



## Chapter 18

# Value Creation and Co-Creation in Tourist Experiences: an East Asian Cultural Knowledge Framework Approach

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## Introduction

The outlook of international tourism has significantly changed today from the early mass tourism era at the end of the Second World War. One of the most distinctive traits in current international tourism is the diverse composition of tourists as well as the types of products offered. For tourism researchers studying tourists' experience value creations and co-creations, these changing trends are highly significant (Ryan, 2002). The late 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a growing number of non-European and non-Western tourists. In particular, China is forecast to produce nearly 100 million tourists by the year 2020 (WTO, 1999). In 2014, still 6 years before the year 2020, Chinese outbound tourists exceeded well beyond 100 million. According to China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), 117 million Chinese travelled overseas (CNTA, 2015 as cited in Huang *et al.*, 2017). Asia Pacific as a tourist-generating region has been growing at the rate of 5.6% per annum between 2000 and 2010 (UNWTO, 2011). The growth continues in the second decade of the millennium. With this growing number of East Asian outbound tourists, it is imperative that research has a fundamental understanding of these tourists in the 'new tourism' era where holiday is consumed on a large scale, yet, more flexible and more individually focused than some decades ago (Poon, 1993, p. 18). A fundamental understanding of East Asian tourists may come from an insight into the region's cultural philosophies. Taoism, Confucianism and Zen Buddhism, constituting the underlying philosophical and cultural backbones of East Asia (Hahm, 2004; Schirokauer and Clark, 2004), are studied in relation to East Asian Tourists' experience value creations and co-creations in the current chapter.

Tourism is about visiting other places, attractions, people and nature. The significance of nature; the scenery, the smell, touch and sounds of various natural scenes is described as fundamental aspects of tourism (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989). Nature is thus often focused in tourism promotion materials. Despite the awareness of the importance of the customers partaking in co-creating value for her- or himself, and for others including the company (Pralhad and

Ramaswamy 2004), few have actually studied the operant resources which the customer provides to enhance consumption value (Baron and Harris 2008; Claycomb *et al.*, 2001), and there is a total lack in acknowledging learning regarding nature in a cultural framework.

Tourism professionals and market researchers are eager to study the variations and similarities of tourist behaviour to become competitive in the marketplace. Acknowledging that people have various attitudes and behavioural patterns depending on their cultural background is vital from two points of view. First, it will allow the tourism firms to focus and develop their offerings in line with the tourist's needs and wants. Second, it will attract tourists to participate in value creation and co-creation processes and subsequently enhance the experience value for tourists with different cultural backgrounds. As such, by acknowledging tourist cultural backgrounds, the tourism providers will receive new knowledge in terms of how to develop and promote their amenities in order to increase tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

The aim of the present chapter is thus to propose an East Asian Cultural Knowledge Framework based on the main East Asian cultural philosophies and revisit some previous study findings in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of the East Asian tourist behaviours. In the eye of current tourism research focusing on the tourist as a key actor in creation experience value, the study aims to discuss relationships between cultural backgrounds, i.e., East Asian, and tourist attitude towards and learning regarding nature-based tourism. Based on a review of the literature on East Asian Cultural philosophies, the chapter attempts to establish a departure point to enhance East Asian tourists' experience of value creation and co-creation. The proposed East Asian Cultural Knowledge Framework is expected to inform researchers on, at fundamental level, the tourists' value creation and co-creation, East Asian tourists' enduring motivations for seeking tourism experiences, and a focus on their attitudes towards nature experiences and learning will be outlined

Organised into two main sections, the first part of the chapter reviews key cultural traits of Zen Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism



specifically focused on the meanings of nature and learning. An East Asian Cultural Knowledge Framework relevant to tourists' value creations and co-creations is proposed at the end of the first section. Second part of the chapter applies the concepts drawn from the framework in order to better understand East Asian tourists' attitudes and learning orientations regarding nature based experiences.

### Tourist as a value creator

Creating and co-creating experiences, as a theoretical construct, reflects the consumer as an active participant in consuming and producing values (Dabholkar, 1990). It is about involving the customer to partake in defining, designing and performing various aspects of the experience (Meuter *et al.* 2000; Bendapudi and Leone 2003; Vargo and Lusch 2004). The process of experiencing a vacation is an 'interactive, relativistic, preference experience' (Holbrook 2006, p. 715) and it involves an interaction between people and/or between products and people (Gummesson 2008; *cf* Vargo and Lusch 2008). Within these perspectives the customer is depicted as a resource integrator in the process of value co-creation (Arnould *et al.*, 2006; Baron and Harris 2010) and the value of consumption is in the use of a product or the experience created through the consumption process rather than in the product itself (Lancaster, 1971; Sandström *et al.*, 2008). Knowledge and learning, i.e., operant resources, are subsequently imperative constructs in the new service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2008). Operant resources are in research also depicted as a core imperative in order to gain competitive advantages (Shaw and Ivins 2002). Given the significance of recognizing the tourist as a value creator and the increasing number of East Asian tourists in the global tourism sector, it is imperative that tourism planners and product providers are competently informed by East Asian cultural constructs that have profound influences on tourists' value creation. The following section provides detailed explanations on Zen Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist meaning of nature and learning.

### Meaning of nature and learning in Zen Buddhism, Confucians and Taoism

There is an essential qualification needed when discussing the meaning of nature and learning from Zen Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist cultural values in this chapter. When we refer to Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist ideologies of East Asian societies in the current chapter, this primarily refers to the societies' cultural backgrounds rather than their religious values *per se*. For example, in South Korea (not dissimilar to the other East Asian nations) Christianity has been accepted with such zeal since its introduction in 1884 that it became the second largest religious group in the country after Buddhism. By 1989, the society witnessed about a quarter of the 40 million population being Protestant Christians (Kim, 2000). Therefore, the Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist values on nature and learning and their principles used in this chapter primarily refer to the cultural heritage of East Asia.

It should also be noted that only English-language publications on Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism have been used as sources for the current chapter. We acknowledge that literature in other languages may strengthen the East Asian Cultural Knowledge Framework proposed in the chapter.

### Meaning of Nature and Learning in Zen Buddhist Cultural Values

Discussions on Buddhist meanings of nature have been active in Western academia. One of the pioneering studies to highlight the meaning of nature from a Zen Buddhist perspective is by Lynn White published in 1967. Arguing that the origin of the current environmental crisis in the West is attributable to the Judaeo-Christian attitude towards the human–nature relationship, where human is perceived as superior to nature, he suggests that the Zen Buddhist meaning of nature of East Asia should be considered by the West (White, 1967). Zen Buddhism is the Buddhist branch prevalent in East Asia (Eckel, 1997), and nature and humanity are perceived

as related aspects of one entity rather than one being superior to the other (James, 2003).

It should be noted that Zen is a Japanese word and other East Asian nations have different names for this school of Buddhism. In Chinese, it is *Ch'an* (禪) and in Korean it is *Sūn* (선). For the sake of simplicity, the English translation of this school of Buddhism, derived from the Japanese word, is used in this chapter. Since White's study, there have been other scholars in environmental or religious studies, who argue that Buddhism is environmentally friendly (Schmithausen, 2000), as it respects nature by placing its value for its own existence.

Three Zen Buddhist principles of nature are drawn from the literature research. First is the relational dimension, which is often discussed as a trait that makes Zen Buddhism environmentally friendly (Sponberg, 1997: p. 353; Zimmerman, 1993). Relational dimension is attributed to the emptiness teaching in the Zen tradition, which has its root in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism (McFarlane, 1990). Emptiness teaching entails that all properties are interrelated and hence relational. A prominent Zen Buddhist scholar Thich Nhat Hanh explains the notion this way:

When we look at a chair, we see the wood, but we fail to observe the trees, the forest, the carpenter, or our own mind. When we meditate on it, we can see the entire universe in all its interwoven and interdependent relations in the chair. The presence of the wood reveals the presence of the tree. The presence of the leaf reveals the presence of the sun. The presence of the apple blossoms reveals the presence of the apple. Meditators can see one in many, and the many in the one

(Hahn 1992, cited by James, 2003, p. 153).

The second principle is non-instrumental value, which is described as the value that 'a being has an end in itself rather than as a means to an end' (James, 2004, p. 87). That is to say within a Zen Buddhist worldview, nature does not exist as an instrument for the life and existence of humanity (see Green, 1996 for detailed explanation). This chapter may benefit from recognising non-instrumental value as one of Zen's principles of nature.

The last principle of nature from the Zen Buddhist traditions is the tendency to include

plants or seemingly non-sentient beings such as mountains, rivers or even pebbles on the beach as part of natural beings that can be enlightened. The inclusion of these non-sentient beings within the realm of nature, or things that can have enlightened 'Buddhahood', is uniquely a Zen trait and not found in Indian tradition of Buddhism (Lafleur, 2000). This notion to include seemingly lifeless beings in the realm of nature is taken as a trait in Zen's principle of nature in this study.

Following the three principles of nature from Zen Buddhism, one principle relating to the concept of learning can be drawn. In Zen Buddhist notions of learning, all aspects of events or contexts are valued and these can include things that are normally not adequate to learn from (Johansen and Gopalakrishna, 2006, p. 340). This view of learning demonstrates the embedded Zen Buddhist philosophy that espouses a heuristic nature of the world. This principle termed as 'learning from mundane everyday life' could also be related at fundamental level to non-sentient beings in nature, where seemingly insignificant things in the world are just as important as other, bigger things in the universe (Lee *et al.*, 2012).

To summarise, three Zen Buddhist traits as regards its meanings of nature are noted: (a) relatedness; (b) non-instrumental value and (c) non-sentient beings as nature; as well as one trait on learning – that of learning from mundane life. In this chapter, relatedness is defined as any action or belief that regards human and nature as a related being. Non-instrumental value is defined as any act or belief that treats nature as an end in itself, rather than as a means to another end. Non-sentient beings as nature refer to any act or belief that includes seemingly lifeless things or non-animal species into the realm of nature. Learning from mundane life as the principle of Zen Buddhist learning is defined as the belief that even seemingly un-educative or too small to learn from can be the source of learning. A summary table of Zen Buddhism's meaning of nature and learning and its relevance in tourism operation is presented in Table 18.1.

With this defined set of Zen Buddhist meaning of nature and learning, we now turn to Confucian meanings of nature and learning.

**Table 18.1.** Meaning of nature and learning in Zen Buddhism and implications for tourism practice

	Zen Buddhism
Meaning of Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Relational dimension</i></li> <li>• Non-instrumental value</li> <li>• Non-sentient beings as nature</li> </ul>
Meaning of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning from everyday mundane life</li> </ul>
Managerial implications for tourism practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism products should emphasise that physical nature and humanity are inter-related</li> <li>• Nature should not be treated as a tool for human use</li> <li>• Small and/or not living things are part of nature</li> <li>• Learning, as part of touristic experience, can be created from everything even from small/insignificant things.</li> </ul>

### Meaning of Nature and Learning in Confucian Cultural Values

Founded by the sage teacher K'ung Fu-tzu (551–479 BCE), classic Confucianism has five constant regulations: *ren* (benevolence, humaneness); *yi* (righteousness); *li* (propriety or rites, rules of proper conduct); *zhi* (wisdom) and *xin* (sincerity or trustworthiness) (Tamney and Chiang, 2002; Yao, 2000). It emphasises the practice of moral virtue in order to become a righteous man, who always acts according to justice through the notion of *yi* (righteousness) (Zhang, 2000). In their efforts to realise the *yi* (righteousness) state, people should employ the correct ways of doing things or *li* (propriety or rites, rules of proper conduct). These instructive methods are in the pursuit of being in harmony with the universe according to Confucian philosophy. His followers had nurtured the teaching of the sage for centuries and Neo-Confucianism was developed around 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The leading Neo-Confucian scholar Chu Hsi (1130–1200) elevates the Neo-Confucian ideology to an even superior extent to the classic Confucian view. His philosophy is worldly spirited, emphasising the balance of religious reverence, ethical practice, scholarly investigation and

political participation (Tucker, 1991: 61). From the perspectives of both classic and Neo-Confucianism, a person's moral virtue to reach the righteous state (*yi*) is regarded with the utmost importance and this can be realised by observing *li* (propriety or rites, rules of proper conduct). Reaching the righteous state through acts of proper conduct is deemed particularly significant in the Confucian tradition, as those who reach this state of *yi* (righteousness) can then govern the nation with an accomplished high moral virtue (Haynes, 2009). Such governance can then bring harmony to a nation, the ultimate reason for the Confucian teaching of *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety or rites, rules of proper conduct) and *ren* (benevolence, humaneness).

With this philosophical ground, Confucian scholars view the universe with three main elements in mind: heaven, earth and human. In this triadic relationship, human is perceived as the child of father heaven and mother earth. Tu (1985) quotes Chang Tsai to highlight the Neo-Confucian view of the universe:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small being as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions

(p. 157).

Mote (1971) described this view of the universe as '[everything] belonging to one organic whole and that they all interact as participants in one spontaneously self-generating life process' (p. 19). With the critical analysis of Mote's view, an East Asian model of the universe argues the position where there is no distinction between energy and matter or spirit and matter (Chan cited in Tu, 1985, p. 36). As reviewed, the 'organismic' relationship is recognised as a significant trait in the Confucian philosophy of universe and nature, and thus the first Confucian principle of nature identified in this study is the organismic relation.

Extending from the organismic relation of the universe, the 'all-enfolding harmony of impersonal cosmic function' as a continuing being (Mote as cited in Tu, 1985, p. 40) subsequently requires the human to be in harmony with the universe.

Harmony cannot be called a unique Confucian value as such. The notion of harmony has existed in East Asia for a long time before the beginning of Confucian thought. From the Confucian five constant regulations, three of them: *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety or rites, rules of proper conduct) and *ren* (benevolence, humaneness) fundamentally place high importance on harmony, as the teaching is in order to reach the state of harmony (Yao, 2000, p. 77–78). Subsequently, this underlying cultural notion gives the rationale for Confucian thought of self-cultivation. Self-cultivation (Cua, 2007; Shusterman, 2009; Tucker, 1998) is a way to bring the human into harmony with nature (Yao, 2000). Being in harmony with nature relates closely to the search for knowledge and action by human or creative transformation. Referring to Tu's seminal work, Tucker argues:

Confucian humanism is fundamentally different from anthropocentrism because it professes the unity of man and heaven rather than the imposition of the human will on nature. In fact, the anthropocentric assumption that man is put on earth to pursue knowledge and, as knowledge expands, so does man's dominion over earth is quite different from the Confucian perception of the pursuit of knowledge as an integral part of one's self-cultivation.

He continues:

The human transformation of nature, therefore, means as much an integrative effort to learn to live harmoniously in one's natural environment as a modest attempt to use the environment to sustain basic livelihood. The idea of exploiting nature is rejected because it is incompatible with the Confucian concern for moral self-development

(Tucker, 1991, p. 65).

Interpreted from the Confucian fundamental perspective of the universe where human, heaven and earth form one entity, the notion of 'creative transformation' has been discussed as a significant point when it comes to Confucian self-cultivation ethics. Interpreting the concept of *li* (propriety or rites, rules of proper conduct) from the *Analects* as a guide for one's moral building, Lai (2006) argues that when one's moral building matures, the concept of *li* becomes something beyond a mere guideline to

follow. Indeed it becomes 'a channel for meaningful self-expression' (p. 69), which highlights the creative transformation notion. Critically comparing the pragmatist and Confucian aesthetics, Shusterman (2009) argues that the cultivating and 'perfecting human' life is the central philosophy in both of the traditions and this philosophy is aimed to improve our humanism (p. 19). It should be noted here that in an aesthetic sense, clearly, making creative transformation is to improve the human, so that the human can be in harmony with nature, not to enhance nature.

As mentioned above, Confucius was an educator who taught many students to succeed in national examinations, enabling them to become high officials in the country. With the aim to be successful in the nation-wide examination, Confucian philosophy for learning emphasises acquisition and understanding (Pratt *et al.*, 1999). Accordingly, Confucianism holds that only when the students have learnt classical works by heart and are able to reproduce them, would they then be able to question and try to be an independent, critical thinker. For this reason, reproducing the classical works was a main part of the national examination. Within this context of learning for succeeding in the examination, learning was viewed as an instrumental entity for a worldly success (Yang *et al.*, 2006, p. 348). Thus, one principle on learning identified for this chapter is 'learning for worldly development'.

In summary, the Confucian principles of nature extracted from the literature are: (i) organismic relation and (ii) creative transformation. For the purpose of this chapter, organismic relation is defined as any belief or action that regards nature and human as an inherently related single organism. Creative transformation is defined, in the chapter, as changes made to nature by humans in an integrative effort to learn to live harmoniously in one's natural environment or as an attempt to use the environment to sustain basic livelihood. The Confucian principle of learning distilled for this chapter is of learning for worldly connection and development. A summary table of the Confucian meaning of nature and learning along with managerial implications are presented in Table 18.2.



**Table 18.2.** Meaning of nature and learning in Confucianism and implications for tourism practice

	Confucianism
Meaning of Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organismic relations</li> <li>• Creative transformation</li> </ul>
Meaning of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning for worldly development</li> </ul>
Managerial implications for tourism practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism products should emphasise that physical nature and humanity are inter-related</li> <li>• Changes made to physical environment/nature are regarded as an integrated effort for human and physical environments by Confucian heritage tourists</li> <li>• Learning, as part of touristic experience, should bring some tangible/practical outcome</li> </ul>

### Meaning of Nature and Learning in Taoist Cultural Values

Sharing essential philosophical grounds together with Zen Buddhism and Confucianism, Taoism is a major cultural philosophy in contemporary East Asia. Since its inception in China, long before Confucianism and Zen Buddhism, Taoism has influenced the development of both. While sharing an underlying philosophical view of the universe that all things are related – the ‘oneness’ trait as previously identified – a unique Taoist view sees the world consisting of *yin* and *yang*, the opposite elements of the universe. *Yang* is the positive element of beings and often described in terms of masculinity, strength, brightness and so forth. *Yin* is the negative element of beings and can be associated with femininity, weakness and darkness. Nature in Taoism is a construct of *yin* and *yang*, signifying a unity between humanity and the physical environment (*Lao Zi (Lao Tsu)* as cited in Lee, 2010).

The Taoist meaning of learning may be described as a constant work of the two opposing forces of *yin* and *yang*. Referring to beauty, goodness, teaching and creation, *Tao Te Ching* provides:

Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty only because there is ugliness

All can know good as good only because there is evil.

Therefore having and not having arise together;  
Difficulty and easy complement each other;  
Long and short contrast each other;  
High and low rest upon each other;  
Voice and sound harmonize each other;  
Front and back follow one another.

Therefore the sage goes about doing nothing, teaching no-talking,

The ten thousand things rise and fall without cease,

Creating, yet not possessing,

Working, yet not taking credit.

Work is done, then forgotten.

Therefore it lasts forever

(Lao Tsu, 1972, chapter 2)

Espousing the work of *yin* and *yang*, the Taoist meaning of learning reflects two opposite sides of wisdom and creativity. The opposing sides of all things in the universe are not to be taken as a conflict but a method to improve the quality of learning (Glanz, 1997).

In summary, the Taoist meaning of nature identified in this chapter is oneness, having profoundly influenced the development of Zen Buddhism and Confucianism. A Taoist meaning of learning involves the ‘unity through paradox’ trait where opposing forces of the universe are the leading forces for unity, the perfection. A summary table of the Taoist meaning of nature and learning along with managerial implications for tourism operations are presented in Table 18.3.

**Table 18.3.** Meaning of nature and learning in Taoism and implications for tourism practice

	Taoism
Meaning of Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oneness</li> </ul>
Meaning of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unity through paradox</li> </ul>
Managerial implications for tourism practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism products should emphasise that physical nature and humanity are inter-related</li> <li>• Learning, as part of touristic experience, can incorporate opposite sides of things</li> </ul>

The three major cultural philosophies of East Asia share the most central idea of 'harmony' among them, related to both nature and learning. For the meaning of nature, Zen Buddhism and Confucianism share the notion that all entities in the world are related ('related dimension' from Zen Buddhism and 'organismic relation' from Confucianism). Both of these ideas are also shared with the Taoist 'oneness' view of nature. While holding this notion that everything is related, Zen Buddhism has a unique view on nature as well: 'non-instrumental value' and 'non-sentient being as nature' as explained in the above section. Similarly Confucianism has its distinctive meaning of nature: 'creative transformation'.

On learning, the three cultural philosophies represent their unique traits most distinctively. For Zen Buddhist, learning is from everyday mundane life; in the Confucian meaning, learning is for worldly development; while a Taoist view of learning is unity through paradox. The

following section further explains how the extracted cultural knowledge framework can be applied to facilitate East Asian tourists' value creation and co-creation by recognising tourists as active participants. Following the identification of their cultural traits on nature and learning, Figure 18.1 presents the Zen Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist meaning of nature and learning.

### Application of the framework

As Figure 18.1 illustrates, there are certain shared cultural values among Zen Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, constituting the meanings of nature and learning. These shared cultural traits include 'relational dimension', 'organismic relation' and 'oneness', leading to the overall harmony of everything in the universe (among individual persons to persons as

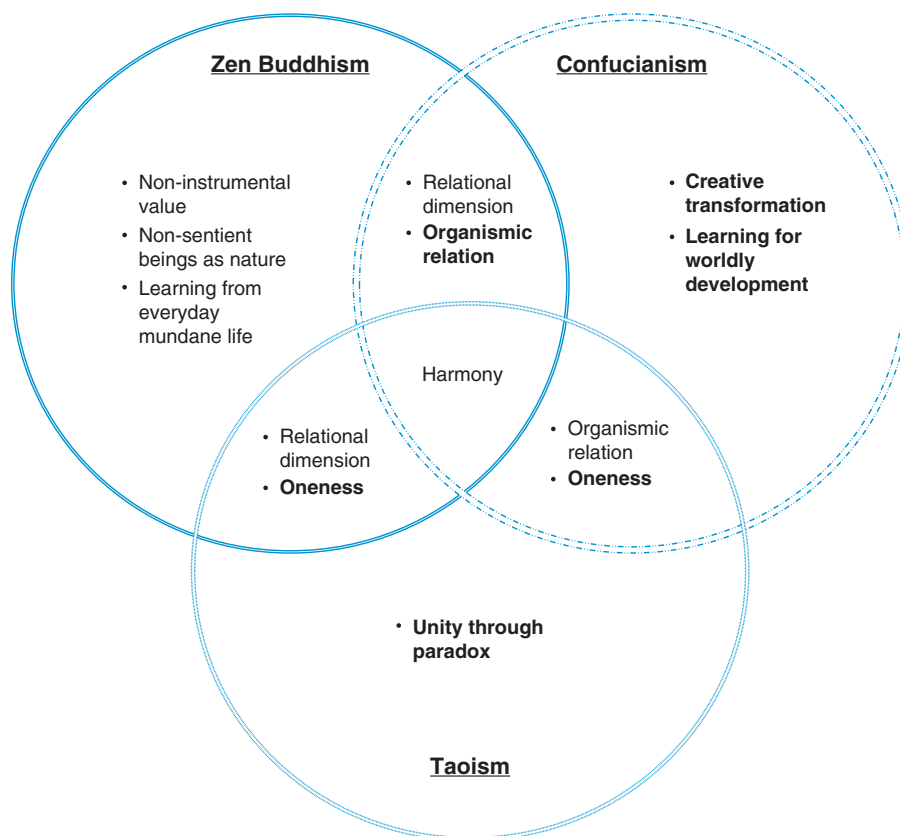


Fig. 18.1. Missing caption.



well as between nature and humanity). When planning, developing and providing tourist experiences, destination management organisations and personnel need to possess an advanced level of cultural knowledge. This is particularly so for a successful tourism business when concerned with the creation and co-creation of tourist experience values involving East Asian tourists, the fastest growing outbound tourist market in the world according to UNWTO.

The meanings of learning from the perspectives of the three main cultural philosophies of East Asia reflect their unique traits. Zen Buddhist meaning of learning recognises learning from mundane everyday life – no matter how small or insignificant things might appear to be, there is something to be learnt from them. A Confucian meaning of learning is more practical than a Zen Buddhist approach. Learning is very much related to individuals' worldly connection and development, which may bring personal achievements in career and/or economic success. Learning in this Confucian sense is, one might say, a tool for psychologically and/or economically successful life. A Taoist meaning of learning clearly reflects its unique worldview of *yin* and *yang* and emphasises unity through paradox. As the opposing side exists, the true quality and existence of the other side can be appreciated in the most paradoxical, yet revealing way.

With the shared meaning of nature as well as comparable meanings of learning established from Zen Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist values, the following section recounts the application of the developed cultural knowledge framework to tourism research. The application is essayed, in this chapter by re-evaluating some research findings on East Asian tourists' experience creations and co-creations.

### Re-evaluating research on East Asians' tourism experience

The East Asian cultural meanings of nature and learning, presented in the East Asian Cultural Knowledge Framework, contribute to deepening the level of cultural analysis in tourist experience value creation and co-creation as shown in this section. The first part of this section

examines the meaning of nature and re-evaluates South Korean ecotourists' value creation and consumption in a previous study. Following the re-evaluation of the South Korean ecotourism experiences, two other earlier findings on Asian backpackers and special-interest tourists are revisited in relation to the East Asian cultural meanings of learning.

A previous study (Lee *et al.*, 2012) presented an analysis of a South Korean form of ecotourism influenced by Taoist, Confucian and Zen Buddhist cultural values. This study highlights the significant contribution of the developed cultural knowledge framework in an effort to better understand East Asian ecotourists' experience creation. Studies have argued that an East Asian and, more specifically, Chinese meaning of nature views nature and humanity as a one united entity (Sofield and Li, 2007; Ye and Xue, 2008). Affirming these earlier studies, the study illustrates a South Korean form of ecotourism, which regards nature and humanity as one inseparable entity.

This in turn brings out a particular attitude towards human changes of nature – as the human and the natural are one entity, change in nature in accordance with changing human society is a way of showing harmony between human and nature; hence it is not considered negative, let alone disturbing (Lee *et al.*, 2012). Reflected through the proposed East Asian Cultural Knowledge Framework of this chapter, East Asian ecotourists' experience value creations are expected to be influenced by the meaning of nature – that humanity and nature are one entity. That is, when planning and marketing tourism experiences for East Asian markets, namely Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese, seeking nature or ecotourism experiences, their value creations can be further facilitated by recognising the East Asian cultural meaning of nature, rather than viewing the market as those who are in pursuit of 'catching up' with Western tourists. This cultural sensitivity may lead to developing particular tourism products that could include certain sites and/or activities involving natural settings as well as other tourists on sites integrating humanity and physical nature as a related single entity seeking an overall harmony. This, in turn, could lead to an enhanced tourist experience for the fastest-growing international tourist market.

The East Asian meanings of learning presented in the framework include learning from mundane everyday life in the Zen Buddhist tradition, learning for worldly connection and development distilled from Confucianism, and unity through paradox from Taoist philosophy. Studies on Asian backpackers identified that the young travellers are highly motivated to learn English, as possessing a high command of the English language would equip the young Asians to become more competitive in their search for jobs and subsequent success in their career, as well as creating cultural capital (Prideaux and Shiga, 2007; Kawashima, 2010; Maksay, 2007). This finding can be clearly explained by the identified Confucian meaning of learning. Similarly in a study of South Korean golf tourist in Queensland, Australia, the special-interest tourists would consider whether golf courses have any associations with well known golf celebrities such as Greg Norman, Arnold Palmer or Adam Scott to choose their destinations (Kim and Lee, 2009). These findings on young Asian backpackers and South Korean special-interest tourists can be understood at a more fundamental level with the use of the developed framework of the current chapter. In other words, the cultural meaning of learning shapes the East Asian tourists' experience value co-creation. Interestingly, the findings point to one singular trait of cultural meaning of learning – Confucian learning for worldly connection and development. Tourism planners, marketers and service providers need to recognise the East Asian cultural meanings of learning influencing contemporary tourists at a fundamental level: this can lead to the satisfaction of enduring motivations to learn/improve English in the case of Asian backpackers, and playing rounds of golf at world-recognised golf courses in the case of South Korean golf tourists. Similarly, other niche-market tourists, such as adventure travellers, from East Asia may be motivated by their cultural trait to be connected to the world and develop themselves rather than blindly trying to 'catch up' with Western adventure tourists. Indeed, a study on young East Asian backpackers found that the ways in which they make their travel experiences meaningful was by connecting to their home and, in a way, preparing for their return (Bui *et al.*, 2014).

East Asian values were found to be the core base for Chinese corporate tourists, wherein the Chinese concept of 'face' played a vital role in determining their behaviour during the trip (Kwek and Lee, 2015). We should also be keenly aware that 'East Asian'-ness is not singular. While there are commonly shared values in the cultural group, different trajectories of social change through the modern/industrial eras in the region resulted in country-specific applications of the shared values in tourism settings. That is, the shared Confucian values developed into somewhat non-identical Neo-Confucian values and seem to have assigned different meaning when it comes to using nature (Prebensen *et al.*, 2017).

Overall, the importance of East Asian cultural values in understanding the growing market of East Asian tourists is recognised steadily. This recognition in turn would be able to provide more focused marketing strategies to the tourism experience providers, who target the growing East Asian market in the international tourism sector.

### Concluding remarks

As tourist experience is becoming more and more service dominant and tourists are being viewed as the co-creator of the overall tourism experiences, tourists' value positions towards important elements in tourism experiences are proving to be a significant area of attention for both researchers and practitioners. Recognising the current state of international tourism where East Asian tourists are the fastest-growing international outbound tourist market, and yet with little understood about the market at fundamental level, this chapter proposed an East Asian Cultural Knowledge Framework on nature and learning, two main elements in tourism experiences.

The three East Asian cultural philosophies of Zen Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism have defined meanings for nature and learning. One shared meaning of nature is that all elements in the universe are related to one another. While this meaning of nature is represented in tenets of all three East Asian cultural

philosophies, each has their unique cultural traits in nature and learning. A clear understanding on the fundamental level of the cultural traits of the fastest-growing market would help practitioners to enhance value creation and co-creation of the East Asian tourist market.

Serving as the departure point research on the fastest-growing market in international tourism at the fundamental level, the current chapter recommends further research in this area. In particular, future study may investigate

the dynamic trend of the dominant East Asian cultural philosophies in the light of the region's political and economic developments. Indeed, the diverse trajectories of contemporary East Asian social developments, where communism, democracy, capitalism and socialism have been leading the socio-political and economic developments, the traditional philosophical cultural values and their modification and adjustment could provide the enduring yet dynamic nature of the cultural forces that shape today's East Asian market.

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