
7 Migration and Tourism Mobilities: How Younger Koreans are Enhancing New Urban Experiences in São Paulo

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Abstract

Bom Retiro, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, is identified as a multicultural zone. In the last few years, Korean residents in Bom Retiro have been promoting their cultural activities and updating their businesses. However, Bom Retiro has other tourism products linked to the Korean community, such as a distinctive shopping area. The goal of this research is to understand the ways in which the Korean legacy participates in tourism development, from the perspective of Korean bakeries. Data reveals that the Korean cultural legacy takes part in Bom Retiro tourism development by articulation of ethnicity from Korean entrepreneurs, and by the global process of cultural commoditization, thus producing consumption spaces at the local level, such as bakeries, gastronomy, fashion, music, and language, and consequently attracting a broad diverse set of visitors interested in Korean culture.

Introduction

It is common sense to assume that the acceleration of globalisation leads to homogenisation of cultures, reshaping lifestyles and landscapes (Gotham, 2005; Harvey, 1989). However, by emphasising this discussion

from another angle, the emergence of neolocalism might represent resistance movements and attempts at differentiation (Collins, 2007). In this context, if, on the one hand, the growth of migration depicts undesirable contingents (such as wars, poverty, religious intolerance), on the other hand, (re)settlement of ethnic groups and their cultural manifestations (way of life, music, gastronomy, language) elsewhere provide resources to transform given portions of major urban concentrations into spaces of singular expressions of 'ethnicity' (Timothy, 2002). From this point of view, many tourist destinations take advantage of such ethnic resources as inputs to develop activities capable of attracting tourists and visitors to particular precincts within the cities. This chapter aims to present and discuss how cultural manifestations of Korean immigration to São Paulo, Brazil intertwine with urban tourism in a global destination influenced by significant migratory flows since the 19th century.

Korean migration dates back 60 years in São Paulo, concentrating their economic, social, and cultural activities within the district of Bom Retiro, a geographic target of several migratory groups throughout the 20th century, including Jewish immigrants and, more recently, Bolivians. The traits of the Korean culture are explicit in the urban landscape, observed in typical restaurants, *Hangul* (Korean alphabet), markets, and churches. One of the reasons for this resistance to assimilation could be attributed to the concept of the 'ethnic enclave' (Chi, 2016), when locals' business and social life rely on the community itself, preserving symbols and signals of the Korean culture.

Today, younger Brazilian-Koreans, usually the second generation after the arrival of their grandparents, are undertaking vigorous commercial renewal, recognising the importance of cultural activities as assets for attracting (new) visitors. This new wave of cultural valorisation could be framed in the wider scope of neolocalism. If these commercial strategies enhance tourism and attract resources for urban development (Fainstein & Gladstone, 1999), it raises concerns about the processes of cultural commodification (Rath, 2007; Williams & Hall, 2000), involving both tourists and local visitors. Thus, this chapter will offer the opportunity to explore economic, urban, and cultural aspects of contemporary migratory phenomena through the lens of tourism, particularly by observing 'tourism mobilities' within a large metropolis of the Global South.

Background

São Paulo a global multicultural hub

São Paulo is the eighth most visited city in Latin America (Global Destination Cities Index, 2018), being a cosmopolitan and global hub 'of great tourist attractiveness due the diverse cultural and economic thrills' (PLATUM 2015-208: 16). Over the last 20 years, tourism has become an emerging activity, aligned with the economic diversification of large global cities.

As the financial and economical hub of Brazil, and in several aspects of Latin America, São Paulo has faced many changes at a variety of levels. With the development of new technologies and the turbulent global economic changes that took place during the second half of the 20th century, the competition between global cities (Carvalho, 2011) stimulated the development of new urban cultures as a response to the rising mobility of the creative classes (Florida, 2011). In this context, and over the last thirty years, these global urban centres have become more connected to the world economy. In turn, the importance of tourism has become more relevant to the economy of São Paulo.

Similar to many other global cities (Sassen, 1991), São Paulo's cultural production has evolved in order to attract and entertain incoming cultural elites, improving its prestige within the international arena (Cordeiro, 2002). However, it still faces drawbacks in its intentions to expand the tourism sector, mainly because this activity appears sporadically in urban policies, without proper planning for the sector. Moreover, tourism in São Paulo imposes itself as a spontaneous consequence of visitation to an attraction, detached from the need for large urban projects that traditionally focus on attracting international tourist flows (Allis, 2012).

Until the 1990s, the business segment was seen as the primary motivator in attracting tourists. However, following the consolidation of policies granted by the Federal Constitution (Brasil, 1988), cultural heritage (either material or immaterial) moved to the forefront of urban and tourism planning (Fonseca, 2009). This new focus on urban and cultural heritage generated a new perspective towards developing tourism to build a competitive, international touristic destination (Allis, 2012).

In this sense, the cultural complexity of this metropolis of 11 million people, which has received various nationalities of immigrants since