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Nyaupane, Gyan P., Paris, Cody Morris ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0339-2471> and Li, Xiang (Robert) (2020) Introduction: Special Issue on Domestic Tourism in Asia. *Tourism Review International*, 24 (1) . pp. 1-4. ISSN 1544-2721 (doi:10.3727/154427220x15845838896305)

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## INTRODUCTION: SPECIAL ISSUE ON DOMESTIC TOURISM IN ASIA

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Although there is some variation in the ratios between domestic and international tourism reported by organizations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), it is generally agreed that domestic tourism represents around 80% of world tourist arrivals. In terms of tourist spending, it is estimated that domestic tourist spending contributes between 71% and 75% of total travel spending worldwide. The WTTC (2018) reported that in 2017 domestic tourism accounted for 73% of the global tourism spending of US\$3.971 trillion, a clear testament to the importance of domestic tourism to the global economy. Since these numbers are based on historic data and domestic tourism is growing faster than international tourism, the actual number of domestic tourist flows and its economic impact could be much higher. There has been a large surge in domestic tourism in Asia in the last few decades, which has been attributed to a rise in the middle class, particularly in populous countries like China and India, the region being the fastest growing economy in the world, and a high cultural value of travel (Chan, 2006; Skanavis & Sakelari, 2011; UNWTO, 2012; Wu, Zhu & Xu, 2000). China is now the global leader in domestic tourism

spending, surpassing the US. Over the past decade, China's domestic tourism spending has quadrupled to more than US\$800 billion (WTTC, 2018).

Domestic tourism is potentially more sustainable and resilient than international tourism (Bar-kin, 2001; Stone & Nyaupane, 2016; Peirret, 2011; Singh, 2011). Economically, domestic tourism is less dependent on the global economy, it has a lower level of leakage as domestic tourists tend to use local goods and services, and it can help ameliorate seasonal effects of the industry as well as distribute tourists to rural areas not usually visited by international tourists. Small tourism businesses, such as restaurants, accommodations, and travel agencies, that domestic tourists use usually do not require large capital investment and these are mostly owned and operated by locals, and consequently provide greater benefits to the locals than the businesses owned by multinational corporations. Socially, the cultural distance between the hosts and guests is shorter in domestic tourism than international tourism, hence causing less social disruptions. In addition, as domestic tourists know the destination, language, customs, and values, and they live within the country, their social impacts are less prevalent than international tourism. Domestic tourism also

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enhances locals' appreciation of their natural and cultural heritage that is essential for environmental and social stewardship. Environmentally, domestic tourists are more likely to use land-based transportation and local goods and services; therefore, their carbon footprint from transportation is far less than international tourists.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has brought the global tourism industry to a standstill. International borders have been closed, airlines have grounded flights, cities have been locked down, and a large percentage of the world's population have been under "stay-at-home" orders. The world has not experienced a pandemic of this scale since the 1918 Great Influenza when tourism was not as prevalent as it is today, so the literature on the effect of pandemics on tourism is rather scarce in the tourism literature. Modern tourism is a new phenomenon and the severity of the impacts COVID-19 will cause is still unknown, but the latest research from the WTTC indicates that there is a potential for a US\$2.1 trillion loss of travel and tourism GDP globally, with up to 75 million jobs at immediate risk (WTTC, 2020). The Asia-Pacific region will likely be the hardest hit with up to 49 million tourism sector jobs at risk and a potential loss of US\$800 billion in GDP. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020) reported that international tourism will decline by 45% to 70% in 2020 because of the pandemic.

Given the catastrophic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty of how long this crisis will keep the world at a standstill or how long the recovery will be to prepandemic international travel demand, for many countries domestic tourism will provide the first basis for recovery. Domestic tourism has played an important role in the economic recovery of tourism after previous outbreaks, such as SARS, MERS, and Ebola, natural disasters, and terrorism and conflict. Compared to international tourism, domestic tourism rebounds quickly (S. Li, Blake, & Cooper, 2010), and can bring much-needed relief to the sector, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses.

Despite the large share of domestic tourism and its benefits, traditionally tourism literature is mostly focused on international tourism and grossly undermines the domestic tourism phenomena. The

purpose of this special issue is to contribute to the literature on domestic tourism in Asia. The first part of this introductory article highlights the fundamental issue of understanding domestic tourism within the Eurocentric tourism framework. The second part provides the synopsis of the articles published in this special issue.

Extant tourism theories and concepts are largely framed on international tourism. Tourism scholars have more recently challenged that using the same parameters and principles of international tourism does not necessarily explain the domestic tourism phenomena properly (Singh, 2011; Stone & Nyaupane, 2016). Tourism research is based on the assumption that tourists are from the Global North and the tourism flow is one way from west-to-east, north-to-south (Winter, 2009). Tourism research is therefore derived from Western Anglocentric epistemology (Cohen, Cohen, & King, 206; X. Li, 2016a; Pritchard & Morgan, 2007). Some scholars (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Winter, 2009) challenge the hegemony of Western academy and knowledge in tourism research and call for an "intellectual decentring" to be more inclusive and represent the voices of non-Western and other minorities.

The importance of understanding non-Western perspectives is particularly important not just for academic debate, but has direct implications on how we provide services to a growing number of non-Western tourists. Tourism flow has significantly changed. For example, China is the world's largest spender for the international outbound tourism market. According to the UNWTO report (2019), about 10% of China's 1.4 billion people traveled internationally in 2018 and Chinese tourists spent more than the combined spending of the next top two spender countries (US and Germany). Many authors have already accepted the fact that non-Western tourists who have collectivist values have different travel norms, motivations, patterns, behavior, and seek different outcomes than Western tourists (Litvin, Crotts, & Hefner, 2004; Mattila, 2000; Reisinger, & Turner, 1998). Yet there is a tendency of uncritical adoption of Western theories into non-Western context, which has little theoretic and practical values (X. Li, 2016b; Winter, 2009). Hundreds, if not thousands, of such empirical research papers are published to test Western theories, frameworks, and models in tourism journals.

However, there is a dearth of research to challenge these theories and propose new ones that are more relevant to Asian and non-Western contexts. This special issue represents a small attempt to ameliorate this lacuna.

The special issue consists of five articles. The first article addresses the issue of the measurement of domestic tourism. In this article, "Domestic Tourism Statistics: A Comparative Analysis of Demand Data Coverage and Method," Ragab, Smith, Ragab, and Meis propose a methodology for measuring domestic tourism that includes a comprehensive list of 17 indicators. As there is a lack of domestic tourism statistics for many countries, this study provides guidelines for a data-driven strategy for developing domestic tourism.

The second article by Chowdhary, Kaurav, and Sharma, "Segmenting the Domestic Rural Tourists in India," examines domestic tourists traveling within rural India. The article identifies two segments of domestic tourists, namely "family retreaters" and "rural escapist" based on tourists' motivations. This study offers an insight into domestic tourists visiting their own countryside for traditional culture, and agricultural and pastoral experience. The findings can be useful for practitioners, such as marketers, policymakers, and destination managers. Studies on domestic tourism in the Global South show tourists' appetite for the urban environments, such as theme parks, shopping, national and provincial capitals, and iconic monuments (Stone & Nyaupane, 2016). This study fills the gap in much-needed research on domestic tourists' desire for authenticity, in terms of traditional culture and lifestyle, arts and architecture, and foods.

The third article, "Domestic Tourism in Nepal: Issues and Challenges" by Basnyat, Shrestha, Shakya, Byanjankar, and Basnyat, highlights the issues and challenges the domestic tourism industry is facing in developing countries with a focus on Nepal. The article concludes that the lack of support and initiatives from the government, diversification of tourism products and destinations, and regional inequality in terms of opportunities and information are the major barriers to domestic tourism. The article also provides some practical guidelines that help develop domestic tourism in the Global South. The article further demonstrates that domestic tourism is less prone to external factors than international

tourism; however, domestic tourism is more impacted by government institutions and policies.

The fourth article by Muangasame and Amnuay-ngerntra, "Thailand's New Approach of Domestic Tourism for the Sustainability of Military Bases: A Critique of Restricted Areas Turned Into Leisure Destinations," examines the potentials and issues related to military-based tourism development in Thailand. The article explains how publicly restricted military space has been transformed into a leisure space for public consumption. Two major factors of tourism development, destination competitiveness and sustainability, are also discussed in the article. Finally, the article proposed a military-based tourism development model that can be applied to other destinations.

In the final research note, "Domestic Tourism: Challenging the Notion Through a Geopolitical Lens," Timothy discusses the complexities of defining and measuring domestic tourism. The article challenges the existing discourse of domestic tourism by identifying some exceptions, including territorial noncontiguity, a state's size and shape, physical geography and accessibility, contested territories, and international day trips that have important conceptual and practical implications in domestic tourism.

We would like to thank all the authors who contributed to the special issue, which we hope will help scholars, practitioners, and students to better understand domestic tourism in general and the Asian countries covered in this special issue. We would also like to extend our appreciation to the reviewers for their time, effort, and thoughtful comments toward improving the quality of the manuscripts. Although domestic tourism of each country is somewhat varied in terms of tourism products, market segmentation, and issues and challenges, conceptually they share commonality. Therefore, the specific countries' focus on the niche market, market segmentation, and issues and challenges can be applied to other Asian countries and arguably to the Global South. More importantly, the country-specific articles are written by the native authors, which is a small but significant step toward empowering the scholars of the Global South to challenge cultural empiricism and foster epistemological decolonization of tourism knowledge.

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