Article

Exploring protest tourism motivations: The case of Hong Kong

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Abstract

Protest tourism is visiting a destination with the major aim of viewing or participating in protests. This qualitative study examined the motivations of Hong Kong protest tourists as a starting point for future exploration of distinctions between this emerging type of tourism and other existing categories. Five primary motivations were revealed. Two push motivations were the desire to (1) have special, new experiences that few others have experienced; and (2) experience tourist offerings first-hand. Three pull motivations were created by sites providing tourists the opportunity to (i) see a one-time historical event; (ii) share the moment with local citizens, even if indirectly; and (iii) experience real-time events with a local guide. The findings point to unique temporal and geographic aspects of the interplay between protest tourist motivations and the unique merging of the subject and object of tourism, shedding light on how different tourism experiences can be framed.

Keywords

Hong Kong, motivations, protest, protest tourism, qualitative research, tourists

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Introduction

Tourism has become increasingly competitive with more numerous and diversified products as tourist interest grows in experiencing the living culture of visited destinations (Metro-Roland, 2011; Paulauskaite et al., 2017). Many tourists seek unique experiences that few others have experienced (Hung et al., 2016) and share them through social network services (SNS) (Wang et al., 2017). As the range of experiences grows so the tourism product umbrella also inevitably expands as new categories of tourism emerge (Hall and Williams, 2020). Protest tourism in Hong Kong, appearing in the fall of 2019, may be one such category.

In March 2019, Hong Kong proposed an extradition bill for compulsory detention and surrender to mainland China or Taiwan of fugitives who had fled to Hong Kong. Citizens of Hong Kong flooded the streets to protest. In June, over two million people participated in the largest protest in Hong Kong history (Chung and Huang, 2019; Dormido et al., 2019). The extradition bill was withdrawn in October, but protests over other issues continued. In October 2019, a travel agency attracted international attention by promoting protest tourism (Hong Kong Free Tours, 2020).

Protest tourism may not be welcomed by the tourism industry as a legitimate new form of tourism given its potential to cast tourism destinations in a negative light: it presents safety issues for tourists, invites "outsider" intervention in political matters, and raises ethical issues in potentially turning protests into spectacles (Han, 2019; Sachs, 2019). Similar concerns have been raised concerning other types of tourism including dark tourism, war-zone tourism, activist tourism, and volunteer tourism (Binnie and Klesse, 2011; Martini and Buda, 2020; Sin, 2009; Tominaga, 2020). Although controversy also exists over the legitimacy of promoting these alternative forms of tourism, analyzing what attracts people to protest tourism is aimed at understanding and predicting how tourists define and value tourism in contemporary settings.

Little substantial research addresses protest tourism, but several established concepts help explain its emergence. Similar to the broader concepts of activist and solidarity tourism, protest tourists show their support for particular values or issues. In addition, protests can be examined as tourist attractions appealing to those who seek adventure (Gray, 1970; Plog, 1974), authenticity (Hall, 2007; MacCannell, 1976), dark tourism (Lisle, 2000; Mahrouse, 2016), and/or festive and collective experiences (Tominaga, 2020). We argue that protest tourist motivations are an appropriate point from which to begin to define protest tourism since it is well accepted that tourist motivation drives tourist behavior (Lee et al., 2004; Park and Yoon, 2009) and that identifying motivations is useful in understanding emerging tourism phenomena (Jaapar et al., 2017; Kraftchick et al., 2014; Wu and Pearce, 2014).

Therefore, the present exploratory study begins with distinctive features of the Hong Kong protest tours and of protest tourists and then focuses on protest tourist motivations by analyzing three qualitative sources: participant observations, interviews, and analyses of news articles. It fills a research gap by exploring protest tourism as an emerging type of tourism and providing basic information for future researchers to conceptualize protest tourism as distinct or not from other types of tourism.

Protest tourism

Protest tours are not a generally recognized tourist category, nor is there any academically agreed-upon definition. The present study proposes that protest tourism occurs when tourists visit a destination with the major aim of viewing protests or, potentially even participate, although this overlaps with the recognized category of activist tourism (Binnie and Klesse, 2011; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Tominaga, 2020). As such, travel to observe protest may even become travel to protest over time, suggesting that these categories may fall on a continuum spanning activist, dark, and protest tourism.

Visiting a protest implies interest in political expression and/or insurgence. Wanting proximity to protests suggests protests are cultural events connecting people to activism and global justice. Advances in technology and transportation have given international tourism an important role in enlarging the geopolitical scope of tourism, including more ways to participate in protests (Hall, 2017). The term activist tourism was coined to describe tourists who started to travel globally in the late 20th century to involved themselves in socio-political issues; more common forms of alternative tourism were eco-tourism, peace-tourism, and pro-poor tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Tominaga, 2020). So-called "flaneur activists" are highly mobile participants in urban social movements who claim the "right to the city" or otherwise travel to cities for protest rallies (Leontidou, 2006, p. 263). Other tourists who do not directly protest may find that a tour just to observe protests similarly reinforces their cosmopolitan identity (van Leeuwen, 2019).

Tourism can be seen as political theater highlighting spatiality and temporality (Connell, 2019). Individual travelers may be motivated to travel to a particular location at a critical political moment when they oppose government policy (Hall, 2018; Raines, 2019; Seyfi and Hall, 2020a) or want to become informed of local circumstances (Mahrouse, 2016; Seyfi and Hall, 2020b) even if they do not themselves protest. Seyfi and Hall (2020a, 2020b) note that tourists increasingly choose destinations undergoing political change. One example is "procotting" (rather than boycotting), where political tourist consumption supports a product, business, or destination. According to Meethan (2001), all tourism, including travel to protests, reflects global commodification and consumption, arguably monetizing protests into a neoliberal global capitalist framework. These alternative tourism models (Tsangaris, 2019) may potentially explain increased travel to participate in protest-related events (Kirchherr, 2018; Robertson, 2006).

The October 2019 Hong Kong protest tours gave form to the protest tour. Hong Kong Free Tours, a non-profit travel agency founded in 2016 by a Hong Kong native, Michael Tsang, began offering walking tours to hidden local attractions rather than to traditional tourist spots. The large-scale protests in early 2019 led Tsang to start tours to protest sites in Hong Kong. The intention was not to get tourists to participate in protests but only to allow them to observe other people protesting. Tourists would walk Causeway Bay, Tsim Sha Tsui, and Central listening to a 2-hour tour guide explaining the current situation. The dress code was casual, and tourists could wear masks and black clothes like the protesters. The terms of the tour specified that tourists were responsible for their own safety (Han, 2019; Hong Kong Free Tours, 2020; Sachs, 2019).

Few cases are similar to the Hong Kong protest tour. In December 2019, an Airbnb US$25 tour program in Chile offering 2-hour viewing of protests to "Live the Revolution" was called off due to public uproar over monetizing the protest (McGowan, 2019). Despite the dearth of current examples of protest tourism, other tourism products that allow tourists to experience historical moments and pivotal events are akin to the concept of the protest tour. Pezzullo's (2007) formulated a concept of toxic tourism based on North American activists organizing tours of heavily polluted toxic waste sites. Like protest tourism, toxic tourism allows tourists to engage with current issues.

Protests as tourist attractions

Although no academic research has clearly distinguished protest tourism from other forms of tourism, our review of the advent of protest-related tourism reveals four potentially unique aspects drawn from tourism and other social studies.

First, many tourists seek adventure, and risks associated with protest-related tourism could be attractive to adventure-seeking tourists. All tourism involves some risk, taking people away from their familiar environments (Gray, 1970; Plog, 1974), but strongly adventurous tourists often want to visit unsafe areas like regions in conflict (Mahrouse, 2016), or to experience rugged mountains or dangerous rapids (Giddy and Webb, 2018; Myers, 2010). Protest tourists appear to be adventurous in traveling to potentially dangerous sites where they assume the risks of visiting the scene of political protests.

Second, many tourists seek authenticity, which protest tours offer in drawing on temporally, spatially, and geopolitically real events. Tourists usually visit front stage tourist attractions like museums, palaces, and theme parks, the latter specifically designed for tourists, but they are also curious to go backstage to experience the ordinary lives of local people (MacCannell, 1976; Wang, 1999). Tourists today visit villages, alleys, traditional markets, and local restaurants more than ever (Paulauskaite et al., 2017; Shim and Santos, 2014). The sites of mass protests in which a large number of local residents participate likely offer more authenticity than many more traditional tourist attractions, allowing tourists to immerse themselves in real-life experiences. Furthermore, tourists can "authenticate" their experience through performative and affective encounters during a protest tour, as individual tourists engage in ongoing experiences and a sense of connection from the tour to construct or reconstruct authenticity (Canavan and McCamley, 2021; Moore et al., 2021)

Third, the protest tour can perhaps be understood as a subset of dark tourism. Tourism has long been associated with pleasure, relaxation, and entertainment, but more recently, emerging dark tourism shows that war, death, or disaster can attract tourists (Collins-Kreiner, 2016; Light, 2017). In explaining risk and danger as commodities for tourist consumption, Lisle (2000: 110) found danger and safety were not diametrically opposed, but rather that war-zone tours curiously combined "danger, seduction, esthetics, and the secure." Indeed, many protest sites, for example some of the US civil rights sites, are now heritage tourist attractions in their own right (Hartmann, 2014). Contemporary globalization, however, now allows for even greater immediacy in the capacity of tourists to experience protest locations.

Protest tours similarly may potentially spotlight unfairness, inequality, discrimination, and dictatorship in society. However, what distinguishes it from other forms of dark

tourism is its temporal immediacy in relation to the event that motivates people to visit a particular site. The organizers of the Hong Kong protest tour explained that they wanted to show the uncomfortable truth behind the colorful skyscrapers in Hong Kong. As Mahrouse (2016) stressed, we cannot assume that dark tourism is propelled only by attraction to violence. Instead, as Buda et al. (2014) describe the experiences of tourists in Jordan and occupied Palestine, these forms of tourism involve an intermingling of fear, fun, danger, safety, conflict and peace. Both protest tourists who travel to watch protests and dark tourists seek opportunities for retrospection and reflection. However, dark tourists generally visit places where previous dark events have occurred while protest tourists visit locations of currently ongoing events where they can actually and physically be present or involved to some degree.

Finally, protests allow tourists to become indirect participants in a sort of festival (Kirchherr, 2018; Robertson, 2006; Tsangaris, 2019). Protests share many attributes of the festival: escape, playfulness, togetherness, sacredness, and placeness (Kim and Jamal, 2007; Morgan, 2008). Protest tourists escape their own worlds, are playful with cultural events, find the protest atmosphere a rather sacred coming together of people observing or pursuing justice, and experience the unique placeness of each country (Brown and Pickerill, 2009; Juris, 2008). Protests are inclusive festivals, open to everyone, where tourists can feel connected to other protesters. Studies on activist tourism or solidarity tourism also explain that an organizational and collective identity is built during a protest journey (Binnie and Klesse, 2011; Tominaga, 2020). In short, protest spaces exemplify what Turner (1974) called the liminoid, providing people opportunities to temporarily suspend social norms and structures.

Hence, protest tourists do not neatly fit into existing categories but rather uniquely combine interests in adventure, authenticity, dark events, and festival features. One would expect protest tourists to have unique motivations associated with this mixture of interests.

Tourist motivation

Motivation refers to what causes people to behave in certain ways and has long been a key concept in the social sciences (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998). In tourism studies, motivation is considered to be key in tourist decision-making, helping researchers to understand why tourists choose particular places or activities (Gnoth, 1997; McCabe, 2000). For example, Park and Yoon (2009) examined Koreans who participated in rural tourism programs and found their motivations included relaxation, socialization, learning, isolation, family togetherness, and excitement. Wen et al. (2018) showed that Chinese tourists visiting Amsterdam for drug tourism were motivated by spiritual and emotional healing, social prestige, relationships and escape, good quality cannabis, commercial cannabis availability, and cannabis experimentation. Hence, attention to tourist motivation allows researchers and marketers to better explain the choice of certain destinations and better predict future patterns (Uysal and Hagan, 1993).

Tourist motivation has often been divided into push and pull motivations (Chen and Chen, 2011; Oh et al., 1995). Push motivations are internal forces that increase people's desire to travel (i.e., pushing them to travel) while pull motivations are more about the attributes of destinations that lead people to select one over another (i.e. pulling them to

the destination) (Crompton, 1979; Uysal et al., 2008). Internal values and perceptions of tourists push them to a particular destination while the attributes of the destination itself can pull tourists to them (Uysal et al., 2008). Push factors often include the personal desire to escape, relax, learn, socialize, or gain adventure, self-esteem, prestige, or novelty (Caber and Albayrak, 2016; Fodness, 1994; Kim and Eves, 2012; Pan, 2012). In contrast, pull factors largely include location attributes like being rich in cultural heritage, natural scenery, entertainment, shopping, and recreational opportunities and offering favorable climate, accessibility, and safety (Klenosky, 2002; Sirakaya and McLellan, 1997).

Tourism researchers continue to shed light on motivations, as we seek to do here for protest tourists. Vidon and Rickly (2018) investigated the motivation of hiking and rock climbing tourists and argued that motivations arose from the relationship among alienation, anxiety, and authenticity. They suggested that anxiety is embodied alienation that drives people to seek authenticity. They concluded that alienation and authenticity are in a dialectical relationship, interacting with and defining each other. Focusing on emotional aspects of tourism phenomena, Buda et al. (2014) suggested that tourists' emotions, feelings, and affects, which are personally and socio-culturally constructed within the toured place, serve as important elements in the decision-making process of tourists. Similarly, Martini and Buda (2020) conceptualized tourism as affective experiences in which tourists re-brand sites based on mediatized events. Tucker (2016) focused on the notion of empathy as the pre-requisite for tourists to positively interact with others while traveling, motivating them to be present with or close to others, particularly in the context of dark tourism, volunteer tourism or, in this case, protest tourism.

Research methods

Hong Kong protest tour

In the Hong Kong Free Tours, a local guide led foreign tourists into ongoing conflict zones in Hong Kong and allowed them to witness local political developments, disparities in wealth, and housing problems. This can be understood as danger-zone or intrepid tourism in which conflict, danger, safety, security, and tourism are intricately entangled (Adams, 2001; Buda, 2016). The tours were free but accepted donations. The first protest tour was on October 4, 2019, the very day the government banned facemasks. The tour thereafter took groups of 2–17 tourists to protests in Causeway Bay and Kowloon. Eight tours were conducted between October and February of 2020 (Oct 10, 14, 21, Nov 29, Dec 2, 8, and Jan 1, 19), with 70 total participants. Michael Tsang said that he created the protest tour to increase global awareness about what was happening in Hong Kong, not to paint a portrait of violent protest. Figure 1 shows the protest scene.

Data collection and analysis

The authors of this study are not residents of Hong Kong but have traveled there. They firmly believe in the value of qualitative nature on tourist phenomena, but inevitably see the Hong Kong protests from different socio-cultural-political perspectives. Hence, this study also reflects the authors' discussions and consensus about the findings.

Figure 1. Hong Kong protesters at Causeway road in Hong Kong. January 1, 2020.

This exploratory research used all available channels to collect information on protest tourist motivations toward temporally, spatially, and politically unique events. Three qualitative sources were collected and analyzed. First, extensive content was gathered from online newspaper and magazine articles, blogs, and SNS posts describing the protests in Hong Kong and the protest tour. All online English-language materials available as of February 2020 about the tours were collected and screened according to qualitative case selection factors of applicability, validity, reliability, and consistency (Curtis et al., 2000; Miles and Huberman, 1994). A total of 132 online materials, excluding some duplicates, were analyzed.

Second, we reviewed field notes and photos produced by the researcher who joined the January 2020 tour. We included the researcher's personal gaze on the studied tour as relevant on its own and as observer of motivations of other participants expressed in their emotional and affective demeanor and behavior.

Third and most importantly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Hong Kong protest tour participants, tour guides, and staff. More than 20 interviews were planned, but only 70 people ever participated in the tour, and since protests were stopped after the COVID-19 crisis and the governmental crackdown on protest in Hong Kong, only 12 interviews were actually conducted. This represents a significant portion of those participating in the tour to date. Questions were designed to open dialogue with interviewees on their motivations followed by clarifying questions (Table 1). The tour was conducted in English, and tour guides and participants were comfortable being interviewed in English by one of the authors, a young single Asian woman. Participants were also young, single, and similar in age to the interviewer, seemingly facilitating participant openness. Each interview lasted 30–40 minutes, with any needed follow-up by email. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized.

Qualitative materials were analyzed in five steps, following Dey (1993) and Elo and Kyngäs (2008). First, we listened to interviews with transcribed text in hand and read the online content several times to familiarize themselves with the materials. The field

Table 1. Participant profile.

No.	Gender	Age	Nationality
1	Male	30	Australian
2	Male	32	Australian
3	Female	25	China
4	Female	26	Singapore
5	Male	24	USA
6	Female	22	Hong Kong
7	Female	21	Singapore
8	Female	24	Hong Kong
9	Female	46	Hong Kong
10	Female	32	South Korea
11	Male	48	South Korea
12	Male	37	Hong Kong

researcher shared her experiences about the atmosphere and conduct of the tour. Second, we sorted words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs used about the tour to identify meaningful themes. In this stage, there was a high degree of concurrence among the researchers. Third, we interpreted the context and connotations of the terms and categorized them into multiple themes, each constituting a unique motivation. During this process, each of us shared our own interpretation of phrases or terminology, identified any conflicts in interpretation, and discussed to appropriately combine and label the themes revealed. This process was repeated until arriving at the stage where no further themes or issues emerged. Fourth, helpful original quotes from interviewees were chosen to exemplify the themes. On rare occasion, we recontacted some interviewees to be sure we understood their original intentions. Fifth, three external experts, including a political scientist well acquainted with the current situation of Hong Kong, were invited to review the themes and quotes to improve the validity and reliability of the analysis.

Hong Kong protest tourist motivations

The current qualitative analysis revealed five motivations of protest tourists that are not typical of other types of tourists, shown in Table 2 along with some of the quotes.

Push motivation 1: Pursuit of more unique tourist experiences

Participants varied in nationality, gender, and age, but all were well traveled. They enjoyed talking about the countries visited, and acknowledged travel as important to them. More experienced travelers tend to start visiting places where ordinary tourists rarely visit (Cohen, 1979; Pearce, 1998). The protest tour offered this opportunity to seasoned travelers. One participant said he joined this protest tour based on its uniqueness, the geopolitical tension, and to be around locals:

Table 2. Summary of study findings.

Motivation	Quotes
Push factors	
Pursuit of more unique tourist experiences	"Uniqueness of the situation" "looking for a new way to travel"
Seeing it with my own eyes	"see for myself the actual situation" "compared to media's portrayal of the protest"
Pull factors	
A moment that can only be experienced once	"the one and only protest tour" "Soak in the atmosphere"
A community to which a tourist wants to belong	"Very nice people, not evil" "feeling supportive of the protest"
The company of a local guide	"their view of the political situation" "eye opener for what Hong Kong people's demands are"

> *[I am interested in the] uniqueness of the situation and I am fascinated by dark tourism. I like to be in situations where there are political tensions in the country and where there are costs on the line for the people. [I like] live action tourism where the locals are involved* (Australian male, 32-year-old, in-depth interview, January 1, 2020).

As seasoned tourists expand their horizons by traveling more and choosing unique tour experiences, they are actually attracted to the various ethical issues and physical risks in protest tours. Hong Kong is a world-class tourist city visited by about 30 million people annually, yet we found that many of its well-known tourist spots held no interest for experienced tourists, who instead came to enjoy watching the mass demonstrations they had heard so much about. The possibility of sharing with others through SNS was a catalyst pulling them to the city as they imagined recounting unusual experiences observing citizens during a historic social movement. One participant who had visited Hong Kong several times described why she went there this time:

> *I visited the Hong Kong tour this time to look for a new way to travel, like joining some experiential tours. I joined the Hong Kong Protest tour out of curiosity. It will be interesting to join this tour with other foreign* travelers *because it is a good chance to interact with people and get to know their viewpoint* (Chinese female, 25-year-old, in-depth interview, January 10, 2020).

Push motivation 2: Seeing it with my own eyes

Traditional and social media outlets have covered the street protests in Hong Kong (Ho, 2019; Kan, 2019; Wang, 2019; Wong and Wright, 2020). Many of the previously ill-informed are now acquainted with what Hong Kong citizens want and what that means to China. However, despite the many commentaries on political events in Hong Kong, protest tour participants wanted to see the protests with their own eyes. The stories told by some tour participants communicated this.

Curiosity. Because I feel like the media representation of the situation is biased, I wanted to see for myself the actual situation (Singapore female, 26-year-old, in-depth interview, January 10, 2020).

I think that it is extremely important to experience/understand something on the ground vs. reading about it in the news... in order to truly understand the complexity of a situation (Hong Kong female, 22-year-old, in-depth interview, January 10, 2020).

Prior to the age of social media, news spread mainly through major newspapers and television and radio broadcasters (Kepplinger and Habermeier, 1995; Manning, 2001). With ICT, people now spread news themselves through smartphones, recording and sharing with others what they see. Controversy over the Hong Kong protests made some tourists want to experience them first-hand rather than just read about them, seeking authentic experiences replete with street scenes, sounds, smells, and physical clashes. One tour participant described his experiences this way:

I wanted to see how different the atmosphere is compared to the media's portrayal of the protest as violent and gruesome. [I wanted to] Soak in the atmosphere and clarify some doubts I had. For example, are all protestors young people? The answer I got today is no (Singapore female, 21-year-old, in-depth interview, January 10, 2020).

The author who joined the tour perceived being at the protest site as an excellent opportunity to watch and understand realities of the protest not typically reported abroad. She felt afraid, uncomfortable, and unsafe, yet she could not stop staring along with other tour participants at scenes previously seen in the news: huge crowds of people demonstrating, a police cordon, firing of tear gas, and umbrellas used to keep the tear gas away.

Pull motivation 1: A moment that can only be experienced once

Conventional tourism typically targets historical spots, natural beauty, and resorts that can be visited at many different times. By contrast, observing a protest tour is totally time-dependent, as many participants noted. Indeed, one attraction of the protest tour is the limited time within which it can be observed. Two participants explained as follows.

Good experience and it's the one and only protest tour in Hong Kong, which I find meaningful (Chinese female, 25-year-old, in-depth interview, January 10, 2020)

Each time the number of protesters and protest tour participants differs, depending on the group, date, and venue; the interest of the protester and participants; and the relationship between the protest objection, the recent issue, changes in political conditions, and the mood of the protesters. Whether the protest can be completed successfully is also unknown (Hong Kong female, 24-year-old, in-depth interview, January 10, 2020).

In contemporary tourism, the temporal aspect is increasingly important (Harrison, 2001; Seyfi et al., 2020). The same tourism spot can provide different experiences

depending on the season or time of day. A festival or sporting event transforms a city into a unique tourism destination on a particular day and time (Robertson, 2006). The Hong Kong protest tour was a unique experience at a unique time in history. Visiting the city when these protests were taking place would be quite different from visiting it with no protests taking place. They would be completely different cities and travel experiences based on timing. Participants described visiting the moment or experience, not the city.

> *When participating in the protest, the tour guide introduced the history and development of the protest. We can easily understand the factors and purpose of the protest. It was the voice and the expression of action for the public's dissatisfaction against the Hong Kong Government. We felt that we belonged to this protest, and [our understanding is] consistent with the public's view* (South Korean male, 48-year-old, in-depth interview, January 1, 2020).

> *Soaked in the atmosphere and clarified some doubts I had* (Singapore female, 21-year-old, in-depth interview, January 10, 2020).

Pull motivation 2: A community to which a tourist wants to belong

Protests can occur anywhere, anytime, ranging from mass protests against serious time-specific political issues, as in Hong Kong, to smaller ones drawing more general attention to the environment or human, LGBT, or animal rights (Seyfi and Hall, 2020a). The interviews clarified that some tourists were neither mere observers nor fully participating protesters, but that they honestly supported the protest and that they traveled to wish the protestors success. These are therefore potentially akin to procotters or flaneur activists (Leontidou, 2006, 2010) for whom tour participation reinforces their cosmopolitan identity (van Leeuwen, 2019). For some, Hong Kong was not a tourist destination as much as a political community to which they had bonded emotionally.

> *I'm so fascinated by the situation, I really wanted to see it in person because the experience is very different to what is shown on News/Media. . . I thought it was amazing, so many people with such passion on the streets. Very nice people, not evil (like on Chinese media publishing). It is important for people to experience the protests first-hand* (American male, 24-year-old, in-depth interview, January 10, 2020).

> *Surprising to see the huge number of protestors on the street... really wanting to be free. Organized well and obeyed by the leaders. Sometimes, felt sad to remember the 5.18 Korea democratization movement* (South Korean male, 48-year-old, in-depth interview, January 1, 2020).

The Hong Kong protests had a clear political purpose with half of the population participating in rallies in various ways (Jacobs, 2019; Liu et al., 2019). Protestors participate in unique ways using their own resources, from physical participation to financial support, from voluntary service to interacting with cultural activities or posting reports through various media sources. Nevertheless, tourists at protest tours may become entangled in the political theater of the protests, and their physical presence at a protest site may encourage citizen protestors seeking to achieve political change. Participants were

not mere voyeurs as they became bonded with the protest community and were no longer disinterested outsiders. One participant explained:

> *I think most of them would firstly say they are neutral and just wanted to see the protest. But I feel they go away feeling supportive of the protest knowing what the protesters do is reasonable. Most of the people make donations when they are leaving* (Hong Kong male, 37-year-old, in-depth interview, January 1, 2020).

The author who was present at the tour experienced similar feelings. She was not initially very familiar with the historical and political background and intentionally tried to assume a neutral attitude as an interviewer and researcher; however, by watching what was transpiring before her eyes, she felt transformed from merely an observer to someone reflecting on the plight of protesters. Through conversations with local participants, she became more affectively involved in their situation.

Pull motivation 3: The company of a local guide

Some interviewees said that local tour guides made it possible to undertake such a tour. The guide offered education and alleviated the increased risk that might otherwise decrease the attractiveness of the tour. In examining war-zone tourism, Mahrouse suggested that being able to purchase some measure of safety might actually promote a culture, for better or worse, of psychosocial reassurance and comfort with the dangers of a site (Mahrouse, 2016). Some participants explained the merits of the local guide tour:

> *The tour guide gave a lot of interesting information about the situation. It is certainly an eye opener for what their demands are. The situation is real but globally no country really cares because it does not affect them. The actual Protest Tour is well run, the tour guide knew where to go and when to go... My thoughts have changed. I have a better understanding of why they are protesting* (Australian male, 30-year-old, in-depth interview, January 1, 2020).

> *I appreciate that I was able to understand from the local guide and the local people theirs view of the political situation in their country of their future. The local guide took good care of our safety and he put in a good effort to allow us to understand the protest situation* (Singaporean female, 21-year-old, in-depth interview, January 1, 2020).

> *News abroad can be misleading and misunderstood and cannot reflect the true situation. Under the guidance of the tour guide, the protest tour gave participants a better understanding of the protest, feel the protesters' emotions, present the truth in front of them, and hopefully release the truth after returning to their own countries* (South Korean male, 48-year-old, in-depth interview, January 1, 2020).

The Hong Kong protest tour guides explained why citizens were on the streets in protest, sharing knowledge as only a local resident could. The guide introduced what tourists should see and guided them through appropriate conduct to avoid damaging the spirit of the demonstration. According to one participant:

The advantages with [the] local guide is that someone is explaining things to you when you need the social context. For example, how are you supposed to know Starbucks in Hong Kong is actually associated with Maxim's group that said things like "we should write off the young generation" (Hong Kong male, 37-year-old, in-depth interview, January 1, 2020).

Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to identify motivations of Hong Kong protest tourists. It examined qualitative data about the emerging genre of protest tourism and extracted two push motivations and three pull motivations. The two motivations pushing tourists to satisfy their needs were the desires to (1) have special, new experiences that few others have experienced and (2) experience tourist offerings first hand, up close and personal. The three identified motivations pulling tourists were the opportunities offered tourists to (1) see a unique one-time historical event; (2) share the moment with local Hong Kong citizens, even if indirectly; and (3) experience real-time events with a local guide.

This study contributes theoretically to tourism studies by identifying motivations of protest tourists. This opens up protest tourism as a potentially novel form of tourism with unique pull motivations: little prior research has explored temporality, the sense of belonging, and the company of a local guide. Our findings further show the binary opposition between tourists and attractions is increasingly no longer meaningful, as tourists play an ever-increasing role in forming and characterizing contemporary places, attractions, products, and environments. Finally, we argue that the rarely discussed temporal dimension of tourism is gaining in importance as tourists increasingly seek to experience contemporary authenticity in a destination.

This study supports three conclusions. First, the framework of push-pull motivations suggests why protest tourism has arisen and what distinguishes it from other types of tourism. In addition to the two predominant push motivations for unique, first-hand experiences, protest tourists were motivated by novelty, learning, and adventure, similar to traditional forms of tourists. Temporality, the sense of belonging, and the company of a local guide were quite original pull motivations that have not been sufficiently discussed in previous studies on pull motivations. This unique set of motivations suggests that despite some similar motivations with dark tourism, activist tourism, or volunteer tourism, protest tourism should be classified as a distinct type of tourism reflecting new desires of contemporary tourists toward areas previously thought unsuitable for tourism (Mahrouse, 2016) and the possibility of commoditizing specific contemporary temporal, spatial, and political events. As Munt (1994) mentioned, "tourism is everything, and everything is tourism" (p. 104): previous limits on objects of tourism are no longer meaningful. This research also shows the importance of exploring newly emerging tourist motivations and analyzing them against existing theories of tourist motivation: efforts to explore new tourist motivations are a critical first step in determining what tourists will accept as appealing future tourist sites.

Second, the current findings show that contemporary tourists increasingly seek to be more than passive, superficial observers of a foreign culture, opening up a fertile area for future tourism studies. Tourists can no longer be viewed just as people buying package

tours and remaining passive observers of tourism targets. They now play active roles in wide-ranging tourist settings where innovation is co-produced by tourism providers and consumers (Hall and Williams, 2020). Protest tourists did not passively observe the tourism object called demonstrations, but at least indirectly participated as meaning-makers reporting on and interpreting these rallies through social media. Although lacking the degree of danger in war-zone or dark tourism, the current findings mirror Lisle (2000), Mahrouse (2016), and Buda et al. (2014) in asserting that seasoned travelers pursue what is new and special to experience local situations first-hand. The binary model dividing tourist (subject) and tourist attraction (object) hinders the understanding of tourist types: the either/or division between subject/object and push/pull motivation may no longer be valid, if it ever really was. Tourism research should change from a dichotomy to a continuum paradigm.

Third and finally, the temporal dimension of tourism is especially important. The temporality element inherent in protest tourism implicates push and pull motivations leading to specific locations involving the geopolitical context and politico-spatial imaginary as shown by their putting as much emphasis on "when" and "where" as on "what" in selecting destinations. Being part of rather than just watching the scene of the 2019 rallies meant visiting Hong Kong at specific times. Temporality is key to the identified push and pull motivations, consistent with the findings of Hall (2007) and Shim and Santos (2014) that many modern tourists prefer to experience living realities for "contemporary authenticity." Seeing with their own eyes with the help of a local guide made demonstration scenes even more attractive. Researchers and tourism companies seeking to understand the psychology, experiences, and behavioral tendencies of tourists must consider these temporal and geographic and even geopolitical aspects (Hall, 2005).

Practical implications of this research include, first, that the tourism industry should expand the boundaries of tourism objects beyond tourists seeking pleasure to tourists assigning value to social and/or personal meaning and to scarcity, symbolism, and/or authenticity. Second, the tourism industry should seek to provide unique experiences. With possible COVID-19 politically imposed travel barriers, people may require stronger reasons to travel and will likely turn to more special, valuable, and authentic experiences. Third, the tourism industry should define ethical principles to apply to tourism involving the observation and participation in socio-political events. Although not a part of the interview process, for example, it would have been interesting to have known if the participant's travel insurance would have covered for any injuries arising out of the tour. Fourth, more tourism products should be offered by local and grassroots businesses to better engage tourists beyond one-size-fits-all models. Tourism-related content unearthed and interpreted by local residents will add distinctiveness and value to increase tourist trust.

Despite meaningful findings and implications, this research has some limitations. Mass demonstrations like those in Hong Kong are by definition spatially, temporally, and politically constrained moments of tourism opportunity. This exploratory research is on one small-scale local protest tour with a limited number of interviewees; hence, the findings are not generalizable and are instead a resource for future studies. Further studies are needed in other situations to more fully define protest tourism and the commonalities and differences from dark tourism, war-zone tourism, activist tourism, and/or volunteer

tourism. In addition, the current analysis applies the classic push-pull framework to explain tourist motivations, but more factors influencing tourist decision-making have been studied by applying other frameworks. It is essential to expand and diversify methodologies to formulate novel qualitative approaches, such as psychoanalytic geography or theories of affect and emotions, to shed light on emerging forms of tourism.

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