

Epistemology of Tourism

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Abstract

The scientificization of tourism have concerned to many scholars in the last decades. The growing number of books, journals, doctoral thesis and papers in general make for some to coincide tourism has been reached as state of maturity in the process of knowledge production. However, in this short paper we place this belief under the lens of scrutiny simply because tourism lacks of a particular method up to date. From our end, we consider that tourism should focus on hospitality as its primary object of study and explain the reasons why it is trivialized by other existent social sciences.

Keywords: Science, epistemology, tourism, methodology, behaviour

Introduction

Many scholars have devoted considerable efforts and attention to respond to what extent tourism should be considered a Science (Jafari and Aeser, 1988; Jafari and Pizam, 1996; Jafari, 2005; Coles, Duval and Hall, 2005; Korstanje and Busby, 2010, Schluter, 2008; Xiao and Smith, 2008; Belhassen and Caton, 2009; Pernecky and Jamal, 2010; Tribe, 2010). In doing so, they found serious challenges and problems because of two reasons. The first and foremost, tourism and hospitality are industries based on leisure practices whose findings are trivialized by other more traditional disciplines as sociology and anthropology. Secondly, even though there are many Conferences and congress, doctoral thesis, books and journals dedicated fully to tourism study, the fact is that tourism lacks for a methodology and an epistemology that give identity before the other disciplines.

Discussion

At some extent, scientification of tourism has a term coined by Jafari Jafari (2005) to denote the significant advances in research and the outcomes applied on tourism but unfortunately this is not enough. The historian of arts Steven Conn has convincingly showed how the firsts step of a discipline (as anthropology and archaeology) wakes up conflicts and tension with the existent consolidated bodies of knowledge. The advance of new disciplines never is easy (Conn, 1998). Nowadays, tourism is being studied from the paradigms of various disciplines as geography, sociology, anthropology, psychology and so forth. The growth of works and researches have been generated what J. Tribe called the “indiscipline of tourism” (Tribe, 2010); however, this new type of fragmentation that characterizes the current Science is not new and seems to be associated to the evolution of modernity. The problem Tribe envisaged affects all disciplines as well. In this conjuncture, the present conceptual

paper is aimed at providing a new paradigm to understand not only tourism but also the states of sciences in general.

Most of the problems at time of defining tourism is the nature of this term and applied in different ways depending on the goals of research. What is important here to note is that tourism is a social fact that is connected with other subsystems as economy, politics, and economy (Monterrubio Cordero, 2011). One of the pioneers research respecting to the adaptancy to scientific knowledge to sciences of tourism was Jafar Jafari. Let remind readers that the main goal in Jafari's development was to give prospective view on scientification of tourism by identifying the previous conditions for its maturity. The sustainability was for this author one of the most important aspects of the activity to the extent to admit overtly *“the purpose of this chapter is to provide retrospective and prospective view on tourism's scientific journey. More specifically, the aim is to identify some of the past conditions that have helped tourism to assume its present scholarly dimension and depth; to sketch the formation of this landscape of knowledge to selectively extract from this context emerging central socio-economic issues; to suggest research crossroads for advancing in new frontiers; to sample the richness of the state of knowledge ... that in turn can guide present and future planning and operation of this diverse mega-industry. Conceptually informed and practically enriched sustainable strategies, now rooted in this body of knowledge, can and will benefit those directly and indirectly involved in tourism..”* (Jafari, p. 28). This introduction let us know the strength of ecological paradigm in the first words of Jafar Jafari in his epistemological essay.

From a cyclical perspective, Jafari is convinced that tourism evolved in four stages. The advocacy platform, denominated the good as well, refers to all economic benefits and advantage brought by tourism and hospitality industries in communities. Directly or indirectly, many companies and association can enrich from tourism generating a fairer wealth distribution. Secondly, after 1960s a new critique sounded in scholarship respecting to the afore-mentioned benefits. For this platform, tourism should be placed under the lens of scrutiny because has serious unexpected problems. This alerting stance contends that tourism can contribute to some pathological effects on community such as contamination and pollution, poverty, seasonality and unemployment, economic asymmetries, full time jobs, rise of foreign exchange, inflation and so forth. The discussion between pro and contras of tourism led to a third position, which surfaced during 80s, the adaptancy platform. Alternating the best and worse of the industry, scholars moved by this wave advocated for “an alternative way of development” characterized by the responsibility of investors and other stakeholders. Jafari writes that *“the prescribed strategies have variously been known as agro-tourism, appropriate tourism, community based tourism, controlled tourism, cottage tourism, cultural or ethnic tourism, ecotourism, farm tourism, green tourism ... the list is still growing with no tourism even named as an alternative by itself. In general, the adaptancy platform argues that the forms are community centred, employ local resources, are relatively easier to manage, are not destructive benefit host and guest groups alike, and even improve communication between them (p. 31).*

As the previous argument given, Jafari explains the three previous stages paved the ways for the advent of a much wider scientific perspective in tourism-research. Whether the older platforms were certainly concerned for the care of host and local resources this new platform would be independent from any moral view (objectivity). The adaptancy, advocacy and cautionary only represented a biased point of view of

what and how tourism evolved. The penchant to see in tourism a whole system whose parts are interconnected each other, gave as a result the advance of a new improved platform: the scientific one. However, this raises a more than intriguing question, how to expand this paradigm worldwide?. The Jafari's answer is not easier but focuses on education and training for future generations aimed to achieving a total control and planning of tourism (rationale). The Universities throughout US and beyond should form a new human resourced enrooted in the field with the necessary technical and scientific skills to expand their current understanding of how tourism works. These integrated skills are more than needed in the tourism related professionals (for further details see tourism as a scholarly field).

About the future, the following words will synthesize how the green-paradigm and education converged in Jafari's mind: *"the above discussion on the four platforms, the transformative forces or catalyst, the text, and context of these in structuring and shaping training and education efforts and outlooks, provide informative retrospective and ongoing insights on tourism – both as a realm of concepts and as a field of operations. This may now be coupled with a prospective view beyond the present scholarly footholds and operational matters, toward scientific and developmental horizons ahead"* (p. 38). The development of our American anthropologist gained acceptance from other scholars and rapidly was cited for all those who envisaged a science of tourism. Accepted by many and criticised by others (few scholars), Jafari became in one of more prestigious experts in tourism fields worldwide and of course contributed to create a new framework for expand the understanding of tourism to date. Nonetheless, his development has some limitations which should be previously revisited.

First and foremost, the evolutionary nature expressed in the four stage of tourism can be seen as a unilateral process where developed and underdeveloped actors co-exist. This means that rich-based societies manage the sufficient resources towards a science of tourism while pour-based societies should be limited to be stagnant in a cautionary platform. The economic problems or dependency of underdeveloped countries coupled with the political instability and corruption created serious obstacles to advance to superior stages of tourism evolution. Therefore, this position leads readers to preclude that the degree of materiality of each society plays a pivotal role in the maturation of tourism. This ethnocentric point of view suggests that the development and instrumentality are two key factors for achieving the improvement in community. Secondly and throughout his works, Jafari emphasizes on an all-encompassed view of this activity; a point well described by his interests in the potentialities of Science. Underpinned in the proposition that Science is the most superior expression of our civilization, Jafari argues that cautionary and adaptancy platform should set the pace to new further elaborated forms of research. The Jafari's ingenuity, enrooted in the Enlightenment, takes for granted that Science can be independent from politics and Empires. One of aspects that characterize the science from other disciplines like arts, is the lack of a moral view; the principle of objectivity sometimes prevents from the critical stance of subjects. This troublesome aspect makes of Science a fertile source for political manipulation. For Science, there is nothing good or bad, things are facts which can be studied and described objectively. Of course, from Jafari's onwards the community-based research has certainly changed to new more apolitical and unethical form of consumptions. Last but not least, the lack of a strong ethical posture respecting to poverty and development was functional to 90s decade where "neo-liberalists"

financial organisms as IMF and World-Bank issued countless credits to developing countries in programs linked to adopting plans of tourism for improving the backward situation of peripheral countries. Unfortunately, not only these programs failed throughout the globe, but also pushed to many underdeveloped countries to pay exorbitant interests for their loans. Secondly, Jafari's precludes that the number of researches are an enough requisite for the consolidation of a discipline. More interested in replicating their findings than presenting an all-encompassed methodology for understanding the phenomenon, from Jafari's onwards, scholars and academies will prioritize the number than the content. As a result of this, in last years many studies have certainly focused on the impacts of tourism in communities, but without a shared-methodology. This seems to be exactly the state of fragmentation Tribe's noted. For instance, psychoanalysis becomes in a science in only 15 years of existence because of two primary reasons: first and most important, the application of the same or similar methodologies to create a unified object of research; furthermore, its independency of other disciplines which have been in tension as psychiatry. As epistemologist, Jafari's involuntarily ignored each academic discipline consolidated a position when established successfully its object of study. However, this object was calibrated in an extent that gave identity respecting to other neighboring sciences. It is important not to loose the sight that psychology is based on the study of "attitudes", sociology focused on "rules and anomie", anthropology is based on "the culture" and of course, geography strengthens the monopoly of the study of soil every day. This assumption begs a more than interesting question ¿what does tourism investigate?, hospitality?, travels?, festivals and event-management, or perhaps patrimony or heritage?. The broader scope of tourism does not allow researchers founding the stepping stone to negotiate paradigms with other discipline. This is the problem and not other.

Third, since tourism was a financial activity based on profits on its inception, management-related discipline were historically linked to business and the development of tourist destinations. The managerial perspective emphasized on explanation of second order in lieu of giving priority to explanation of first orders. This point distanced tourism science more and more from the other classical ones. Whenever policy makers should evaluate about the potentialities of certain project, they conduct empirical fieldwork as scientists do, but they are more interested in revealing the attitude of interviews as well as their main demographics assets as age, gender, income, and so forth. The connection given among the variables in these types of studies allows researchers getting information of second order. For example, the 70% of consulted females opted for Ibiza as destination in their holidays. The problem was this epistemology, with the passing of decades, intended to claim for scientific status. Of course, the classical disciplines promptly refused the entrance of tourism to the pantheon of sciences but cynically they recognized tourism as something else than a modern industry. One of the most interesting points in this debate is that sociology, anthropology and geography found many problems at time of consolidating their presence in a world which was monopolized by medicine, physiology and geology respectively. To cut the long story short, in order for tourism to be considered as a science scholars should coordinate efforts to create a unified methodology based on conceptual assumptions and empirical observations. These bodies of knowledge should be coined beyond the control of other disciplines. We strongly believe that tourism should be recognized as the "science of hospitality" because of the following reasons.

- a) Tourism is circumscribed but not determined by travels, the hospitality activates tourism in many senses.
- b) Tourism is a form of leisure, as many others as watching TV or playing Football, based on the needs of escarpment.
- c) The social system can be divided in five subsystems: mythical-religious which explains those incongruence of world, economy (to regulate the shortage), politics (to accumulate power), geographical (to maintain the indoctrination of citizens subject to a certain soil), and onyric. The latter has the function to mitigate and sublimate the cleavages generated by the ongoing interaction of systems.
- d) Leisure can be considered as a part of onyric subsystem.
- e) Leisure and tourism are mirrors that reflect the organization of a society. Therefore, there are many forms of tourisms. For example, aborigines maintained not only the legacy of their heritage but their form of travelling to practice tourism beyond their residency.

Conclusion

Whether one catches a glimpse of history, it is clear how Empires can build their hegemony over a periphery by a process of accumulation and consequent exchange between capital and workforce. They often situate strategically in privileged areas to extract the necessary resources for revitalizing their industries. At a second facet, empires return to their colonies elaborated products and styles of life based on pecuniary consumption and leisure. This creates a cycle of exchanges that feed back the colonialism. To put this in bluntly, the commodities set the pace to the sign. The postmodern tourism we are living in our days is related to a specific form of transformation based on mobility, consumption, aesthetic, and individualism enrooted in the expansion of Anglo-world. The institution that facilitates the connection of all topics today are studied in tourism science is hospitality. Unfortunately, the late-modernity is exerting considerable pressure to weaken the social bondage among subjects and Science is not an exemption. Gradually, the diversification of disciplines not only makes from the sensible world an unabated net of disconnected assumptions, which leads people to moral relativity, but also places serious problems for Science to go forward a coherent framework of knowledge. Precisely, the modernity's strength is the incapacity for scholars to understand her roots (Harvey, 1998).

Nevertheless, this seems to be a much deeper matter that should be still investigated in other approaches. Last but not least, the experimental model draws the boundaries between pseudo-sciences and sciences. Tourism related research should for the next years not only to break the hegemony of other sciences in its paradigms, but also establish a comparative model to compare and understand the diverse types of tourism each society develops. In lieu of thinking tourism as only one, scholars and academy ought to a periodic table (the term is borrowed from C. Levi Strauss) to describe from many perspective how tourism evolved in other cultures or times. Besides, the disaggregated studies of tourism nowadays tackle only partial aspects of tourism as heritage, development, colonialism, sustainability and so forth. We are rushed to return to "systemic paradigm" simply because tourism is a part of a much broader complex system connected to other institutions as politics, economies etc.

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