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**Review of the Doctoral Dissertation by Qihang Qiu, M.Sc.  
titled "The Role of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Tourism Place Making"**

For evaluation, a doctoral dissertation consisting of four thematically coherent scientific articles and a self-report has been presented:

Paper 1: Qiu Q, Zuo Y, Zhang M., 2022, *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Tourism: Research Review and Investigation of Future Agenda*, Land; 11(1):139; doi.org/10.3390/land11010139.

Paper 2: Qiu, Q., Liang, X., Zuo, Y., 2023, *Identifying European and Chinese styles of creating tourist destinations with intangible cultural heritage: A comparative perspective*, International Journal of Tourism Research, 25(2), 266–278; doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2567.

Paper 3: Qiu Q., 2023, *Identifying the role of intangible cultural heritage in distinguishing cities: A social media study of heritage, place, and sense in Guangzhou, China*, Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 27, 100764; doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2023.100764.

Paper 4: Qiu Q., Yifan Z., 2023, *"Intangible cultural heritage" label in destination marketing toolkits: Does it work and how?*. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 56, 272-283; doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2023.06.025.

Scientific significance of the dissertation topic

Cultural values are among the key factors in the development of tourism. The intangible cultural heritage has immense potential for the creation of places that attract tourism. The complex relationships between tourism, intangible cultural values, and space

(place) form a broad area of study that has been analysed for years in geography and other social sciences. In various geographical contexts, places are intentionally created for tourists (tourism spaces) to invigorate these areas, assign them new functions, and stimulate economic development. The doctoral dissertation by Qihang Qiu aptly addresses this socially significant issue by examining the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and place making processes.

Research objectives, research questions, research methods

The main objective of the dissertation was to uncover the mechanisms through which the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) influences tourism destinations. The author set three research objectives:

- To understand the value of ICH and popular ICH resources,
- To map the tourism place making process while integrating ICH resources,
- To confirm the role of ICH in differentiating a city and ultimately serving as a destination marketing and management tool.

In addition, four research questions were formulated in accordance with the purpose of the dissertation:

- a) Which ICH resources have been discussed most extensively in recent years, and what are the prevailing research trends and future directions in ICH tourism?
- b) How can ICH be effectively employed for tourism place making?
- c) Does ICH have the capacity to render a place distinct and, if so, how?
- d) How does the labelling of ICH contribute to destination marketing?

Research questions were addressed using qualitative and quantitative methods, including systematic review of the literature (Paper 1), literature meta-analysis (Paper 2), social media studies using big data analysis and analysis of semantic content (Paper 3), and a questionnaire survey subjected to Structural Equation Modelling (Paper 4).

The main findings

Paper 1 includes a discussion of the relevant scientific literature in English. It presents the ways in which the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is defined and discusses the content and structure of scientific works from temporal and spatial perspectives. The

content of the publication is categorised into thematic areas. As a result of the literature review, the author has demonstrated a rich and diverse picture of research on intangible values in tourism.

Paper 2 contains a comparative analysis of the planning of themed tourist attractions related to intangible heritage. Based on an analysis of scientific literature, the author conducted a qualitative meta-analysis of 23 European and 16 Chinese thematic cases. The findings reveal differentiated patterns and methods in the planning and decision-making process between the regions compared.

Paper 3 used the city of Guangzhou as a case study to reveal how the qualities of ICH contribute to the distinctiveness of a city destination. Using Chinese and English tourist reviews on TripAdvisor as data sources, the authors confirm the role of ICH in creating a positive and unique sense of place.

Paper 4 investigates the usefulness of ICH labelling as a marketing tool, using Yong Qing Fang Street in Guangzhou as a case study. The findings identify the mechanism by which tourists' cognition of the ICH label affects their intentions to revisit this destination. The role of emotions regarding the ICH and the perceived destination image were identified as mediators between label cognition and self-declared behavioural intention (re-visiting the place).

#### Substantive evaluation of the dissertation

Intangible and material values in tourism are integral components of tourism geography theory. The topic of intangible cultural heritage as tourism assets and its significance as a factor in tourism development has been recognised and discussed in the scientific literature for decades. In her dissertation, the author does not rely on the existing body of tourism geography studies but instead grounds her considerations in the theoretical concepts of human geography and other social sciences (cultural studies, management). This approach provides a new interpretive dimension to the analysis of intangible tourism values.

The author connects the relationship between intangible cultural values and the place making process in the context of tourism. This relationship is considered in a functional dimension, as indicated by the title of the dissertation and the research objectives and questions. It is important to note that evaluating the role of intangible cultural values in

the place making process is an extremely challenging task due to semantic issues, the blurring concepts of place, place making, sense of place, as well as the fact that the functional relationship analysed involves psychological aspects, including the needs, intentions, and behaviours of tourists. The author has managed to overcome these difficulties, addressing the research problem in a creative and analytical manner.

There is no doubt that intangible values influence the place making process in the context of tourism and enrich the tourist experience. In the value chain offered to tourists, intangible cultural heritage creates added value, thus affecting tourists' subjective sense of satisfaction. This fact has been confirmed in the author's research both through content analysis of tourist reviews on the TripAdvisor platform (Paper 3) and through statistical analysis of behavioural predictors of return intentions to destinations and repeated participation in cultural events (Paper 4).

In my evaluation of the dissertation, I find the conclusions drawn from the comparative analysis of the planning process for intangible values for tourists between certain European countries and China particularly valuable. Furthermore, the analysis of comparative social responses to ICH, reflected in the content of reviews by Chinese and international tourists on the TripAdvisor platform, is noteworthy. These analyses revealed the differentiation of these processes depending on the socio-cultural context and the cultural background of the tourists, highlighting the strong connection between tourists' reactions to ICH and cognitive and emotional processes. I also highly regard the introduction of the place making concept into tourism studies by the doctoral candidate, which, in my opinion, offers applicative possibilities for this concept in the practice of creating and managing tourist attractions.

My overall assessment of Qihang Qiu's doctoral dissertation is high. However, for future work, I suggest that the doctoral candidate delve deeper into tourism geography theory and multidisciplinary tourism studies, utilizing theories such as tourist motivation or the concepts of tourist experience and tourist attractiveness, which are less ambiguous than the notions of place making and sense of place. This would also help avoid the unintentional repetition of problems already identified, such as the construction of a complex structural model (Paper 4) presenting linear relationships that are quite obvious and do not add significant value to existing knowledge from the perspective of tourist motivation theory and theories of tourist behaviour.

It is important to maintain caution regarding the terminology used in scientific works related to tourism. Terms from different terminological orders are often mixed in tourism studies. The author frequently uses the term "ICH tourism," which is actually a label used in marketing practice rather than a scientific concept. I also draw attention to the unclear term "tourism place making." Perhaps "place making through tourism" would be more accurate?

I encourage the author to continue researching the relationship between tourism and place making processes, considering a broader range of issues, including the commodification of ICH and the significance of ownership and proprietorship of space in place-making (as a planning process) in various geographical contexts. An important aspect that would complement the functional relationship studied by Qihang Qiu between ICH and place making would be to recognise how tourists use and experience a given place and what implications this has for both tourists and planning decision makers.

#### Conclusion of the review

The reviewed doctoral dissertation, presented as a collection of standalone articles accompanied by an explanatory narrative, represents an original approach to addressing a scientific problem. The doctoral candidate meticulously planned and conducted her own research, adhering to established methodological standards.

Analysis of the dissertation reveals that the doctoral candidate:

- Possess extensive and organised knowledge of intangible cultural heritage and understands its significance as tourist assets.
- Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the relevant literature.
- Has a solid theoretical background in social sciences, enabling her to engage in scholarly discourse and theoretically justify her own research.
- Is proficient in advanced statistical techniques, particularly in network analysis and content analysis.
- Capable of formulating research problems and scientifically solving them.
- Engages effectively in discussions of research findings, formulates conclusions, and understands the interpretative limitations of her own research.
- Publishes research results in globally recognised journals.

Therefore, based on the above, I conclude that the reviewed dissertation titled "*The role of intangible cultural heritage in tourism place making*" meets the requirements set for doctoral theses as defined in the Act of 20 July 2018 on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742, as amended). Accordingly, I recommend to the Scientific Council of the Discipline of Socio-Economic Geography and Spatial Economy of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań to admit Qihang Qiu, MSc, to further stages of the doctoral procedure.



*/ Mirosław Mika /*