However, it should be noted that the words 'Eurocentrism' or 'Western-centrism' do not primarily denote all the countries geographically belonging to Europe/West but only specific areas, such as north western Europe (i.e. the UK, France, Germany, Netherlands and Belgium), Southern Europe (i.e. Spain, Portugal), North America (i.e. the United States, Canada), and also other centres like Australia and New Zealand. The effects and the saturation of Eurocentric beliefs differ therefore according to historical narratives (i.e. predominant Spanish and American influence in Latin America and even in The Philippines or British influence in South Asia). Therefore, Euro/western-centrism does not refer to specific geographical locations but is rather indicative of geo-political crystallisations of power after colonisation. Eurocentrism created binary views of the world and its people, which we have gradually internalised and to a certain extent accepted as true – 'superior' and 'inferior', 'developed' and 'developing', 'first world' and 'third world', 'modern' and 'primitive'. These terms have assumed a specific meaning over the years based on the prejudicial views of the coloniser and have produced what we call 'dominant discourses'. With the crystallisation of these assumptions, we have, for centuries, consciously or unconsciously, adopted Western/European models and ideologies and regarded them as 'normal' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Propelled by Eurocentric 'grand narratives', binary concepts concerning class (international division of labour) and culture have become the central tenets of the capitalist system. As these capitalist structures developed further, they permeated any aspect of society, our socio-economic lives, and, as Quijano (2010) asserts, have produced inequalities and hierarchies that still remain strongly in place in (post) modern societies. Thus, as Grosfoguel (2007, p.219) argues, "To call 'capitalist' the present world system, is to say the least, misleading. Given the hegemonic Eurocentric 'common sense', the moment we use the word 'capitalism' people immediately think that we are talking about the 'economy.' Capitalism is only one of the multiple entangled constellations of the colonial power matrix of the European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world system". Importantly, capitalism cultivates the 'systematic abuse of power' in every aspect of our lives (i.e. class, race), including academia.

2.2. Eurocentrism, capitalism and academic knowledge

Eurocentrism was, as Grosfoguel (2007) and Quijano (2010) point out, primarily about the domination of intellect and culture. In this regard, the current capitalised/globalised academic system of higher education is one of the other habitats in which Eurocentric values and ideologies have flourished. As Pennycook (1996, p. 64) observes, universities have become the "key sites of cultural and epistemological invasion, where inappropriate and irrelevant forms of Western culture and knowledge are thrust upon an unwitting student population". These Eurocentric educational and academic systems in the non-West (former colonies) made sure that the colonised would, even after their so called 'independence', stay "dependent upon the West for answers and solutions" (Subramani & Kempner, 2002, p. 233). Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1983, p.96) adds, "it is through education that the physically absent agents of Western imperialism continue their hegemony after decolonisation". Intellectuals of the non-West, according to Alatas (2004), thus remain in the state of a 'captive mind', structuring their knowledge around the tenets of scientism and valuing objectivity, free ethics, and universalism (Mirande, 1978), all of which lay at the heart of Eurocentric ideology and were propelled during the colonial era. One must understand that the Western/masculinist idea that we can produce somehow forms of knowledge that are "un-positioned, un-located, neutral and universalistic" (Grosfoguel, 2002, p. 209) is a myth in the colonial world. Such ideologies were kept in place only to control and dominate the 'captive mind' in the Eurocentric/capitalist world system.

Unfortunately, even after more than sixty years since the 'colonised' obtained independence, much of the ideologies functioning within higher education systems in the non-West, especially in terms of knowledge production and dissemination, remains Eurocentric. The non-Western production of knowledge is predominantly delivered in the English language (including local journals), primarily because the Lingua Franca of academia in many parts of the non-West (through colonisation and globalisation of course), is English (Mura & Sharif, 2015). In this scenario, monolingual scholars of the periphery are further excluded from the English speaking academic circles of the non-West (another centre within the periphery). Paradoxically, this phenomenon (propelled by globalization and internationalisation) also affects non-English speaking countries in the West, such as France, the Netherlands and Germany. Furthermore, in the capitalist structure that universities are functioning in, priority is now given to ranking systems, which encourage scholars to write in English and publish in Tier 1 and Tier 2 ISI/Scopus journals. The reward system currently in place within academia makes any attempts of breaking away from these ideological frames impossible, primarily because academic performance and promotion are largely based on research publications (predominantly articles in ISI Journals). As Buranyi (2017) notes, "the pursuit of high impact publications for rewards is as rotten as the incentive system of banking bonuses".

In this scenario, peripheral nations and scholars "are not only obligated to the industrialised nations for books, journals, applied research findings, and for the majority of knowledge in the scientific and technical fields, but ironically also for research and knowledge about their own countries" (Subramani & Kempner, 2002, p. 240). In other words, scholars are compelled to accept dominant discourses – and also reiterate them – to climb the academic career ladder (Hall, 2004). Scholars in the periphery have to constantly relate their ideas to the work produced by those representing the 'centre', causing ideological conundrums that many are not even aware of due to lack of critical thinking and the system's enforcement mechanisms. This status quo also refers to the work produced in the non-West. In this respect, Canagarajah (1996, p.460) provides an exemplary case when he states that "to present my data on culture in rural Tamil Saiva communities in Sri Lanka, I had to frame my paper in relation to the work previously published by David (1974), McGilbyray (1982) and Pfaffenberger (1982), each of whom spent only a few months in my community". From this perspective, the ontological (objective), epistemological (detached) and methodological (quantitative) traditions of the Western academy still dominate the intellectual site of the non-West. Therefore, despite 'globalisation', within the domain of the social sciences, majority of scholars and their theories keep emanating from the 'West' to the 'Rest' (Wallerstein, 1997).

What is not understood or accepted by many is that, as the majority of journals publishing research articles are situated in a narrow confined location within the 'developed world', the policies related to research dissemination are shaped and negotiated according to the "even narrower cultural/linguistic groups" (Canagarajah, 1996, p. 440). As Naidoo (2003) notes, authors from all around the world (especially the non-West) shape and negotiate their research according to the accepted norms diffused by Western journal ideologies (i.e. positivism, quantitative methods) in order to obtain acceptance. The privileged position of renowned journals is also a matter of scepticism, as many have criticised the current system of knowledge dissemination. For instance, in a recent article in *The Guardian*, Monbiot and Buranyi discuss how the academic publishing world is monopolised by few publishers (one of whose profit margin in the year 2016 was at 36%), which not surprisingly also define the direction of science itself (Monbiot, 2017). In this scenario, publishing academic work has been turned into a capitalist money-making machine. This has led to a situation where status and money define what should be researched and how research and knowledge development and dissemination should be approached.

It is no surprise thereby that the political economy of knowledge production resembles the industrial processes of exploitation. Indeed, "the hegemony in the publishing industry serves the larger political function of reproducing centre institutions, ideologies and discourses in the periphery communities" (Canagarajah, 1996, p. 460). The publishing conventions and their underpinning ideologies contribute to foster the growing intellectual hegemony of the developed nations. In this scenario, even though many argue that countries like Singapore, China and Hong Kong are now becoming major producers of knowledge, it should be noted that even the production of this knowledge takes place within the dominant ontological and epistemological ideologies of the centre. Thus, as Grosfoguel (2002, p.210) argues, we still live in a world where "the dominant imaginary is still colonial." Although the predominant Eurocentric ideologies in the social sciences and humanities (especially in disciplines like sociology and anthropology, see Wallerstein, 1997) have faced major criticism after the decolonisation of major parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the wider discussion of decolonizing knowledge is still an ongoing agenda in need of voice, especially in the changing structures of higher education and research. Indeed, the myth that we are living in a decolonised world still needs to be challenged, because as Kwame Nkrumah has argued, although independence has been granted and the direct colonial administration has left, the world still functions (especially former colonial countries and even countries such as Japan and Thailand that were never colonised by a European power) within neo-colonial frames due to capitalist and globalising forces. In other words, the canons of thought in the social sciences remain fundamentally grounded on ideologies of scholars belonging to the 'centre' (De Sousa Santos, 2016).

2.3. Tourism knowledge and power

In tourism, discussions concerning Eurocentric epistemologies are relatively recent. Although some authors, such as Chambers and Buzinde (2015), Cohen and Cohen (2015), Hall (2011), Tribe (2006, 2010), Tucker and Zhang (2016), Winter (2009), Wijesinghe et al. (2017) and Wijesinghe and Mura (2018) have initiated debates on the Eurocentric nature of tourism knowledge, there have not been major forms of criticism to the current status quo. In this sense, tourism knowledge, with its own set of discourses, primarily developed by Western male scholars, remains colonial (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). Chambers and Buzinde (2015, p.2) note that "it is increasingly acknowledged that our existing knowledge about tourism is Eurocentric and therefore ignores and negates those knowledges which emanate from other cultures and from traditionally marginalised groups". In other words, studies about tourism remain bounded by/privilege "WEIRD (white, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic) cultures and academic communities (Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010a, 2010b cited in Oktadiana & Pearce, 2017).

Tourism knowledge embodies Eurocentric, 'universalistic', and 'positivist' ideologies (Ballantyne, Packer, & Axelsen, 2006; Riley & Love, 2000). This current state of affairs is also influenced by the fact that "funding sources are more likely to support generalisable studies that have an impact on practices affecting the bottom line" (Riley & Love, 2000, p. 182). For this reason, scholars across the world replicate the same procedures and methods to study tourism in different cultures, justifying the use of these standardised procedures and methods (without critical thought) with the simple explanation that 'it has been used before' and 'it gave similar results' (McKercher & Prideaux, 2014). This further promotes the growth of 'positivist', 'universalistic' and 'commercialised' forms of research, which are often perceived as of higher economic value than forms of research that attempt to address fundamental social and political questions (Ren, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2010).

The rules that exist in the academic game are very much a political act (Hall, 2011) that favours specific value systems over others. Such a phenomenon still exists because each generation of tourism scholars has and continues to play an active role in 'tourism myth making' (McKercher & Prideaux, 2014). Due to the dominant thoughts that were developed by the first generation of tourism scholars and embraced by the second generation, third generation scholars have to face big challenges to reshape past traditions. Challenging existing myths requires solid critical skills, which may help to question dominant Eurocentric disciplinary thoughts and discourses and go beyond 'acceptable ways of doing things' (Mazanec, 2009). Although there is hope that the increasing number of 'responsible intellectuals' challenging the status quo would have an impact on the existing dominant ontological, epistemological and methodological myths (see the critical turn in tourism studies, hopeful tourism), whether and how these forms of activism are effective remains a subject of debate.

2.4. Tourism ideologies and PhD knowledge

Since the 1970s, as noted by Jafari and Aaser (1988), postgraduate studies in tourism have taken an upward direction, with many universities across the world offering various courses beyond undergraduate levels. Tourism studies are seen to have become a distinct field of inquiry with the emergence of specialised journals, universities, departments and research centres offering PhD programs (Oliveira & Guerreiro, 2015). After the first study conducted by Jafari and Aaser (1988), which explores North American doctoral dissertations in tourism, many authors have conducted studies to understand trends in tourism masters and doctoral theses in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Ireland, China, Egypt, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and even on wider communities such as those registered in *Trinet* (tourism network society). Overall, the growing number of dissertations in tourism seems to support the idea that "tourism as a doctoral dissertation subject has generated a special interest in the tourism academia" (Huang, 2011, p. 316).

However, previous studies exploring postgraduate tourism students or doctorate students have mainly focused on identifying disciplinary trajectories, research interests and subject trends in postgraduate or doctoral research. Although some notable trends identified and discussed by the authors of these studies are related to arguments concerning hegemonic ideologies, there has not been work specifically focused on these power structures. For instance, Jafari and Aaser (1988) noted that the majority of dissertations on tourism were located in the field of economics, followed by anthropology and recreation. Similar results were also found by Hall and Pedrazzini (1989) and later by Meyer-Arendt and Justice (2002). Likewise, Huang (2011), who explored tourism doctoral dissertations in China, found that 'economics' was the largest discipline to contain tourism doctoral studies followed by geography, management, and tourism management. More recently,

Table 1
Participants' profile.

Nationality	Age	Gender	Highest Education Qualification	Location of Education prior to PHD	Stage of PHD	Methodology used for PHD
Malaysia	40–44	Female	Master's Degree	United States	Proposal writing & Defence	Quantitative
Philippines	25–29	Male	Master's Degree	Philippines	Proposal Writing	Qualitative
India	25–29	Male	Master's Degree	Malaysia	Thesis Writing	Mixed-Methods
India	24 and below	Female	Master's Degree	Malaysia	First Year (Attending coursework/modules) & Proposal Writing	Qualitative
Malaysia	25–29	Female	Master's Degree	Malaysia	Thesis Writing	Qualitative
India	30–34	Male	Master's Degree	Malaysia	Proposal Writing & Defence	Qualitative
Malaysia	24 and below	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Malaysia	Thesis Writing	Qualitative
Malaysia	30–34	Female	Master's Degree	Malaysia	First Year (Attending coursework/modules) & Proposal Writing	Qualitative
India	30–34	Female	Master's Degree	India	Proposal Writing	Quantitative
Maldives	40–44	Female	Master's Degree	United Kingdom	Proposal Writing/Proposal Defence	Qualitative
Malaysia	35–39	Male	Master's Degree	Malaysia	Proposal Writing/Attending coursework modules	Qualitative
Iran (**refused to participate in focus group due to lack of knowledge about paradigms and methodologies)**		Female			Proposal Writing	Qualitative

Oliveira and Guerreiro (2015) and Carr and Hayes (2017) have observed that the focus of tourism doctoral research remains in marketing, management and tourist behaviour with a growing interest on sustainability due to worldwide attention on the topics of sustainable development and climate change.

As postgraduate students are supervised by first and second generation tourism scholars, who tend to reiterate Eurocentric education systems and positivist beliefs, they are subjected to various 'how to do lists' in order to pass. In this scenario, although critical thinking is a core graduate attribute, there seems to exist a barrier to achieve it. Indeed, various institutional, philosophical, methodological structures of power do not facilitate the development of independent thinking (Pyhalto, Toom, Stubb, & Lonka, 2012, pp. 1–12). Thus, students internalise the cultural norms (methods, paradigms, writing styles, etc.) of institutions and dominant discourses especially in the increasingly capitalist higher education structures as their focus is on 'passing' the PhD viva voce and increasing the university's reputation. Here, students are encouraged to adhere to a path that guarantees successful completion rather than develop critical or original ideas. As Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) argue, due to the various epistemic wars that exist within the department or discipline, doctoral students often think that in order to be successful, they have to follow various traditions. In other words, "the influence of the dominant ideology that still reigns in tourism academia can work to stifle the confidence of PhD and junior academics" (Ateljevic et al., 2005, p. 15).

3. Methodology

3.1. Study site

This study is conducted in higher education institutions of Malaysia where education systems are primarily subjected to 'Eurocentric visions' (Mura & Sharif, 2015). The predominant acceptance of Western education styles in Malaysia stems from the belief that Western education styles are more 'advanced', 'progressive' and 'developed' than Asian educational paradigms. These views are further propelled by capitalist forces and attempts of 'internationalisation', stated in the Malaysian government's Vision 2020. Since the majority of 'English-speaking developed countries' adopted a more commercial and entrepreneurial spirit since the 1990's, with the practise of 'internationalizing higher education', countries like Malaysia also moved towards developing a business model education system, one where 'global competition' (and subsequently 'global ranking') have become the key indicators to define success. As such, Malaysia now hosts several Western universities' branches (e.g. Nottingham University, Monash University, and Curtin University) and also institutions offering dual/twinning programmes, which allow students to attend courses from universities based in the United States, France, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia. Driven by the idea of attracting larger numbers of international students, universities in Malaysia (both private and public) have undergone major reforms (i.e. changing language of conduct to English, affiliating with international universities, hiring Western scholars, sending local scholars to study in countries such as US & UK). The acceptance of western academic norms, standards and bonds by no doubt "ensured that colonised masses were kept intellectually captive" (Subramani & Kempner, 2002, p. 233). Within this scenario, Eurocentric and capitalist ideologies are easily internalised by Asian tourism PhD scholars in Malaysia.

3.2. Data collection

The empirical material presented in this article derives from focus group discussions held with two groups of Asian tourism PhD scholars. The questions asked during the focus groups attempted to explore doctoral students' ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs and choices (objective 1), and understand the main reasons behind these choices (objective 2). Under the second set of questions, we extended the discussion to various global and institutional power structures. More specifically, participants were asked about their experiences with supervisors, jury members, graduate committee members as well as graduate school policies. During the focus groups, we also explored the extent to which captivity (Alatas, 1972) is functioning at both intellectual and psychological levels. Theories on intellectual subjugation and dependence of Asian scholars on Western theories and philosophies were presented to the participants to capture their perspectives.

For the data gathering, first we identified a list of private and public universities in the Klang Valley area of Malaysia (which includes Kuala Lumpur and its wider urban area). Then, we selected those universities offering PhD programmes in social science. Each university was then contacted to identify students pursuing doctoral studies in tourism and hospitality. Moreover, we reviewed the online profiles of faculty members in each of the selected universities to identify scholars with a specialisation in tourism, who were then contacted to inquire about the

PhD students under their supervision. A total of 12 Asian PhD students agreed to participate in two focus groups (see Table 1). One of the doctoral students decided not to take part in the study as she claimed a lack of knowledge concerning research paradigms and methodologies. In total, two focus groups were conducted and moderated by two of the authors of this paper, who are Asian PhD candidates. As Ndimande (2012) explains, the researcher's extended knowledge about the context in which the participants live and her/his own lived experiences contribute greatly to have better insights into the community/phenomenon explored. All the participants of this study come from former Asian colonies. The focus group interviews, conducted in English, were both audio and video recorded with the full consent of the participants, and then transcribed. The focus groups lasted between 2 and 4 h.

3.3. The study

In our study we applied multiple strategies to build trustworthiness by following the criteria described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). More specifically, we employed several criteria to establish trustworthiness: prolonged engagement with the participants, persistent observation of groups' dynamics, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks.

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 three authors of this paper all have a good understanding of the topic. The first and third authors (two Asian PhD scholars applying critical theory) became familiar with paradigmatic issues concerning research after following a course entitled *Philosophy of Social Science,* which was delivered by the second author (a mid-career Western tourism scholar based in Asia). The first author is a Sri Lankan scholar who is currently exploring neo-colonial structures of power in the production and dissemination of tourism knowledge in Southeast Asia. The second author, a European scholar based in Malaysia whose work has focused on epistemological issues concerning tourism knowledge, is the first author's PhD supervisor. The third author (despite not being part of the tourism academy) is conducting his research on curriculum and its reforms in The Philippines. The locale of his study, The Philippines, is part of a colonial past whereby the educational system is highly informed by Western views and ideologies. We believe that the composition of the team – an Asian PhD tourism scholar, a European tourism scholar and an Asian PhD scholar in education, allows us to have and share etic and emic perspectives on the topic. Furthermore, all the authors have experienced what is discussed by Wilson (in Ateljevic et al., 2005, p.16): "I understood and was told on several occasions that the gates to academia were held by quantitative researchers and that a qualitative PhD was held in less serious regard". Similarly, from my (first author) own experience as a PhD scholar, I recall that at the time I submitted my research proposal (a qualitative study employing a critical theorist approach), I was 'encouraged' by the graduate research committee in an Asian university to follow the 'easier' path of quantitative research. When I refused to do so, I was warned about the struggles that previous PhD students conducting qualitative research had faced during their doctoral studies.

Before starting the focus group discussions, we introduced ourselves, our place of origin, our scholarly backgrounds, and the kind of research that we conduct. For the audit trail, the transcriptions (a total of 62 pages) of all the focus group sessions were carefully written based on audio and video recordings. The method of transcribing is verbatim. All the pauses, fillers, changes of words which were video-recorded were carefully transcribed. In order to address the 'dependability' issue, the processes of this study were reported in detail (see audit trail description above). Shenton (2004) argues that in order for qualitative research to be dependable, the following parts should be stated in the manuscript: (a) the research design and its implementation, describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level; (b) the operational detail of data gathering, addressing the details of what was done in the field; and (c) reflective appraisals of the project, evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken. All these are carefully detailed in this section. Furthermore, the first transcription was transcribed by the third author and the second one was transcribed by the first author. For audit trail purposes, the first transcript was examined by the first author and the second transcript was examined by the third author.

Morrow (2005, p. 252) defines transferability as the "extent to which the reader is able to generalise the findings of a study to her or his own context." Consequently, providing succinct information about the researchers, research context, processes, participants are important factors for readers to understand before they can decide whether results and conclusions of a study can be transferred. However, we would like to emphasise here that this study does not aim to draw generalisations but, instead, provide an avenue for deeper discourse on the arguments presented in this paper.

4. Presenting the empirical materials

4.1. Asian PhD students' choices and Eurocentrism

Out of the 11 participants who took part in the study (6 in the first focus group and 5 in the second), 8 were conducting qualitative research and identified themselves as interpretivists, 2 quantitative researchers labelled themselves as positivists and/or post-positivists, and one mixed-methods researcher identified himself as a positivist. Eurocentrism, as we have discussed earlier, denotes a view of the world (knowledge) that is objective and universal. In the coloniser's model of the world (Blaut, 1993), it is assumed that the system within which we live, whose ideologies have been maintained by each generation (due to crystallisations of Eurocentric assumptions), narratives among the colonised exist based on ethnocentric and binary views of people, knowledge and culture. However, the persistent nature of such ideologies is not simply a consequence of Asian higher education structures. It is also a dominant narrative deeply embedded in wider societal beliefs and structures. Therefore, in order to present our participants' narratives, the discussion would flow according to the multiple levels at which they encountered Eurocentric ideology before entering higher education and during their university studies. The narratives will provide the reader an in-depth understanding of the structures and its influences that eventually guided their research choices. We will begin our discussion from their initial point of contact to Eurocentric ideology: society. The participants of this study all spoke loudly about the ways in which they were raised, that shaped their 'systematic' ways of thinking, and what Blaut (1993, p. 28) articulates as "colonial tutelage".

> "I would say it is a very Asian mentality to be very systematic …. like, you see our parents are like 'don't do this, don't do that' but they never tell you why … For example, if I ask my mom, 'why should I do this', she'd say 'it's just how it is (*negatively expressed*) …. " (P3)

> "It's the Asian mind-set. Follow, follow and follow. Like sheep we follow …. . We are from 'developing' countries, so we are not matured yet as compared to the western countries" (P1)

> "I think specifically in Asian region, we are very limited in following the western [with emphasis] thing like. It's like you know we follow …. In Asian culture, we have this top-down approach. The information and guidance come from the top and people below follow. But for westerners its opposite" (P4)

> "Asian mentality is very quantitative. After high school, we have to go to university, we have to at least get a diploma and then a degree.

That is a very quantitative way. That is how we are like photocopy machine. We produce an army of you know, robots. Growing in that atmosphere, it's hard for you to do something outside the box, something different. I don't really like the Asian mentality (*negatively expressed*). 'Why do I have to do this, why do I have to do that'. That is why maybe I like how the Western think" (P7)

These binary views of society, cultural norms and knowledge tended to rise at each aspect of the focus group discussions. More specifically, the participants often referred to differences between Asia and the West and/or developed and developing countries. Importantly, Western culture and norms tended to be labelled as 'positive' while Asian cultural norms and values were mostly perceived as 'negative'. These perceived dichotomies seem to mirror Eurocentric ideologies (as discussed in the literature review).

"I would say that I wasn't really good in research you know, so I wanted to start from somewhere where people can help me out. I know if I go to Australia, they will start from a level. I have to reach that level before I can actually commence it. So I thought, let's start from the 'grass root' level (implying to Malaysia)" (P3)

The focus groups also unveiled Asian students' Eurocentric views and biases about education. More specifically, most of the interviewees expressed their desire to conduct their doctoral studies in Western countries, such as the UK, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, although financial issues and high entry requirements did not allow them to do so. This seems to evoke what Doyle, Manathunga, Prinsen, Tallon, and Cornforth (2018) have argued, namely that many students from past colonies move to the colonisers to pursue their studies and engage with academic norms of English writing. Such a phenomenon can be further explained by the increasing efforts of Asian governments in promoting the 'Eurocentric vision' through Western education (Mura & Sharif, 2015). It is an accepted norm in the Asian communities and academic circles that Western education is more advanced than its counterparts are.

Among the 11 participants, only 2 conducted their higher education studies overseas, namely in the United Kingdom and United States respectively. When asked for the reason behind the choice of studying overseas, they explained that the motivational push mainly came from their parents, who convinced them of the 'advanced' position of these foreign universities. Drawing on my own personal reflection here, I (first author) too was raised in a societal structure (Sri Lanka) where being educated in a "WEIRD" (white, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic) culture or academic community (Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010a, 2010b cited in Oktadiana & Pearce, 2017) was regarded as highly important, especially during job interviews, promotions, and societal tasks in general. This perception was also shared by the remaining 9 interviewees. Although they did not have the possibility to study in 'WEIRD' countries, they all expressed their unfulfilled desires to attend a Western university (e.g. the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada). However, these plans had to be aborted due to financial constraints and challenging academic entry requirements. Participant 7, for example, had planned to study abroad (Australia) but was unable to do so:

I couldn't go because of financial issues. I don't think I can go out there. I'm basically stuck here, to be honest. OK. I'm stuck here …. If you want to go to UK, Australia, you need to show bank deposits" (taps the table) (P4)

Propelled by the dominant discourses present in Asian societal structures, the participants sub-consciously mirrored the ideas, choices and mentality of former generations. Due to the narratives they were exposed to, participants made choices based on ethnocentric views aligned to Edward Said's *Orientalism*. They developed views that gaze at the West in a romanticised fashion, mainly as a more developed, progressive and advanced context.

Beyond wider societal structures, participants' second major contact point to Eurocentric ideology occurred during their experiences in higher education. As discussed earlier, universities in Malaysia are highly aligned with Eurocentric and capitalist norms. Although education is the most important tool for structural change, business-like, profit-oriented, 'internationalised' superstructures in Malaysia tend to perpetuate Western norms. In this respect, higher education is one of the main avenues to propel Eurocentric norms further (Pocock, 2015). As such, academics working in Asian universities are compelled to align themselves with the 'WEIRD' academic culture. Participants argued that the systematic, objective, positivist, ideals that exist in Asian universities shape their methodological choices:

"I never knew qualitative methodology …. In Philippines (American education system) we are only taught of quantitative methods. Qualitative is just touch and go … quantitative is the main method to use and qualitative is a support to quantitative" (P2)

"I was taught from diploma and in my degree (Malaysia) that there is only one way of doing things …. . Asian mentality is very quantitative (negatively expressed). We are like photocopy machine. We produce an army of robots. Growing in that atmosphere, it's hard for you to do something outside the box" (P7)

"When I did my graduation (in India), we do have one module, research methodology, so the research methodology chapter usually talks about statistics" (P4)

Furthermore, during the focus groups, many participants referred to the power structures that shaped their research choices. These structures occur at different levels, from micro (between supervisors and students, jury members and students), to macro (e.g. institutional, global) levels. Based on the experiences recorded in our focus groups, there seems to exist a silent, yet dominant, set of instructions to be followed in order to successfully complete a PhD journey. These include already established and 'accepted' ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, methods, models, topics and subjects, which are favoured by gatekeepers (e.g. panel jurors, supervisors, graduate officers). As Holligan (2005) notes, "it seems that some doctoral supervisors may feel compelled to over-direct students in developing their research studies in order to ensure successful completion rates: Discourses of autonomy and independence ('old discourses') remain under siege because of the emphasis now accorded to a consumerist service ethic … students will expect 'quick fix' solutions to their academic difficulties, whereas many academics will favour loyalty to the 'old' discourses and respond with antipathy to insidious, commercialised discourse of performativity" (p. 268).

In terms of supervisory influence, 6 of the 11 participants stated:

"At first I wanted to do mixed method, but my supervisor (Malaysian) said that according to his experience dealing with students who are doing mixed methods, they are having difficulty in defending their thesis. So he asked me to do either quantitative or qualitative" (P2)

"Sometimes you have a problem whereby, you do have a qualitative spot but in your thesis, they would say 'scrape it out' so I did … … My supervisors are all Malay and they graduated locally (*negatively expressed*). I have a problem whereby I have fixed decisions that I have to make. If the supervisor said, I want you to do quantitative, you have to do quantitative … local universities (public), I mean over here, they are subjected to specific answers that they want from you" (P1)

"My supervisor (Pakistani) said 'do one method, it's very hard to defend mixed method', but my literature suggested to do mixed-method. I said no. I fought with my supervisor. He told me then, 'this is on your own, do whatever you want, I'm not with you" (P3)

"My ex-supervisor (Malaysian) was not very helpful at all. He was

pinning me down and never allowed me to progress" (P9)

"My second supervisor is a quantitative researcher (new supervisor) but I told him, I will not change my methodology, this is my methodology … but the way my new supervisor evaluated my paper and trying to put something or asking to remove something on it … the way he reviewed the paper is very quantitative." (P8)

"I wanted to do qualitative, but my supervisor asked me to do quantitative because it was easier, so I had to go with that" (P6)

However, instances in which supervisors were open minded in allowing relatively free and independent choices were also mentioned by 2 participants:

"One of my supervisors are very quantitative (Asian) and the other qualitative (European). Their mind-set doesn't really influence me, at the end of it, they let me choose" (P5)

"I chose my methodology. My supervisor (European) is understanding. We built the topic and everything together" (P7)

Others also shared their experiences with the respective graduate offices and jury personnel, which had an impact on their choices.

Look at the structure of the report guidelines from the graduate school. It's all quantitative based. Even the power point slides, they don't tell you that you can do it differently. They just give you as it is and expect you to follow it. Even when we go for our defence, the jury will ask you 'what are your expected outcomes'. You are not supposed to have it. So yeah, I feel that it is very much cultivated in Asian society. Maybe that is how they have been taught before and they don't want to change (P5)

Three of them (all Asian jury) were quantitative people. I am presenting a qualitative proposal … So I presented and then somebody is asking to rewrite and do test of the hypothesis. I feel like here, because quantitative has become a norm and maybe it was like what I thought when I did my degree that if you do quantitative you get better marks, so people will direct you to that (P4)

Participant 1, who had already conducted qualitative interviews before her proposal defence, was forced by the panel jury to remove the qualitative part and to opt for a quantitative approach.

Panels might like the numbers, but to me, it's not enough, so I just have to hide it. You have to follow the path, you cannot build you own path.

Likewise, participant 3 added:

The Asian mentality is more towards to what they believe that has to be done by this person (*negatively expressed*). Like for example, if you are proposing something, if they don't like it, they will not think of other perspectives, they rather [try] to influence you …

Moreover, while students were discouraged to conduct mixed methods research (3 of 11 participants) and persuaded to opt for one approach only (either quantitative or qualitative), quantitative research was often deemed as 'a safer choice'. The assumed 'safety' of quantitative studies was attributed to the idea that following the (positivist) tradition and applying rather conventional methodological techniques are important strategies to successfully complete a PhD within the timeframe allocated (usually three years). Finishing a PhD within the allocated time or earlier is of utmost importance to universities in Malaysia, which are highly driven by completion rates as these affect their global and local ranks. Furthermore, as completion rates also affect supervisors' career progression, students are encouraged to opt for choices that would enable them to finish faster, rather than developing creative or critical thinking. These deeply entangled arrangements produce a "power relation between the student and a supervisor as well as other authoritative persons, that makes it difficult to develop independent thinking and to express one's own viewpoint" (Pyhalto et al., 2012, p. 5). Overall, the participants' narratives seem to reiterate the idea that "academic freedom is a mirage" (Hall, 2004, p. 147). Indeed, the global academic scenario is driven by capitalist structures of power that do not allow scholars to deviate too much from 'the rules of the game'. In this scenario, the possibility of free choices, seem to be difficult, especially for young PhD students. This is particularly true for Asian tourism PhD scholars, who are subjected to various layers of power structures.

Based on these power structures and dominant ideology, it became clear, through the stories of the participants, that their philosophical beliefs or worldviews had little to do with the way they conducted research. Rather, participants preferred to follow systematic frontiers of conducting research rather than following their paradigmatic beliefs. They followed systematic protocols rather than reflexive choices. For instance, all the participants confirmed that their methodological choices were influenced by circumstances (e.g. their research objectives, problems, questions, previous literature/international literature) that go beyond their paradigmatic beliefs:

"It depends on the research problem. I mean it's the practical way. I would say the most important is the research problem … that will lead you to the methodology you should use" (P3)

"I choose quantitative, because hoteliers would not be very comfortable when being interviewed. Also getting slots to interview them would be a task too" (P9)

"I really hate SPSS, I really hate numbers. So I told myself let's try doing interviews. So I chose qualitative" (P7)

"My method is solely related to the literature that I have read …. my literature suggested that better to follow mixed method" (P3)

Interestingly, the participants did not mention the need to connect methodologies to paradigmatic beliefs, as Denzin and Lincoln (2017) argue. In this situation, even though the majority (8 of 11) stated that they are conducting qualitative research, the preferred paradigms were positivism and post-positivism. As one of the participants conducting qualitative research put it

"I know my knowledge and my experience would help me in 'finding out the meaning that I want to find out" (P2)

Participants also stated that reflexivity and prolonged engagement in the field may cause biases, which they perceived as an obstacle for the overall 'validity' and 'reliability' of their study. Hence, quantitative research is viewed as a safe option in order to persuade readers (or viva voce jury members) of the significance of the findings. In this scenario, qualitative research is approached in a rather rigorous/positivist-like systematic fashion. As a result, reflexivity is only included at times in methodology sections to justify why a specific area of inquiry was selected.

"People favour quantitative because it is easily said. Its figures. Figures talk on their own. It's a symbol. Probably one figure will justify everything" (P1)

"I want to share that I am qualified to be a part of this group that I want to interview because of these experiences that I have" (P2)

In this rigid structure, the young generation of future Asian tourism academics, the 'third generation' as defined by McKercher and Prideaux (2014), seems to further accentuate the first generation's myths of what constitutes 'correct' and 'legitimate' knowledge. Indeed, "acknowledging, exposing and publishing emotional admissions may also be scary for researchers accustomed to the rational, intellectual ideology of science" (Pocock, 2015, p. 33). As such, the participants' ways of conducting qualitative research are anchored to positivist tenets and ideologies. This point emerged clearly in discussions about reflexivity and less impersonal ways of writing during the focus groups. More specifically, the participants' statements seem to support Walle (1997,

p. 525), who (twenty years ago) argued that “high on the list of priorities of scientific/quantitative methods, is the dehumanisation of research in order to reduce bias and increase rigor”. A further point expressed by the participants concerns the role of the socio-cultural and academic environment in reiterating Eurocentric structures of power. In this regard, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1983) contends that the replication of Western imperialism is due to the ability of the system to control one's ‘mind’ based on a ‘systematic abuse of power’. In this scenario, although qualitative research approaches have become more legitimised, they are still framed by ‘positivist’ and ‘post positivist’ tenets. Thus, even within the context of qualitative research, emphasis is placed on finding objective truths.

Overall, the discussions during the focus groups indicate that PhD scholars are aware of Asian scholars' dependence on Western knowledge. Still, due to influences coming from a variety of societal, political and institutional structures, they did not show forms of critical thinking that could challenge or eventually overcome these power structures. This is not surprising as “the captive mind is unconscious of its own captivity and the conditioning factors making it what it is” (Alatas, 2004, p. 690). In this scenario, Asian students' contributions to knowledge are mainly constituted by attempts to apply Western theories to non-Western settings. The dominant theories and methodologies employed by Asians are Western because the captive mind's “way of thinking is led by Western thought in an imitative and uncritical manner” (Alatas, 2004, p. 691). For instance, since the majority of the participants' research focus is on sites in Asian countries, we asked them about the theories that they are mobilising in their own PhD work. They all answered that their studies are grounded on Western theories. When we explored this point further by asking “do you feel in any way that the theories you use would have implications for your findings?” or “did you consider using local theories?” some answers argued that “there are no such local theories in my field”, and “everything is written in international journals”. As other participants, one interviewee also contended that local theories are not legitimate enough to be used in a PhD level research. Another stated,

> At this level (in India), you know very traditional like, going to the same Indian roots, because they don't really think, beyond the Indian library. They read Indian authors. It's that kind of mentality there (*negatively expressed*)” (P3)

Moreover, the participants also viewed Asian knowledge as being at a “grass root” (P3) level and somehow ‘inferior’ if compared to Western standards. Indeed, in few instances theories and methods developed by Australian scholars were labelled as ‘appropriate’ while those proposed by Asian scholars as ‘not so good’. Participants of this study accentuate similarly the “god-eyed view of western knowledge” that Chambers and Buzinde (2015, p.6) explain in their own reflections. Their reading material thus stems primarily from ‘international journals’, and only if information about the research site is needed they would refer to local authors. Even then, if material about their ‘Asian’ research sites are available from Western authors, they would exclude local authors completely. As such, although attempts of disrupting Eurocentric hegemonic structures have been propelled by some tourism scholars (see Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011), our study seems to indicate that Eurocentric ideologies still dominate the globalised capitalist system in general, and the intellect of the ‘third generation’ of Asian tourism scholars in particular. At the current time, breaking Eurocentric myths does not seem to be an option in Asia, because to break it would mean to challenge many hegemonic systems, such as capitalism, democracy, globalisation, and free markets, all of which support the ‘Eurocentric vision’. However, in the global neo-colonial scenario where new superpowers such as China, Japan and South Korea are rising, future research could extend our discussion beyond the influence of Western normative cultures to understand the effects of the new power regime on the worldwide knowledge domain.

5. Conclusion

By giving voice to a group of Asian PhD students, this paper attempts at exploring the power structures shaping tourism doctoral students' ontological, epistemological and methodological choices. Overall, this work contends that Eurocentric hegemonic structures, propelled by capitalist and globalising forces in higher education, play a major role in moulding paradigmatic beliefs and subsequent methodological choices. More specifically, Western norms and approaches to research (what is perceived as the ‘tradition’ in global academic circles) are often accepted and reiterated by the third generation of tourism scholars almost unquestioningly. In this scenario, students are not the only agents reproducing dominant discourses and practices. Rather, a complex net of gatekeepers, including supervisors, examiners and administrators, act all together to reaffirm capitalist dynamics and a global business-oriented education system.

The question then arises as to how we, as members of the tourism academic community, could play an active role in challenging this ‘status quo’ and promoting change. There are power structures propelled by global macro forces (e.g. capitalism, globalisation) that we, as single individuals entangled in the structure, may not be able to question (perhaps we may not even be aware of the forces shaping our choices!). In a regime where creativity and originality are relatively discouraged, free choices are a hard-to-die myth. Still, it is also true that in our daily professional routines, as teachers, supervisors, and administrators, we could play an important role in propelling change. As teachers, we should believe in the need to inform our doctoral students of the existence of different paradigmatic beliefs and approaches to research. As supervisors, we should embrace the idea of dialogical student-supervisor relationships, in which traditional beliefs should be debated and questioned in a free fashion. As administrators, we should begin shaping processes and procedures – at both department and university levels – that go beyond positivist assumptions (e.g. accepting theses that go beyond the traditional literature review-methodology-findings structures, avoiding to implement mechanical approaches to research that jeopardise individuality and creativity). Most importantly, doctoral students should be the principal agents driving this change. As reflective human beings, we should believe that only by constantly reflecting upon their research-related choices, doctoral students could become fully aware of the macro and micro forces behind them. This may not lead to an immediate drastic change of the current state of affairs. However, it could definitely inspire Asian PhD students and encourage them to explore less Eurocentric, more critical approaches to research.

While this study provides provocative insights into the state of Asian tourism knowledge and its related power structures, it is important to emphasise that it presents limitations. One of them concerns the scope of the research and its participants. In this respect, although this paper attempts to cast light on the experiences of Asian PhD students, it mainly focuses on Asian doctoral students in Malaysia. As such, most of the discussions are framed within the structures of power specifically characterising the Malaysian higher education system. Moreover, this paper did not explore in its objective or discussion how different faculties (e.g. business, communication, etc.) may play a role in changing students' perspectives, as different disciplines have different foundational beliefs. Also, while we highly value PhD students' perspectives, it needs to be reiterated that these are only partially representative of the whole scenario concerning tourism knowledge, which is also represented by scholars performing in different levels of their career (e.g. lecturers, senior lecturers, professors).

Based on these limitations, we believe that future studies could contribute to this line of research in different ways. More research is definitely needed to explore whether and how similar discussions may be applied to other contexts (both in Asian and non-Asian contexts). Since colonialism has not only affected Asia, future research could focus on the colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial legacies influencing the

production and dissemination of tourism knowledge in non-Asian territories, such as South America or Africa. By doing so, it could be interesting to compare forms of (neo)colonial powers shaping tourism knowledge in South America and Asia for instance. Moreover, whether and how emerging powers (e.g. China, India) may influence tourism knowledge in Europe and the Western world in the future could be another focus of interest. Overall, this line of research could allow us to have a better understanding of the fluidity of power relations in the global arena in general, and tourism studies in particular. Finally, future work could expand the scope of our study by considering Asian tourism scholars operating within non-tourism faculties/schools and comparing doctoral and mid-career (e.g. senior lecturers, associate professors). Furthermore, comparisons between Asian and Western perspectives on paradigms and knowledge could be of help to understand whether similar beliefs (e.g. positivism) are conceived and operationalised in research in different ways. As paradigms are not fixed, this could provide interesting insights on how paradigmatic values may change over time in scholars' careers.

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Author contribution

All three authors have made significant contributions towards the completion of the paper. First author contributed to the design of the project, as well as the introduction, literature review, data collection and moderation, transcribing and interpretation of data, drafting, revising and finalizing the manuscript as well as supporting documents, addressing reviewers' comments and correspondence with the journal. Second author contributed to the design of the project, provided multiple reviews and input on the project and draft manuscripts, managed editorial work, wrote the methodology, conclusions and recommendations and assisted in responding to reviewer comments. Second author also provided support in organizing and conducting the focus groups. Third author contributed to the conception and design of the study, the methodology as well as data collection and analysis. Third author actively participated in the organizing, conducting and moderation of focus groups. All 3 authors were involved in the discussion process throughout the development and completion of the study.

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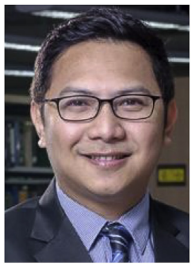

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