Tourism Research: Building from other Disciplines

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Abstract: *Tourism as a field of study is challenged to identify a theoretical core and disciplinary boundaries. While the phenomena of tourism may be considered a system of interlinked parts, the scholarly body of knowledge of tourism may be described as a mosaic of knowledge. This paper identifies a number of methodological problems that tourism research must address. We further propose that future attention should focus its attention on core issues of tourism related to consumer's pursuit of difference in their travel. Further, these core issues should be addressed using the most appropriate disciplinary theory and methodology providing the data needed to produce a holistic picture for deeper analysis.*

Keywords: discipline, field of study, theory, system

Introduction

This paper examines issues and problems concerning tourism as a phenomenon and field of academic study. It is prompted by discussions between the authors and with other academics extending over a decade about tourism's disciplinary status and how this may be shaped by factors both within and outside of the control of tourism academics. In the paper we discuss issues such as the current levels of tourism theorisation and methodological sophistication, the analogies and metaphors which provide guidance to tourism scholars, the current trends in some countries to combining academic tourism departments into business schools, and the rarity of tourism research contributing to the development of the 'traditional disciplines'.

The proliferation of descriptive case studies and the lack of generalizable or testable hypotheses in much tourism research contrast poorly with established disciplinary fields (which often seem to be more enthusiastically supported by educational administrators and government research funding). The range of problems studied seems to us to be only a limited

selection of those perplexing tourism managers and destination administrators. In seeking to account for the relatively underdeveloped state of tourism research we came to better appreciate the complex, dynamic, fragmented and evolutionary nature of tourism and to see as increasingly important the administrative, economic, social and environmental contexts within which tourism activity is created and enjoyed at the destination scale, and the factors leading to changes in its various forms. These factors are significant influences on the tourism industry, and also shape tourism research. We also recognise that despite these difficulties there are some unique strengths to the ways in which tourism research is developing.

There has long been argument between academics about whether tourism is indeed a distinct discipline, and if so, what its relationships might be with other, more traditional areas of study. This soul searching about academic boundaries is not restricted to tourism scholars. For example, Astuti (2001, p. 443) in discussing issues of collaboration for anthropologists, urged them to “be prepared to advance our methodology by co-operating with other disciplines”. Perhaps some progress is being made. Weaver and Lawton (2002) detected the gradual evolution of an interdisciplinary approach from multidisciplinary tourism research. In this paper we examine the merits of this argument and propose that tourism research may be seen as a mosaic of topics, theories and methodologies. Tourist destination research is an academic field which is maturing in ways that have not been fully recognised as yet. Zhao and Ritchie (2007, pp. 476-490) write:

“The unique value of this research lies in its objectivity in revealing the overall profile of the emerging international tourism research community in the 1980s. In this sense, it enhances the identity of tourism as a distinct, maturing field of study and appropriately recognizes the contribution of tourism scholars and their institutions to the body of knowledge in tourism.”

But perhaps we should ask in what way is it maturing? Certainly there are increasing numbers of doctoral students studying tourism and related fields (Botterill & Gale, 2005). There is also an expanding number of journals, conferences and papers such that no one scholar can spare the time to read them all! Tang (2014, p. 193) in a review of the application of social psychology theories and concepts in hospitality and tourism studies found an increase of almost nine times in the number of such papers published in the top 12 tourism and hospitality journals in 2012 compared to 1999.

However, the study of tourism faces problems of fragmentation of effort and a lack of indigenous theory. On the issue of fragmentation, Pearce (2012, p. 173) writes:

This specialisation (tourism) may be advancing our understanding of particular aspects of tourism demand, but our cumulative knowledge of this phenomenon is perhaps less than the sum of the individual parts due to fragmentation and a lack of cross fertilisation from one discipline (sic) to another. This is not a matter that can be easily resolved but the development of integrative frameworks prepared with the purpose of enhancing linkages across research on demand, paying attention to communicating concepts of and findings to a broader audience, would be one way forward.

Tang (2014, p. 194) identified the lack of indigenous or domain specific theory as a significant weakness for tourism and provided a review of social psychological theories and concepts “*to promote theoretical studies and develop further research efforts in the hospitality and tourism field involving the principles of social psychology*”.

Similarly Oh et al. (2004) write:

“While it is hardly arguable that the tourism and hospitality discipline is an applied science, the discipline still needs its own domain-specific theories as its knowledge infrastructure to strengthen its scientific identity and status”.

One important way in which tourism as both a field of study and as an industrial sector must mature is in its recognition in the relevant power structure. We argue that tourism is worth studying because it is an important human activity which enables us to contrast daily life with something different in many aspects. We contend that it is also a fundamental, historic human activity whose many forms range from pilgrimage through business to hedonism. Significantly, it brings people of different cultural backgrounds into contact, thus causing social and environmental problems at the destination scale which require solutions, and offering opportunities for social and economic development. This complexity suggests that the study of tourism may benefit from the insights and methods of many disciplines, making tourism studies ideally suited to universities prepared to operate less defensive (or exclusive) disciplinary boundaries. In seeking answers to issues related to the status and developmental direction of tourism we examine briefly the origins and development of tourism research, the paradigms of

tourism and the accepted view that tourism is a system, and tourism as a field of study or a discipline.

Study of tourism: origins, development and constraints

Arguably the desire for travel away from home is inherent in humans and indeed a number of types of experiences sought by tourists have been identified, building on early work by Cohen (1979). Tourism in the sense of organized, comfortable and facilitated travel has been an integral part of life since ancient times (Casson, 1994). Religious pilgrimage has over the past few centuries been complemented by *touring* which has developed a logistic accommodation network similar to that used on the Route de Santiago de Compostela (Norman, 2011). In the 20th century, the rapid growth in packaged holidays within Europe immediately following the Second World War, the democratisation of jet travel in the early 70s and the recognition of the economic potential of tourism by many governments and entrepreneurs have dramatically increased long distance leisure travel (Laws, 1995). Today the growth of new economies such as China is further fuelling tourist numbers (Pan, Scott, & Laws, 2006).

The independent academic field of study and research of tourism however, arguably only began in the later quarter of the twentieth century (P. L. Pearce, 2005). In Britain, the 1960s and 70s witnessed the establishment of new universities in response to population growth, increasing prosperity and rapid technological innovation with accompanying losses of industrial and agricultural jobs. Social science degree courses such as tourism were attractive to academic administrators as they required relatively little capital investment and it was easier to recruit staff compared with laboratory based subjects or medicine. The first tourism research journals such as *Journal of Travel Research* (first published in 1962) and *Annals of Tourism Research* (1973) and many international conferences were also established in this period. Nevertheless, the academic study of tourism still carries a stigma of flippancy and hedonism and many leading universities such as Cambridge still do not offer tourism courses.

Nevertheless, many other universities did establish tourism schools and by the 1980s a steady supply of tourism specialists (mainly with Masters Degrees or tourism management experience) were being recruited to teach a range of (mainly) undergraduate courses. In Britain,

research activity, defined by publications and PhDs awarded, was evaluated by government through the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) at 5 yearly intervals from 1986, and used in decisions about for the funding of universities and by them for schools' budgets as well as individual academic promotion. Perhaps as a consequence, PhD level research in tourism increased as did the number of academic journals focussed on tourism and related topics (events, hospitality, marketing, and so on). Zhao and Ritchie, (2007, p. 481) commenting on their analysis of tourism research authorship in the period 1985–2004 in the eight leading tourism journals found a very strong correlation between doctoral training and academic leadership. They considered tourism to be a multidisciplinary research area as 57 leading scholars had doctorates in geography (15), leisure/recreation (14), business/management (8), tourism (6), psychology (4), economics (3), and education (2) as well as forestry, computer science, sociology, planning, and philosophy.

More recently, the interest of university authorities in tourism seems to be waning. Pizam (2014, p. A1) has noted:

“During the last few years, I have become more and more concerned about the preferential treatment of STEM disciplines [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics] at US institutions of higher learning, at the expense of other disciplines such as arts, humanities, social sciences, education, business and naturally hospitality and tourism management.”

In Australia, Pearce (2005, p. 255) noted that by that time, the number of Cluster One universities (Australia's oldest universities) teaching tourism had declined from six to two. In 2013 there was only one left (The University of Queensland) as the University of NSW has eliminated its tourism program due to a focus on more traditional disciplines in response to the requirements of the Australian Excellence in Research Assessment exercise. In many universities, tourism is at some risk of being submerged, or dissipated amongst more traditional disciplines such as business studies, as is happening in 2014 at the University of Queensland to its School of Tourism. It may be that one of the causes of this decline is an inability to develop a core or centre and the lack of clear boundaries for studies of tourism (Oh et al., 2004). However this was not an issue in the period when student numbers were growing suggesting that the constraining circle of expectations resulting from the RAE and from the personal preferences of academic leaders about valid research questions, methodologies, analysis and reporting is an underlying cause of these reverses.

Yet it continues to be difficult for tourism academics to state a convincing case for our subject when contrasted with the more effective lobbying of many other disciplines. As noted above, Pizam (2014) has expressed his concern about the (American) obsession with the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). He challenged the argument that supports STEM as favoured disciplines for government funding due to a shortage of qualified workers. In examining this argument he said

a 2004 Rand Corporation report also questioned the claim of a shortage of STEM workers. “The analysis found that despite concerns about potential shortages of STEM personnel, particularly in engineering and information technology, there is little evidence of such shortages in the past decade or on the horizon. Economic indicators, notably the low levels of unemployment and rising wages that one would expect to accompany shortages, have failed to materialize” (Pizam, 2014, p. A1).

One of the main measures of an academic's or a department's success is their output of published research. A premise of RAE type exercises is that academic journals can be ranked in terms of significance, and the editors of the most highly regarded journals have strict expectations about the style, approach and quality of the papers they select for publication. To a considerable extent the measurement of journal quality relies on the frequency with which its published articles are cited in other acknowledged journals, *and so the constraining circle of expectations about research questions, methodologies, analysis and reporting is further tightened.*

This is exacerbated by a tendency to discount any publications that have appeared in journals which are not considered mainstream to a particular. In Australia, some success has been achieved in increasing the number and ranking of tourism, hospitality and events journals on the Australian Business Dean's Council Journal Quality List (<http://www.abdc.edu.au/journalreview.html>). Tourism does however seem to be a field that is unusually reliant on related disciplines for its theory. Kim (2009) found that in 2003-05, 12% of citations in top tourism journals were drawn from other tourism journals, 21% from hospitality and 67% from other sources. An earlier study of six leading hospitality journals (Howey, Savage, Verbeeten, & Van Hoof, 1999), found 14,605 citations from non-tourism or hospitality sources, but from a restricted set of disciplines. Some 35% were drawn from the business and economics literature, 10% from social science and business administration and 6% from natural sciences and geography. Within the three top tourism journals, 51% of

citations were from tourism with 26% from business and economics. Only 4% of citations came from hospitality.

Can (and should) tourism academics address this reliance on other disciplines? Pearce and Butler (2010) has noted the ongoing calls for greater theorisation in tourism, which he argued “*appears not to have been driven by the pursuit of core questions under the umbrella of any unifying set of theories leading to a structured cumulative body of knowledge*”. Indeed, Franklin and Crang (2001, p. 6) advocate a greater openness by tourism researchers to developments in social and cultural theory, and criticised the majority of tourism researchers who depend on a small core of theorists resulting in “*standardised explanations, accepted analyses and foundational ideas*”.

It would also appear that the emergence of tourism as a discrete area of study has had little effect on those disciplines which gave rise to tourism studies. Further, few methodological advances have originated in tourism research, although it has benefited from many methodologies developed for example in statistics, management studies, crisis management or consumer behaviour. We consider that one issue underpinning the failure to distinguish tourism research as a separate area is the failure to identify a core of tourism that is different from other areas of study. Instead tourism is seen as an all-encompassing phenomenon - a grand interacting system. Such an approach may be useful as a means of increasing the visibility of tourism research but has not and arguably will not encourage development of indigenous theory. Instead this “all things to all people” approach dissipates and weakens the efforts of the tourism academy. We suggest that the question of whether there is a core of tourism be (re-)examined.

The core of tourism

While there is no universally accepted academic definition of tourism, that given by Jafari (1977, p. 8) is used here to provide a starting point for discussion: “Tourism is a study of man away from his usual habitat, of the industry which responds to his needs, and of the impacts that both he and the industry have on the host socio-cultural, economic, and physical environments”. This is clearly an inclusive approach based around the idea of travel away from a “usual habitat”. Therefore we argue that it is the experience of geographical, social or cultural difference by a traveller that therefore forms the core of the study of tourism. From this perspective, tourism itself is threatened by factors such as globalization and homogenization

of culture, along with the ability of immersive technology to remove people from their everyday lives while remaining at home. While it is arguable that other potential threats to international tourism arise from the increasing burden of ‘security’ measures imposed at frontiers (and elsewhere) by Governments engaged in both anti-terrorism and the control of immigration which restricts this movement (Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006), and by increasing air transport taxes, here we consider that these are restrictions that may temporarily reduce tourist flows but will not curtail it indefinitely so long as the interesting and attractive differences remain between the origin and destination.

If difference is central then the tourism industry is that which supports the creation and experience of difference. We argue that this leads to a gradation of topics that are more or less central to the study of tourism. One limitation of Jafari’s definition is that a number of ‘other’ fields such as hospitality, travel, recreation, sports and conventions are often included under the more specific title of tourism studies leading to a broadening of the field. Tourism is used as a generic term for this broader range of topics for research and examination in the current paper. The expanded field of tourism therefore includes the study of all activities, businesses and government organisations which together provide services to what is popularly known as travel and tourism. However this expanded field is built on the core of tourism –the study of why people travel outside their ‘usual habitat’.

Some methodological issues in current tourism studies

If we consider that tourism is from a visitor’s a trip away from their usual environment then we must realise that tourism involves an extended period of time. A number of authors have examined a trip as consisting of pre, during and post phases that may extend over months (Clawson, 1963; Moutinho, 1987). However it would appear that the core component of a trip is the complex series of experiences that are undertaken in the destination that comprises the “unusual habitat” the tourist seeks. It appears to the authors that our understanding of the tourist’s destination experiences is woefully inadequate. Often the extended trip is encapsulated or studied as consisting of only one particular experience. This is the approach that leads to ecotourists being identified as such because they visited a national park as one part of their trip. In fact tourists engage in many experiences on each trip, some mundane, some hedonic and some unpleasant and we need to better understand how these separate experiences, including their anticipation and recollection interact.

In seeking the data that may help us to understand this complex behaviour researchers are hampered by the sources of data they have available. The overwhelming most popular means of collecting information about tourists relies on self-report questionnaires. We may collect this information before a trip, at some intercept point or on returning home but it is isolated and focused on a particular aspect of the trip. Further self-report data is subject to numerous biases that affects validity. However, the methods of data collection that may provide a more holistic view are starting to become available. This data can be derived from sensors that are able to monitor a person over extended periods in terms of their heart rate, degree of arousal, focus of attention, geographical position, and so on. This new data may help to address the fragmented nature of data from which our study of tourism is currently constructed.

The data needed to better understand tourism must be able to measure emotion. One of the characteristics of tourism is that people travel primarily to achieve hedonic outcomes for themselves. Tourism is a discretionary activity in the main. Of course, there are many people who travel for business or for unpleasant reasons but at least in the context of business travel the experience is mostly emotionally positive. It is therefore surprising that it is only recently that mainstream psychological theories that explain how emotions are elicited such as cognitive appraisal theory (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Roseman, 2001; Scherer, 1988; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) have been used in the tourism literature (Hosany, 2012; Ma, Gao, Scott, & Ding, 2013). Interesting, the technology to measure emotions and to track related behaviour is becoming cheaper and more available, with some enabled in mobile phones (Poh, Swenson, & Picard, 2010). Thus the continuous measurement of a tourist's experiences may soon provide data for tourism researchers.

This highlights another methodological issue related to how as researchers we find the most appropriate theoretical models on which to base our research. This may be an unusual question for those researchers who adopt a particular disciplinary perspective as each disciplinary will have its accepted theories. Two points should be made about this issue. Firstly anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, economists and so on who study tourism may not be aware of the most recent theoretical advances in their disciplines, as they become increasingly focused on a stream of research specifically on tourism. The authors would always advise a doctoral candidate to read outside the tourism literature when developing their conceptual framework. Secondly, and conversely, it is incumbent of a researcher studying a tourism phenomenon to adopt a theoretical disciplinary framework that appears most relevant to answering a particular

question. However, in the tourism literature we will often find indigenous theoretical concepts and frameworks developed that are not informed by relevant disciplinary theory.

The boundaries of tourism

Given the discussion above of tourism's core and current related methodological issues, can we also find a boundary to the study of tourism? Early tourism academics had diverse academic backgrounds with economics, geography and anthropology prominent as their base discipline or 'traditional discipline' in Leiper's terminology (Leiper, 1981). Like the development of economic geography (Barnes, 2001), tourism's early success was related to its 'economic situatedness', the growing significance of the industry, and its ability to inform real problems through application of theory drawn from multiple disciplines. At the same time these disciplines have all enlightened tourism researchers with their own traditions and theoretical ideas. Indeed tourism became a testing (dumping) ground for anthropological, sociological, psychological, geographical and other disciplinary debates. Many of the early ideas of the "tourist bubble", 'destination life cycle model' and so on, are ideological or conceptual arguments directly transferred from other disciplines, as has been acknowledged by their original proponents, although many of the writers who have since built on these ideas fail to recognise the true origins.

One way of describing an academic field is that which falls within a certain paradigm. If this is the case then tourism has no boundaries as "is not possible to present tourism research as operating in the grip of a paradigm" (Tribe, 2006, p. 366). Instead, "evidence points to a soft, permeable field comprised of different traditions which, unlike a paradigm-ruled field, can coexist and are susceptible to new schools of thought" (Tribe, 2010, p. 14). Biglan (1973) developed a taxonomy of academic disciplines based on three dimensions: (1) the degree to which a paradigm exists (paradigmatic or pre-paradigmatic); (2) whether the subject matter is practical and applied (pure versus applied); and (3) involvement with living or organic matter (life versus nonlife systems). The natural and physical sciences are considered to possess more clearly delineated paradigms and are in the "hard" category. Those having less-developed paradigms and low consensus on knowledge bases and modes of inquiry (e.g., the social sciences and humanities) are considered "soft." Applied fields tend to be concerned with application of knowledge, such as law, education, and engineering. Pure fields are those that are viewed as less concerned with practical application, such as mathematics, history, and philosophy. Life systems include such fields as biology and agriculture, while languages and

mathematics exemplify nonlife disciplines. On this basis tourism is a soft, applied and non-life field which may explain its lack of consensus on knowledge bases and modes of inquiry.

An alternative means of determining the boundary of tourism would be to find “a conversational community with a tradition of argumentation” (Shotter, 1997, p. 14). Academic knowledge fields have been described as a series of networks (Barnes, 2001). Such networks are useful for the analysis of complex, shifting patterns of influence. In tourism, researchers often form temporary groups for specific projects or lines of enquiry, and may indeed at any one time have membership in several such groups in addition to their more routine lecturing duties. Here, what they seek is the specialised, complimentary or different expertise of people from another discipline, so tourism research groups may be transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, cross disciplinary or multidisciplinary or even extra-disciplinary, which Tribe (2010) explained as being emergent knowledge rather than drawn from a discipline. Although this fluid disciplinary organisation is often viewed as a sign of weakness and as signifying a discipline which has not matured, it is a rational response to the complex and evolutionary nature of tourism and tourism research.

A cursory examination of medical and other scientific journals suggests that multiple authors are far more common in those areas compared with tourism research. We speculate that this might be due to the benefits of varied specialisms contributing to the better understanding of a particular problem, or of established professors supervising a number of PhD students rather than one or two working on disparate topics as is usually the case in our field, and consequently being legitimately entitled to share author status. Alternatively, (and more likely), scientists are more astute players of the publication-citation-research funding game? Nevertheless it is not uncommon to find 2 or 3 names on a tourism paper, often from universities which are geographically remote. Further research could establish how varied are the areas of expertise or disciplinary bases of multiple authors, and perhaps lead to a better understanding of benefits and dynamics in a research collaboration. In our case, Laws has no first degree, a Master’s degree in Management, and an MPhil and a PhD in tourism, while Scott originally qualified in with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry (followed by a Masters of Business Administration, Masters of Business (Marketing), and a PhD in tourism. This varied background, together with Scott’s previous managerial position in destination organisations has proved a fruitful basis for enjoyable collaboration over more than a decade and 28 joint

papers, chapters or books. However, examination of the networks of tourism research reveals no cohesive patterns (Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013).

Becher and Trowler (2001) promoted the viewing of academic disciplines as tribes with their own territories: tribes imply both social organisation and an individual academic subculture; territories imply epistemological organisation leading to disciplinary coherence with clear boundaries, leading to the use of terms such as foundations, fields, areas and turf wars. Beyer and Lodahl (1976) explained that disciplinary worlds are separate and distinct cultures exerting varying influence on scholarly behaviours as well as on the structure of higher education. According to Ladd and Lipset (1975), the effect of strong control systems within each discipline has been divisive within the broader academic community. In reality, few if any disciplines operate in isolation. It is common practice for one discipline to adopt (and adapt) methodologies and theories from other academic domains, a process which may be akin to the double-loop learning by which organisations evolve as they seek to implement understanding gained from earlier experiences and to overcome behaviour which is a self-fulfilling prophecy (Argyris, 1982).

Disciplines have been distinguished by styles of presentation, preferred approaches to investigation, and the degree to which they draw from other fields and respond to lay inquiries and concerns. Put simply, scholars in different disciplines "speak different languages" and in fact have been described as seeing things differently when they look at the same phenomena. Disciplinary boundaries have a second connotation; tourism is often bundled with related subjects such as travel, or hospitality within scholarly departments. Lynch et al (2011, p. 4) in the Editorial introducing the first Volume of *Hospitality & Society*, commented that: "*a brief review of the literature reveals that scholars and practitioners are approaching hospitality from very different perspectives and with very different objectives. Hospitality is framed quite differently in the social sciences than it is in the managerial sciences.*"

and that

"The metaphor of hospitality has the power to convey not only meaning, but also to transport intellectual projects across disciplinary boundaries. Despite the advances in the study of hospitality and the application of hospitality concepts, at present the study of hospitality is transacted largely within distinct and separate academic subjects and disciplines..." (Lynch et al., 2011, p. 13).

There are two main ways of conceptualising a field of study, a reductionist or a systemic and holistic approach. The disciplinary approach to academic research and understanding is typically reductionist (Ware & Mabe, 2009). The standard approach is to define and limit a subject under investigation, to isolate it, select research methodologies, generate data through observation for analysis using specific methodologies and then draw conclusions to be written up in standardised journal or report formats. This has the effect of isolating a part of the broader topic and concentrates research effort on that part. An alternative paradigm is to seek a holistic or systemic grasp of the interlinked nature of tourism (Faulkner & Russell, 1997; Leiper, 1989, 1990).

We argue that it may now be more beneficial to think about tourism as a series of systems each with many points of similarity but with important differences, and to focus on the key differences as a means of explaining variations in our findings from disciplinary based analysis. This may be particularly applicable at the level of destination analysis. By repeated analysis of many destinations from a variety of appropriate disciplines we may expect to develop causal inferences or an analysis of variances (Morris, 2005). This approach has the advantage that it reduces the explanatory burden for researchers. They do not need to explain what the research means for every destination but instead can contrast and compare two particular destinations. This in turn allows a ‘bottom up’ development of theory and practice that provides actionable results. *In any study we advocate the application of the most insightful theoretical framework leading to a mosaic of related studies. This approach avoids the need to draw sweeping boundaries around our topic.* The most insightful framework is one which encompasses several relevant methodologies, which in combination result in a mosaic understanding of the complex interactions found in tourism, and has the additional benefit of reducing the significance of boundaries around a predefined research topic.

The tourism mosaic

Should we therefore conclude that the study of tourism has no boundaries but instead might be considered as a mosaic of different subfields? The authors consider this may explain the extraordinary but fragmented growth of tourism research (Tribe, 2010). Each tile in the mosaic or tourism related topic has its own research agenda, set of journals and conferences and curriculum, and may indeed exist as an independent school within a university offering tourism studies. This proliferation is both a sign of the vigour of research interest and a token of weaknesses in defining the topic, its key research questions and appropriate research methods.

In this sense the fragmentation of tourism research may contribute to scepticism of its maturity by other academics.

We contend that attempts to bound tourism in a disciplinary sense is mistaken because the disciplinary approach obscures the rich understanding to be gained from the application of a wide range of disciplines. In addition if we continue to pursue a global or general theorisation of tourism at the expense of more applicable understanding of some of the components of tourism we risk alienating the industrial and governmental partners who form the basis for our work. Urry (1981) has noted that the many fragments of the modern world connect with each other, but only if we choose to look for the connections. There is great advantage in seeing tourism as evolving in context, for that is at once to realise that there are no finite or universally applicable 'solutions' to tourism, and also to understand that each form of tourism, each tourist location and each tourist's experiences differ. It is the mosaic of activity, the iterations of activity and effect, particularly at local (destination) scales, and the world-scale of the industry that are worthy of study. To understand tourism requires a new paradigm, which we call the Tourism Mosaic. People who have watched a long buried Roman mosaic floor being excavated, at first with shovels then with trowels, then with fine brushes can readily share the archaeologists' pleasure and excitement of discovery. But the final and real revelation of what had been created perhaps two millennia previously by craftsmen from thousands of tiny cubes of brightly coloured stones is achieved only by close work with a bucket of water and a sponge. Suddenly it becomes clear that, although each stone is an important, indeed an integral part, they make far more sense when seen together as components of the mosaic.

One of the points of agreement amongst tourism researchers is that each tourist destination is composed of a mix of accommodation, catering, entertainment, activities and transportation businesses of varying scales and sophistication, and importantly, for each destination tourist activity causes varying impacts. As these exist in differing combinations in each destination, and also vary across time in each, every destination, and each study is in important but obscure ways unique. The current understanding of tourism as a system does not take us much further than the ability to help students conceptualise the complexity of tourism.

In contrast to the systems approach which emphasises the connectedness of everything (epitomised by the 'butterfly effect' Lorenz's (1972) famed combination of meteorological observations with mathematical analysis), the a mosaic analogy can help researchers identify particularly critical areas and seek to understand the relationship between those elements. The

researcher must accept that this will be a partial picture (perhaps equating to the stage of archaeology before an excavated mosaic is washed), but it allows for subsequent research to operationalize the nature and significance of linkages between two important sets of factors: 1. the component elements of a tourist destination, and 2. the similarities amongst destinations.

These similarities are found in the large numbers of small businesses, some dominant businesses, government interventions, globally similar markets segments, and a commonly adopted public-private sector management approach. We doubt that the current theorisation and methodologies can meet some of the criteria noted earlier for a mature, reductionist discipline. The search for a general theory of tourist destination management is likely to be elusive and nor is it likely that a predictive theory could ever be achieved. The mosaic analogy moves beyond description and analysis of destination components by focussing attention on an integrated understanding of the whole mosaic-picture.

What the mosaic approach may add to current research is an increased ability to focus in on the broad and detailed picture of a destination, identifying (or at least speculating on) the key linkages requiring further research in order to understand that picture as a coherent whole. By repeatedly identifying research weaknesses across many tourist destinations (or through time), we can expect more precise research protocols, and a greatly enhanced ability to recognise differences, similarities and dynamics.

Conclusion and limitations

This paper is based on a consideration only of Anglophone sources, and its perspective is mainly British and Australian. Much more work remains to be done, particularly on tourism research published in other languages and in non-tourism journals, to explain the current characteristics of tourism research, the funding it receives and the departmental location of tourism research within different universities. The charting of new journals and conferences discussed above is also incomplete, not least because new topics and titles frequently appear.

An underlying question which has not been sufficiently explained to our non-tourism colleagues is, what distinguishes tourism from other human activities? The basic definition espoused by early academics is concerned with movement away from home on a temporary basis, and the activities and businesses which enable it. But this implies that destinations will experience visitors in numbers, with consequent effects on residents, disruption to their normal

economic activity, their culture, and the local ecology. This in turn results in the need for administrative responses, and ultimately the pre-planning of tourist destinations to minimise adverse consequences, maximise benefits and compete effectively with the alternative destinations and non-tourism activities which tourists might choose. Therefore, behavioural aspects to the understanding of tourism are critical. The hedonistic approach recognises this, as human activity away from the psychological constraints of home is likely to be more focussed on self-expression, possibly resulting in libidinous behaviour in the pleasure peripheries epitomised by ‘rites of passage’ destinations such as the Gold Coast (Raybould & Scott, 2003) or the Mediterranean resorts of Palmanova and Magaluf (Andrews, 2011).

From this perspective, tourist destinations now become laboratories for social psychologists and ethnologists. From at least the period after the second world war when early international mass tourism developed, destination governments have sought to gain economic benefits from the influx of visitors, through taxation of increased revenue streams, cooperative planning agreements for new resorts whereby developers are required to invest private resources in infrastructure, and by expanded work opportunities in the area. More recently, supranational organisations such as the Asia Development Bank have explicitly recognised the almost unique power of tourism to penetrate remote and traditional communities.

The main benefits of tourism (from their perspective) may be the introduction of a cash economy to people who were previously subsistence farmers and fishers (and over whom therefore central government had limited influence), and the introduction of new skills including timed and paid work, and exposure to or interaction with people from very different cultural backgrounds. According to Asian Development Bank, these are preconditions for the effective participation of people from remote SE Asian communities in emergent industrialised countries’ economies.

These triple perspectives of the personal significance of tourism (as source of income or as self-expression and as cultural change-agent) and the uniqueness of its destination impacts are the foundation of claims for the importance of studying tourism, but the approaches adopted by most contemporary researchers do not do justice to it because they do not fully recognise its changing and complex nature nor the interactions with other economic, social, cultural and political organisations. This paper has focussed attention on the institutional grounding of academic research into tourism. We have noted the rapid growth of the subject area, the growing range of topics but the continuing narrow set of methodologies and theories which

characterise the subject area, and the lack of an agreed definition of it, contributing to the scepticism with which some of our colleagues view tourism research. Taken together, these concerns underlie questions about whether tourism qualifies as a discipline, and if so, what its stage of maturity might be.

In considering the weaknesses, we claim that the study of the tourism industry, its organisation, growth and effects, and the study of tourists' expectations, decisions, actions and experiences depends upon two key factors, an understanding of its complexity, and the ways in which tourists and tourism interact with (but differ from) everyday life. Barnes (2001, p. 540) noted that science is embedded within complex sets of social relations that variously shape its institutional form, rationale, practice, and knowledge. Tourism studies may be important as the first topic in social sciences for non-deterministic, chaotic yet integrative research at both local and international scales. One of the main distinguishing features of tourism research is the centrality of differences. Tourism may therefore also come to be seen as an appropriate laboratory for social research and its study is not merely the cataloguing of what goes on in the pleasure peripheries of society. A consequence could be that tourism researchers themselves may no longer be relegated to the peripheries of academic communities. Tourism researchers are sometimes criticised for studying trivial and simple problems, and for low levels of theorising in their work. But Huxley (2013), commenting on his neurological research at Cambridge University says:

“My own tendency has been to stick to simple problems, such as conduction in a single nerve fibre and contraction in a single muscle fibre. Even simple problems are not necessarily easy, and one of my hobbies has been looking into the totally wrong theories previously held by highly intelligent people in these and other fields”.

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