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Cultural Heritage Diplomacy

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Cultural diplomacy to quench the thirst for heritage tourism by intellectuals in both continents can adhere to guidelines for signage and guidebooks through the use of events or forums to build affinity based on expertise. This can be achieved through the intersection of a universal knowledge for increased awareness prior to visitation to fully absorb the essence of a culture. Cultural heritage events specifically geared to guests from non-Christian backgrounds would help them enjoy the art of the colours and form which evolved over centuries in Europe.

The misconceptions that arise from culturally ethnocentric observations as a travelogue from overseas adventures and re-spun into novels or articles (fiction or non-fiction) can have, without planning, a damaging effect on the cultural heritage exchanges. In order to embark on cultural heritage routes with diplomacy, tourist managers can team up with scholars, who are versed in literature, architecture, fine arts and gastronomy, and to filter the notes through the “lens” of a specific tourist market unfamiliar with European Culture that encompasses Christianity.

It is no surprise that continents with a profound caretaking of cultural heritage would find interchanges fascinating, especially in the intersections of literature and legends that have been part of the universal library of human intellectual development and expression. Each culture has its spiritual background with its own form to express its heritage. Cultural heritage diplomacy would take these elements into account as a starting point of launching marketing schemes.

As a result, although on one hand we have seen literature as a dynamic mover of tourism across borders, on the other hand it may have created an obstacle for cultural heritage sharing on equal ground. This handicap can be easily solved with appropriate planning of cultural heritage routes geared for this specific market. Rural areas connected to urban hubs can add value to the local flavour sought after by non-European tourists.

Hence, European rural tourism professionals may view the gastronomy challenge as an opportunity to offer reciprocal menu options and interchanges with inter-cultural chefs, as do Asian hotels for European guests. Menus at rural hotels can emphasise traditional European dishes that are based on appropriate ingredients that adhere to Asian, African, or other regional tastes that are non-European. Legumes or cheeses account for the vegetarian

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issue, especially in rural areas where little variety in restaurants may be available for non-meat eating visitors to choose vegetarian dishes. Rice as a main staple of Asia can be offered in countries such as Italy (risotto) and Spain (paella), due to their natural recipes abundant in these regions of Europe. In addition, potato dishes in Northern and Central European countries are options to consider due to the cuisine that utilizes this ingredient. Beef and pork are especially to be avoided due to cultural reasons with some Asian countries such as India. The cow is considered the symbol of the cosmic knowledge vehicle (like the “Milky Way) and is spared from slaughter to provide opportunities to receive gifts from God, both abstract and real (yogurt, cheeses, milk). Menus typically depicting beef dishes would be unappealing to the majority of Indian tourists.

Finally, the cultural exchanges between the continents, with conferences and activities, should attempt to fill in the gaps for bilateral cultural heritage diplomacy to educate tourists beyond stereotypes.² New knowledge may be sought to combine fictional romanticism rich in literary style for enjoyment with non-fiction scholarly works to prepare tourists in an educated manner, given the rise in educated tourists on a global scale.

References

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