

Global Heritage Tourism And Environmental Sustainability: A Review Of Hyung Yu Park's Heritage Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Heritage Tourism by Hyung Yu Park (2014) offers a comprehensive examination of how heritage is conceptualized, managed, and commodified in the tourism context. This review critically evaluates Park's work, focusing on its theoretical frameworks and engagement with key debates in heritage tourism. The book's treatment of authenticity, commodification, the global-local nexus and environmental sustainability is analyzed. Comparative international case studies from Vietnam, Nepal, the UK and beyond are highlighted to assess the empirical relevance of Park's arguments. While the book excels in integrating perspectives from anthropology, sociology, geography, and management, it is critiqued for occasionally heavy reliance on referenced material with limited continuous analysis. The review discusses the work's contributions to theory and practice, its originality and limitations, and implications for tourism planning, heritage governance, and future research.

Keywords: *Heritage Tourism; Authenticity; Commodification; Globalization; Sustainable Development; Urban Heritage; Heritage Governance.*

INTRODUCTION

Heritage tourism has grown into a significant segment of the global tourism industry, as destinations increasingly promote cultural and historical assets to diversify beyond mass tourism. This expansion has brought not only economic opportunities but also environmental and social changes, prompting urgent questions about how tourism can be managed without endangering environmental and heritage resources. In an era of climate change and sustainable development imperatives, heritage sites face mounting pressures from physical degradation due to visitor overuse to the risks posed by climate-related events. Indeed, international bodies like UNESCO warn that climate change is increasingly threatening the integrity and authenticity of World Heritage sites, compounding problems caused by mass tourism. Global policy frameworks now reflect these concerns: for example, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals include a target to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. The focus is on conserving natural and cultural treasures hand-in-hand with a view to protect the environment and interests of local communities.

Hyung Yu Park's *Heritage Tourism* (2014) is a timely scholarly work that, although published over a decade ago, offers a comprehensive examination of heritage tourism's complex dynamics. Park approaches heritage tourism as a "dialectic and discursive relationship between people and places," exploring how global forces and local identities intersect at heritage destinations. The book sits at the intersection of environmental science, social science and management perspectives, drawing from fields such as geography, sociology, anthropology, and tourism studies. Park's interdisciplinary observations makes her analysis particularly relevant to contemporary sustainability discussions.

This academic review re-examines Park's key arguments and case studies through the lens of

environmental sustainability. The review outlines the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin Park's analysis – notably authenticity, commodification and the global-local nexus with an emphasis on how these frameworks relate to environmental sustainability. It delves into thematic discussions from the book, reframed to highlight sustainability concerns, tension between commodification and authenticity (and its environmental implications), urban heritage regeneration (balancing economic development with ecological and cultural conservation).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Park builds her analysis on several core concepts that frame heritage tourism, starting with the notion of authenticity. Heritage tourism often hinges on the pursuit of an “authentic” past, yet Park underscores that authenticity is not an inherent property of sites but a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by both the providers and consumers of tourism. In her view, what visitors perceive as “authentic” is contingent on interpretation and context – tour guides, site managers, and tourists themselves co-create meaning. This aligns with broader scholarly debates that question objective authenticity and emphasize negotiated or experiential authenticity in tourism. From a sustainability standpoint, the quest for authenticity has implications for how sites are preserved: maintaining a sense of authenticity often requires protecting the integrity of the place, which includes its physical environment and ambiance. Park hints at this when noting that excessive tourist infrastructure or commercialization can undermine a site's character. For instance, replacing historic features with modern tourist facilities may erode not only cultural meaning but also the site's environmental setting (e.g. green spaces or original materials). Thus, authenticity and conservation go hand in hand – a point increasingly recognized in heritage management guidelines that link authenticity with environmental integrity

The commodification of heritage is presented by Park as a double-edged sword. On one hand, turning heritage sites, traditions, or local cultures into tourism products can make history accessible and engaging to a broad audience. Creative packaging from heritage theme parks to live historical re-enactments might even enhance visitor appreciation and generate revenue that can be reinvested in preservation. On the other hand, Park echoes concerns that intense commodification risks stripping heritage of its deeper cultural or spiritual value, reducing it to a mere commercial commodity. Park cites the example of Hoi An Ancient Town in Vietnam to reflect how unchecked commercialization can deteriorate the uniqueness of the heritage site. The author mentions that global promotion boosted the tourism of the city but at the same over commercialization due to the conversion of historic homes to shops and tourist facilities led to erosion of authenticity. Park suggests for moderate commodification with appropriate management strategies to reap the benefits of tourism without compromising the eco-cultural integrity of the place.

Park observes the impact of mass footfalls on environmental sustainability. Notably, opening heritage tourism to the masses increases the scale of tourism's environmental footprint. The rise in global travel for heritage – facilitated by cheaper flights and digital promotion – carries a carbon cost. Recent research even estimates that heritage-related travel may account for roughly half of all tourism's carbon emissions, a sobering statistic that underscores why sustainable practices (like promoting low-carbon transport, limiting long-haul trips, or offsetting emissions) are increasingly part of the heritage tourism conversation. The author observes that the contemporary heritage tourism market must balance mass accessibility with the risk of cultural dilution and environmental degradation

Park's global-local perspective prefigures the now-common idea that resources must be balanced with local empowerment and environmental limits. The author states for a middle ground where communities can engage with global tourism markets on their own terms, maintaining control over their heritage assets and environment even as they welcome international visitors.

PERSPECTIVES ON HERITAGE TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

Commodification and Authenticity

One of Park's prominent observation is how making heritage “consumable” – through souvenirs, staged

performances, or convenient reconstructions – affects its authenticity and value. She notes a split among scholars: some argue that tourism democratizes heritage by broadening its audience and financially supporting conservation, while others warn that tourism intensifies commodification, turning culture into a commodity and thereby marginalizing its intrinsic values. Throughout *Heritage Tourism*, Park illustrates this tension with real-world cases. For example, in addition to the Hoi An case mentioned earlier, she discusses how historical villages, museums, and even intangible heritage (like rituals or crafts) are often repackaged to meet tourist expectations. This repackaging can recreate a sense of the past that is enjoyable for visitors, but it may also replace original meanings with market-driven narratives.

Park observes that overcrowding, wear and tear, and modifications to accommodate tourist comfort (e.g. adding modern buildings, excessive lighting, or amenities in historic areas) can degrade the very environment that made a site appealing. Park cites visitor management techniques – like limiting numbers or channeling tourists to less sensitive areas – as important tools to protect authenticity and physical integrity. In her sustainable development chapter, she even mentions “demarketing” strategies (such as advertising off-peak visitation or alternative sites) to relieve pressure on iconic destinations. These approaches reflect a growing consensus in sustainable tourism that effective management should prioritize quality over quantity reflecting a balance between use and conservation.

Climate change adds an important layer to the authenticity discussion that Park touches upon. She was forward-thinking in noting that changing environmental conditions threaten heritage sites’ material authenticity. Many historic structures and artifacts were “not built with the capacity to resist modern environmental changes”, as Park observes. Rising humidity, temperature fluctuations, extreme weather, and sea-level rise can physically damage buildings, archaeological remains, and cultural landscapes, altering their appearance and integrity. For example, increased humidity might cause ancient murals to peel, or flooding might erode archaeological layers – effectively distorting the authentic fabric of the site. Park highlights that alongside controlling tourist impacts, heritage managers must now anticipate climate-induced wear. Efforts to preserve authenticity, therefore, must include climate adaptation measures (like installing environmental monitoring systems, using climate-resilient conservation materials, or even relocating or digitally documenting extremely vulnerable assets). Park’s inclusion of the questions of long-term viability: economic viability, cultural continuity, and environmental resilience.

In summary, Park’s exploration of commodification and authenticity demonstrates the importance of context and management. Rather than viewing these concepts in absolute opposition, she presents them as a continuum where thoughtful policy and community engagement can tip the balance towards mutually reinforcing outcomes. The implication for sustainability is clear: heritage tourism should be managed in a way that tourism benefits and do not come at the expense of a site’s environmental and cultural sustainability.

Urban Heritage and Regeneration

A significant thematic area in Park’s book is the nexus between heritage tourism and urban development. In the chapter “Heritage Tourism and Cities,” Park explores how cities around the world have increasingly turned to heritage as a resource for urban regeneration and economic revitalization. Park stresses that sustainable urban planning is essential when heritage is a cornerstone of development. She advocates for planning approaches that integrate community interests and heritage conservation into the urban growth process. This means cities should implement tools like heritage impact assessments for new projects, enforce building height and design controls in old quarters, and channel a portion of tourism or development revenue back into conservation of historic areas.

Park also highlights the importance of intangible heritage such as traditional festivals, fairs, workshops and other cultural activities which can help in boosting urban tourism in a eco-friendly and less cost effective manner. Park provides examples of cities that have developed their cultural vibrancy – such as annual heritage events or community museums – to draw visitors in a way that spreads economic benefits to local artisans and performers. Such approaches also help avoid the scenario where only big developers

profit from “heritage projects.” In essence, Park is advocating for a people-centered approach to urban heritage tourism, paralleling her points on community-based sustainability.

Park’s visualization of urban heritage tourism perfectly aligns with SDG 11 which states the principles of sustainable cities. His idea of sustainable heritage tourism contributes to preservation of local resources, urban biodiversity and reinforcement of social cohesion through shared cultural spaces.

Sustainable Heritage Tourism

The book highlights the importance of applying sustainability principles to heritage tourism. Unlike natural resources, cultural heritage includes historical structures and traditions that predate modern sustainability discourse, meaning many heritage sites were not designed to handle large visitor volumes or environmental changes. Park discusses how increased tourist traffic and climate change are two significant threats: heavy visitation can physically wear down sites and disturb local lifestyles, while climate change (e.g. rising humidity, extreme weather) can deteriorate ancient buildings and sites that were “not built with the capacity to resist modern environmental changes”. These issues demand proactive management strategies. Park advocates for controlling visitor numbers at sensitive sites – for instance, implementing capacity limits or timed entry (a practice sometimes termed demarketing in tourism) to prevent overuse. She also underscores the importance of involving local communities as stewards of heritage, noting that a “people-centered approach” is vital for sustainability. This means engaging locals in decision-making and ensuring they benefit from tourism, which in turn encourages them to support conservation efforts.

Park provides the example of Lumbini in Nepal, the birthplace of Buddha, to illustrate multi-stakeholder dynamics in sustainable heritage tourism. Lumbini is a sacred heritage site and a growing tourist destination. Park notes that to locals, Lumbini presents economic opportunities (jobs, businesses serving pilgrims), whereas at the national level it is seen as a matter of prestige and cultural pride. Such differing motivations can create tension between development and preservation. Park argues that finding consensus among stakeholders – local residents, government, religious authorities, international donors – is essential. She suggests that applying CSR principles and glocalized strategies (where global actors like NGOs or tour operators work in harmony with local needs) can provide funding and expertise for conservation without overriding local interests. In Lumbini’s case, this might mean investing tourism revenues into local community projects and infrastructure, while enforcing regulations that protect the archaeological and spiritual integrity of the site.

Another aspect Park covers is marketing for sustainable heritage tourism. She introduces the idea of “sustainable marketing” – marketing approaches that not only promote visitation but also educate tourists and set appropriate expectations. For instance, heritage destinations can be marketed with an emphasis on respectful behavior, or highlighting off-peak visitation to spread impact. Park also alludes to the role of modern technology and social media: while social media can overhype certain sites (leading to sudden mass tourism influx), it can also be a tool for spreading awareness about preservation needs and engaging younger generations in heritage appreciation.

Throughout this thematic discussion, Park’s core message is that sustainability in heritage tourism requires a holistic, balanced approach. Economic gains from tourism should be weighed against non-economic values like cultural continuity and community well-being. She emphasizes long-term planning, where heritage management and tourism development are integrated rather than at odds. This reflects and reinforces global policy shifts, such as UNESCO’s focus on sustainable tourism at World Heritage Sites. By including sustainability, Park’s book ensures that the future-facing challenges of heritage tourism are part of the conversation, making her work especially relevant to planners and policymakers who must manage heritage assets under pressures of both tourism growth and global change.

DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS

Hyung Yu Park’s *Heritage Tourism* is impressively comprehensive in scope, covering an array of topics from foundational concepts to emerging issues in the field. One of the book’s greatest strengths is its

integration of multiple perspectives – it bridges humanistic insights about culture and identity with practical management and marketing considerations. As a result, the book connects heritage tourism to broader social, economic, and (as we have highlighted) environmental issues. This synthesis is reflected in Park's ability to highlight connections between heritage tourism and broader social, economic, and political issues. As one reviewer noted, the text "highlights connections and relationships between heritage tourism and broader issues within social science and management studies", making it valuable not only for students as an introduction but also for researchers seeking a cross-disciplinary understanding. The empirical relevance of Park's work is bolstered by the numerous case studies and examples woven into each chapter. These range across continents and scales – from small community sites to global cities – lending credibility and real-world weight to theoretical discussions. The inclusion of cases like Vietnam's heritage town, Nepal's Lumbini, and urban redevelopment in Liverpool ensures that readers can see how the abstract concepts of authenticity, commodification, and governance play out in practice. This comparative international outlook is a notable contribution, as it provides a multi-scalar perspective (local, national, global) that resonates with the complex reality of heritage tourism today.

In terms of theoretical originality, Park's book is not trying to propose a single new theory of heritage tourism; rather, its originality lies in the comprehensive framework it builds by assembling diverse strands of scholarship. Park's notion of a "dialectic" relationship between people and places via heritage tourism is a useful conceptual device, emphasizing that heritage tourism is not one-dimensional but a conversation between tourists, communities, and sites. While many of the concepts discussed (authenticity, commodification, etc.) are well established in the literature, Park's contribution is to evaluate them side-by-side and in context. The book's attempt to blend "contradictory ideas of heritage and tourism" through both scholarly and managerial lenses is commendable and somewhat original in its holistic ambition. It brings together discussions that are often siloed – for example, one usually finds debates on authenticity in anthropological literature and separate discussions of branding and marketing in business literature; Park puts these in dialogue within a single volume. This approach yields insights, such as recognizing that effective heritage tourism management requires understanding both cultural values and market dynamics.

However, the breadth of *Heritage Tourism* also has a limitation. Given its 2014 publication, *Heritage Tourism* covers digital technologies and social media only briefly, mainly noting their rise. In the years since, these factors have revolutionized heritage tourism (e.g., Instagram-driven travel trends, virtual reality in museums, etc.). Despite these critique, *Heritage Tourism* succeeds as a synthesis and educational resource. The chapters are well-organized, each ending with discussion questions and ample references, which is excellent for students and practitioners who want to explore further.

In summary, the book's comprehensive nature is both its main strength and the source of its minor weaknesses. The synthesis offered by Park has enduring value in the field – evidenced by the fact that it remains a recommended text in heritage tourism courses and cited in research several years after publication. For those in tourism planning and development, Park's work acts as a bridge between academic theory and the practicalities of managing heritage attractions, making it a significant contribution despite the noted limitations.

Policy Implications and Future Directions

Park's *Heritage Tourism* emphasizes that policies should mandate stakeholder participation – involving local communities, indigenous groups, and minority populations in decision-making about what is preserved, how it's presented, and how tourism benefits are shared. Embracing this inclusive governance can help address the biases in heritage representation that Park highlighted (e.g., broadening the official heritage narrative beyond elite histories).

When it comes to environmental management, Park's work (especially her sustainability chapter) supports the integration of environmental planning into heritage tourism policy. This is even more urgent today. Planners should create guidelines for environmental carrying capacity at heritage sites – essentially limits on visitor numbers and activities based on ecological thresholds (soil erosion rates, water availability, waste

assimilation capacity, etc.).

On the community side of sustainability, Park's insights suggest supporting community-based tourism models. Governments can facilitate the creation of heritage trusts, cooperatives, or local tourism boards that empower communities to run tourism enterprises and retain a share of profits. This not only keeps economic benefits local (which improves social sustainability), but it also means those who have the most to lose from environmental degradation (local residents) have greater control to prevent it. For example, a community-managed guesthouse near a heritage site is more likely to implement eco-friendly practices and educate guests about respecting the site, compared to an external tour operator solely focused on profit. Some policy examples here include providing micro-loans or training programs for local entrepreneurs, simplifying licensing for homestays or local guides, and ensuring that a portion of site entrance fees goes to a community fund.

Finally, Park's work points to several future research directions that scholars and policymakers should explore. One area is measuring the long-term effects of heritage tourism on social cohesion and identity. Park suggests heritage tourism can build national solidarity and diaspora connections, but future research could investigate how sustainable these effects are and whether they apply equally to all groups in society. Another area is the role of technology: as virtual reality, digital storytelling, and social media evolve, research is needed on how these tools can be used to enhance authentic interpretation without commodifying heritage beyond recognition. In essence, Park's comprehensive review of heritage tourism in 2014 lays a foundation, and the field now would benefit from targeted research that builds on each of the key themes she identified, using updated methods and data to address the new challenges of the 2020s.

CONCLUSION

Heritage Tourism by Hyung Yu Park stands as a significant scholarly contribution that dissects the complex interplay between heritage, environment and tourism in a global context. Heritage Tourism (2014) is a reminder that the past (heritage) and the present (tourism) are in continuous dialogue – a dialogue now further complicated by concerns for the environmental (sustainability). It challenges us to ensure this dialogue is managed responsibly. As we look ahead, the principles outlined by Park, enriched with an environmental consciousness, can guide us towards a heritage tourism paradigm that honors the essence of places and peoples while embracing innovation and change. In an era when sustainable development is a global priority, Park's interdisciplinary, holistic approach to heritage tourism is not only useful – it is essential. Her work provides a strong foundation upon which future research and policy can build, striving to achieve the delicate balance where heritage tourism supports both cultural vitality and ecological balance for generations to come.

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