



Qasim

Based on your country of origin or personal experience:

Explain the relationship between tourism and commodification, with a special focus on the following questions:

- Which aspects of culture are being commodified for tourism purposes (festivals, crafts, traditions)?

Tourism and commodification

Tourism and commodification are closely linked because tourism often turns cultural and social practices into products or experiences that can be sold to visitors. Commodification occurs when traditions, customs, arts, and lifestyles gain economic value and are marketed to attract tourists. This process can support cultural preservation and create income for communities, but it may also change or simplify traditions to satisfy tourist expectations.

In Pakistan, many aspects of culture are commodified for tourism purposes due to the country's rich cultural diversity and heritage.

Festivals and Cultural Events

Various regional festivals attract both domestic and international tourists. Events such as the **Shandur Polo Festival**, **Kalash Festivals (Chilam Joshi, Uchal, and Choimus)**, and **Basant Festival** in Punjab showcase local traditions, music, and sports. These festivals, originally community celebrations, are now promoted as tourist attractions. Sometimes performances and activities are adjusted to suit visitors or scheduled to increase tourist participation.

Handicrafts and Traditional Crafts

Pakistan is famous for crafts such as **Sindhi Ajrak and embroidery, Multani blue pottery, Peshawari chappals, Balochi embroidery, Kashmiri shawls, and wood carvings from Swat and Chitral**. These crafts are sold as souvenirs in tourist markets. Artisans sometimes modify designs or produce items in large quantities to meet tourist demand, which may reduce traditional quality but increases income opportunities.

Traditional Music and Dance

Folk music and dances such as **Attan dance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ho Jamalo dance in Sindh, and Punjabi bhangra and giddha** are often performed for tourists. Performances that were once part of social or religious gatherings are now staged for entertainment in hotels and festivals.

Cuisine and Food Culture

Pakistani cuisine is also commodified through food tourism. Traditional dishes like **biryani, nihari, chapli kebab, sajji, and karahi** are promoted as cultural experiences. Restaurants sometimes adjust spice levels or presentation to suit foreign visitors.

Traditional Lifestyle and Dress

Tourists visiting northern areas such as Hunza, Skardu, and Chitral often experience local lifestyles, traditional homes, and clothing. In some cases, locals wear traditional dress mainly for tourist interaction or photography.

How has this commodification changed these cultural aspects or the way people engage with them?

Impact of Commodification on Cultural Aspects in Pakistan

In Pakistan, commodification through tourism has significantly influenced how cultural traditions are practiced and how people engage with them. Tourism has brought economic benefits and increased cultural awareness, but it has also changed the original meaning and practice of some traditions.

1. Festivals and Cultural Events

Many local festivals, such as the Shandur Polo Festival and Kalash seasonal festivals, were *traditionally celebrated* only within communities for religious or seasonal reasons.

With tourism promotion, these events are now organized to *attract visitors, media, and sponsors*. Performances are sometimes scheduled or modified for tourists, and communities may focus more on entertainment value than traditional meaning.

2. Crafts and Handicrafts

Craft production in areas like Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan has increased due to tourist demand. Crafts such as Ajrak, embroidery, carpets, and handmade footwear are now produced mainly for sale.

Artisans often make cheaper or quicker versions to meet tourist demand, which sometimes reduces quality. However, commodification has also helped preserve crafts by providing income and employment.

3. Music and Dance Performances

Traditional dances and music forms, once limited to weddings or community gatherings, are now performed in hotels, cultural shows, and tourist festivals.

Performers sometimes adapt dances or music to appeal to visitors, turning

cultural expression into staged entertainment.

4. Food Culture

Traditional foods such as *chapli kebab*, *sajji*, and *regional dishes* are promoted for tourists. Restaurants sometimes adjust taste and presentation for foreign visitors, making food more commercial than purely cultural.

5. Lifestyle and Local Identity

In northern tourist regions such as Hunza, Skardu, and Swat, locals sometimes wear traditional clothing or demonstrate traditional practices mainly for tourist interaction or photography. Culture becomes something performed for visitors rather than practiced naturally in daily life.

6. Changing Perception of Culture

For many communities, culture has become a source of livelihood. Younger generations may learn crafts or performances mainly as economic opportunities rather than cultural inheritance.

- What are the negative impacts of such commodification on local communities?

Negative Impacts of Tourist Accommodations on Pakistan's Local Communities

The rapid growth of tourist accommodations such as *hotels, guesthouses, resorts, and short-term rental homes* in tourist areas of Pakistan has brought economic benefits, but it has also created several negative impacts on local communities, especially in popular destinations like Hunza, Skardu, Murree, Swat, and Chitral.

- ✓ Increase in Cost of Living
- ✓ Environmental degradation
- ✓ Lose of local culture and lifestyle
- ✓ Unequal economic benefits
- ✓ Pressure on infrastructure
- ✓ Seasonal employment problems

1. Increase in cost of living:

The development of hotels and resorts often raises land and property prices. Local residents may find it difficult to afford housing as landowners prefer selling or renting properties to tourism businesses. **Prices** of food and daily necessities may also **increase** due to higher tourist demand.

2. Environmental Degradation

Large numbers of accommodations lead to increased waste, water consumption, and pollution. In northern areas of Pakistan, improper waste disposal, water shortages, and damage to natural landscapes have become serious concerns. Construction of hotels sometimes damages forests and agricultural land.

3. Loss of Local Culture and Lifestyle

As tourism grows, communities may adjust their lifestyle to suit tourists. Traditional

houses may be converted into guesthouses, and local customs may change to accommodate visitor expectations. Over time, local traditions and peaceful village life can be disrupted.

4. Unequal Economic Benefits

Often, large hotels and resorts are owned by outside investors rather than local residents. This means much of the profit leaves the community, while locals may only get low-paying jobs, creating economic inequality.

5. Pressure on Infrastructure

Small towns and villages are often not prepared for large tourist numbers. Roads, electricity, water supply, and sanitation systems become overloaded, affecting residents' daily lives.

6. Seasonal Employment Problems

Tourism in Pakistan is seasonal, especially in mountain areas. Many local people rely on tourism jobs that are only available for a few months, leading to unstable income during off-seasons.

- What strategies can be used to balance tourism development with cultural preservation?

Strategies to Balance Tourism Development with Cultural Preservation in Pakistan

Tourism development in Pakistan provides economic benefits, but it must be managed carefully to protect the country's rich cultural heritage. The following strategies can help balance tourism growth with cultural preservation.

1. Community-Based Tourism Development

Local communities should actively participate in tourism planning and management. When residents manage guesthouses, cultural tours, and craft markets, they benefit directly while maintaining control over how their culture is presented.

2. Protection of Cultural Heritage Sites

Historic places such as **Mohenjo-Daro, Taxila, Lahore Fort, and Baltit Fort** should be protected through proper conservation policies. Visitor numbers should be controlled to prevent damage, and restoration work should follow heritage protection standards.

3. Promotion of Authentic Cultural Experiences

Tourism programs should encourage authentic cultural experiences rather than staged or artificial performances. Festivals, crafts, and traditions should be presented in ways that respect their original meaning and community importance.

4. Support for Traditional Crafts and Local Artisans

Government and tourism organizations should support artisans through training, fair trade markets, and certification of authentic products. This helps maintain traditional craft quality while providing sustainable income.

5. Sustainable Accommodation Development

Hotels and resorts should follow environmental and cultural guidelines, using local architectural styles and environmentally friendly practices to avoid damaging communities and landscapes.

6. Education and Awareness Programs

Tourists should be educated about local customs and respectful behavior. Similarly, local communities should be trained to manage tourism without losing cultural identity.

7. Regulation of Tourism Activities

Government authorities should control overdevelopment by enforcing laws on construction, waste management, and environmental protection, especially in sensitive areas like northern Pakistan.

8. Promotion of Off-Season and Diverse Destinations

Encouraging tourism in different regions and seasons reduces pressure on popular areas and spreads economic benefits across the country.
