



The Ever Changing Tourism

Khairil Wahidin Awang*, Yuhanis Abd Aziz and Zaiton Samdin
Department of Hospitality and Recreation
Faculty of Economics and Management
Universiti Putra Malaysia
E-mail: khairil@econ.upm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This conceptually-based paper seeks to articulate the contemporary forms of tourism development, a phenomenon that is denoted by a myriad of terminologies. Although the examples given is not exhaustive, due to the broad scope the topic commands, the formulation of the paper is to address and to disseminate some of the concepts behind these terms, and as such dispel some of the myths associated with some of them.

Keywords: Tourism, Development, Alternative, Small, Empowerment

Introduction

Mankind has seen tourism evolving into many forms since many centuries ago. While, tourism has been, and still being used as a modernising agent, it has now been looked upon with such sophistication. Contemporary forms of tourism; Ecotourism, Sustainable tourism or Green tourism, among others, are the manifestation of this sophistication. However, the practice of each of these forms of tourism tends to sway and conform to perceived beliefs of the practioners, who do not realising that their actions are in contradictory to existing concepts that underpinned their formulation. This paper is to disseminate the ideals behind these concepts, briefly illustrating the dos and don'ts, while exposing the roots behind prevailing terminologies.

Alternative Tourism

The concept started to surface in the literature relatively some two decades ago. It has been argued that there is no standard uniform agreed meaning among scholars pertaining to this form of tourism. Butler (1990) suggest that alternative tourism has been associated already with wide ranges of different notions and concepts, and therefore it is impossible to define it explicitly. Nonetheless, the approach has remained focussed on the concept of sustainability, a concept that can be traced back to the conservation movement in the west during the late 19th century (Hall, 1998). However, in the context of tourism specific, concepts of alternative tourism encompass a range of tourism strategies that include 'soft', 'responsible', 'green', 'appropriate', 'controlled', 'people friendly', 'small scale' and 'cottage' characteristics (Conference Report, 1990). The 'green movement', which is associated with the wider concept of the 'green consumer', for example, inspires the promotion of environmental issues in tourism (Shaw and Williams, 1994). Elkington and Hales (1992), who produced 'The Green Consumer Guide', further disseminated the notion of green tourism among tourists. Krippendorf (1986) argues for the notion of 'a soft and human tourism', which would not cause intolerable social and ecological damage. Environmentally conscious tourists, many of whom are part of the 'inner-directed' lifestyle group whose leisure pursuits are motivated by new experiences, creativity, human relations and personal growth (Gordon, 1991), lead to the demand for environmentally sound holiday. Gordon adds that it is the tourists' influence that forces politicians and tourism businesses alike to take the environment as a genuine concern. Such conditions culminated in ecotourism, a new form of tourism development.

* Corresponding author

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“Travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas...”

(Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987, cited by Boo, 1990, p. xiv).

While Shaw and Williams (1994) noted a new trend in which tourism businesses like tour companies have started to reassess their image by offering ‘ecological holidays’ to potential clients, Mowforth and Munt (2003, p. 80) suggest that “...the term ‘sustainability’ can be and has been hijacked by many to give moral rectitude and ‘green’ credentials to tourist activities”. In this case one has to treat the phenomenon cautiously. Ioannides (2001) argues that British-based International Federation of Tour Operators (IFTO) embrace of sustainable tourism is more to do with profit, particularly in an era where tourists are becoming discerning and sophisticated. However, Shaw and Williams (1994, p. 247) argue that “while many tourists will only pay lip-service to ‘green holidays’, as equally will sections of the tourism systems; but this may not ultimately detract from the importance of green tourism”. To this Poon (1994) surmises that in the era of ‘new tourism’, package tours are fast becoming a thing of the past and tourism has become segmentalised.

Small Businesses

Small-scale tourism businesses are becoming more important due to the demand of a new hybrid of tourists. The advent of this lifestyle entrepreneur has been a positive stimulus in the growth of small tourism related businesses or tourism entrepreneurship. Unlike the conventional entrepreneurship of production and consumption, the lifestyle entrepreneur has an underpinning factor in that “business represents an opportunity to indulge in in-depth place experience, which integrates both lifestyle and identity” (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2002, p. 378). In this sense, lifestyle rather than economic gain is the main motive behind business operations such as the Black Water Rafting, an enterprise that deals with river ‘sledding’ activity in New Zealand. Hence ‘lifestyle’ is one of the diverse reasons on why people indulge in tourism related businesses other than financial rewards. These entrepreneurs had social and cultural obligations, which more than often delimit the growth of their businesses. They are content with their ways of life.

However, Shaw and Williams (2004) offer caution against such notion. According to the authors, how these businesses are run varies according to the place and type of tourism activities. Based on a study of the surf tourism industry in Cornwall, they argue that although surf entrepreneurs are influenced by desires for freedom and being their own boss, and have interest in the environment, there is clear evidence that they also had plans for business development and expansion, and as such were profit oriented.

Meanwhile, sustainable tourism has taken the phrase alternative tourism, a generic term, to distinguish it from the conventional mass tourism (Weaver, 1991). Table 1 illustrates Weaver’s notion of alternative forms of tourism, which among others have criteria that denote small-scale accommodation development, lower market volume and low import sector. Weaver argues that tourism in Dominica started as a ‘circumstantial’ alternative tourism destination. In this context, circumstantial conditions appear to conform to characteristics such as low visitation and impacts levels. However, once the destination becomes popular, conventional mass tourism creeps in. Dominica opted for a mass form of tourism due to the presumption of financial benefits that it brings in. The state enacted statutory provisions such as the Hotel Aids Ordinance 1958, which offered a tax break for hotels containing more than 10 bedrooms, and exemption of duty import on goods for the construction of these hotels. These acts, however, failed to generate the necessary impetus for the intended form of tourism. Widespread local opposition and political instability caused by several coups and volatile anti-white protests, and the fact that Dominica lacks white-sand beaches amidst a rugged interior landscape, contributed towards this failure. This resulted in the state’s subsequent policy of ‘deliberate’ adoption of alternative form of tourism for the entire country. As such, it adopts a philosophical approach towards alternative tourism, using the Kastarlak Report (a United Nations’ sponsored report on Dominica) as a template to move forwards. This suggests among other things, specialised markets, such as environmentalists, as suitable for the country’s tourism industry.

Table 1 Characteristic Tendencies: Conventional mass tourism and alternative tourism

Variable	Conventional Mass Tourism	Alternative Tourism
Accommodations		
Spatial pattern	Coastal, High density	Dispersed, Low density
Scale	Larger-scale, Integrated	Small-scale, Homestyle
Ownership	Foreign, Multi-national	Local, Family, Small business
Market		
Volume	Higher	Lower
Origin	One dominant market	No dominant market
Segment	Psychocentric-Midcentric	Allocentric-Midcentric
Activities	Water/beach/night life	Nature/Culture
Seasonality	Winter high season	No dominant season
Economy		
Status	Dominant sector	Supplementary sector
Impact	High import sector	Low import sector
	Repatriated profits	Retained profit

Source: Weaver (1991)

Post-modernism

Alternative tourism as represented by many small companies emerges in the era of post-modernism to take advantage of the changing consumer trend, which demands more on special interest tours. From a wider perspective, there is a shift from Fordism, to a more flexible and small but specialised scale of modes of production and consumption (Harvey, 1990; Urry, 1990; Mowforth and Munt, 1998). However, some scholars challenge this notion. Ritzer (1998), for one, contends that even in specialised niche market like *Starbucks*, there tends to be a replication of mass production and consumption. Replication of a chain of *Starbucks* in other towns and countries mirrors the mass production of this branded product.

While many researchers have favoured alternative tourism development in place of mass form of tourism, work written by scholars on alternative development has wide range of issues (Brohman, 1995). Some researchers have explored the tourism entrepreneurship of indigenous population. Din (1997), for example, further argues that the lack of empowerment that has caused locals to be marginalized in Langkawi, Malaysia.¹ Conversely the better equipped locals and outsiders are in the better position to reap the benefit. This gives rise to a question of empowerment in alternative tourism development.

Empowerment

In term of empowerment and the participation of the local community in sustainable tourism planning, there are some literatures produced by researchers such as Murphy (1985), Inskeep (1991), Gunn (1994) and Slinger (2000). Slinger, for example, shows that the indigenous Caribs² have managed to revive their traditional crafts and culture which earlier on been subjected to a process of cultural erosion, encouraged by the government to participate in ecotourism activities. Furthermore, the Caribs have recognised that protecting the environment is important, particularly when they need raw materials from the forest to produce their handicrafts.

By using the empowerment issue in tourism development researchers like Bagguley (1990) and Apostolopoulos *et al.* (2001) have also further diverged into the new field of gender and tourism. Hitherto the history of tourism, which can be attributed by its birth from industrialisation and its transformation by post-industrialisation, has been mostly described from a 'masculine perspective' (Kinnard and Hall, 1994). This view has been at the expense of other dimensions such as feminism. This is imperative given that ¹ Langkawi is an island resort in Malaysia. Its transformation from a forgotten Malay village to a holiday paradise has caused dramatic effects to the island's socio-culture and environment. ² Indigenous of Dominica.

tourism also takes into account the changing role of gender,³ such as the 'softening' of tourism attractions, activities, experiences and tastes (Kotari, 1997). The stereotyping of this sexual imagery is further being enhanced by marketing brochures selling tourist destinations and products that use women as the pulling factor. While the male is associated with power and ownership the women are portrayed as passive and being owned (Edensor and Kothari, 1994). At the same time, this has produced a notion that tourism leads to prostitution (Mackie, 1988; Truong, 1990; Hall, 1994). A by-product of mass tourism, this particular form of activities is associated with male tourists who aim to travel to exotic places to primarily or as a secondary agenda indulge in sexual encounters with prostitutes. Many scholars relate this phenomenon to developing countries, however, Hall (1994) argues that these activities also persist in developed countries even though it is more exploitative in the former. Conversely, sex-tourism has also evolved into the exploitation of male hosts by female tourists and also the emergence of the so-called gay tourist circuit. Gender relations in the tourism industry also transgress into the labour field. Bagguley (1990), for example, explores the relation of gender in tourism employment where a majority of part-time workers in the hotel industry are women. Nonetheless, Mowforth and Munt (2003) argue that although this new form of tourism has extensively influenced tourism activities in both developed and developing countries, it is arguably a western phenomenon. These authors argue that poor developing countries are still experiencing the effect of conventional mass tourists due to a major increase of such tourist groups from increasingly affluent middle class societies such as in Southeast Asia. However this trend is part of the evolutionary process that is happening in the region.

Conclusion

This paper illustrates the arguments behind the coining of new terminologies, with regard to the advocacy of particular types of tourism phenomenon. It also suggests that certain parts of the world is progressing towards a tourism phenomenon, which is underpinned by the concept of 'being small', while the remaining corners of the earth, is embarking on the practice of mass consumption. Within the perspective of tourism planning though, a newer form of tourism development provides not only a novel feature through its bottom-up process of advocating development but also incorporates a holistic notion of development process through its inclusion of indigenous or local participation in its framework.

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3 Further gender issues in the context of tourism can be inferred from Swain (1993 and 1995)