

Genealogy of Tourism Development: A Critical Marketing Approach

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Abstract

Marketing has predominantly seen tourism as a panacea, benefitting host communities. As such, the discipline largely overlooks the negative impacts of tourism development in the context of power imbalances, which bring about dependency and exploitation. This paper explores the genealogy of tourism development, situating the analysis within the socio-economic and political structures that influenced development discourses in general, and tourism discourses in particular. In doing so, we claim that the development of social, human rights and environmental movements played a significant role in the birth of sustainable tourism and other related forms. These popular demands/grievances, however, were managed and repackaged in the shape of ethical, morally acceptable products without the structures of inequalities changing. Today, even this discourse has been pushed back as the salvation of economic growth dominates the development discourse. We argue for the return of the political, an analysis that incorporates power and hegemony in an attempt to develop a counter-hegemonic discourse, vital for a critical and progressive transformation.

Keywords: Genealogy of tourism, Tourism discourses, Hegemony

Introduction

“Tourism, spurred by jumbo jets, charter tours, and the affluence of the industrial nations, has become a major economic activity. To many developing countries with few resources other than sunny climates, sandy beaches and exotic cultures, it has seemed to offer an opportunity to secure foreign exchange and stimulate economic growth. Critics question, however, whether tourism yields economic returns commensurate with its costs and express concern about its possibly adverse social and cultural effects.”

(de Kadt 1979, back cover)

Marketing has predominantly seen tourism as a panacea, benefitting host communities. As such, the discipline largely overlooks the negative impacts of tourism development in the context of power imbalances, which bring about dependency and exploitation (Belk and Costa 1995). This attitude has been the subject of critique since the early years of tourism studies. Indeed, seminal work produced by sceptical scholars (e.g. Turner and Ash 1975; de Kadt 1979; Smith 1978) points out the problematic nature of this kind of development/growth. Further, such work highlights that negative social and environmental impacts of inadequately planned tourism development (e.g. cultural imperialism, the commoditisation of culture, and environmental degradation) counterbalances the positive economic benefits.

Taking a critical approach, we attempt here to further the debate on tourism development. We identify the dominant ideologies that influenced tourism development. Moreover, we offer a critical explanation that exposes radical contingencies, and contradictions, within the theory and practice of tourism. We argue that the extant literature thus far has analysed tourism development and policy through normative approaches. In contrast, we use a Post-structuralist Discourse Theory (PDT) approach to discover continuities and discontinuities in tourism development discourses and to offer an alternative reading that goes “beyond the simple critique and deconstruction of texts, practices and institutions to offer an alternative conception of ethics for the critical evaluation of political and moral norms and structures” (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 5). In doing so, we adopt a genealogical approach, linking PDT and critical marketing, in order to analyse the genealogy of tourism development, and argue for the need of the return of the political (Mouffe 2005). Focusing specifically on the context of tourism, we critically reflect on hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles, offering an alternative reading. Thus, we contribute to critical approaches to marketing and development in a progressive manner, against the trend in academia to shift discourses to suit ‘vested interests with a great deal of power’ (Tadajewski et al, 2014: 1760).

Tourism and Development: Two Schools of Thought

Two distinct schools of thought address tourism development impacts. On one hand “policy and planning studies have addressed this problem and advocated community solutions to tourism opportunities and problems” (Cheong and Miller 2000: 373). This paradigm amounts to what Lea (1988) termed the *functional approach*. Being somehow optimistic, the advocates of this approach (e.g. Elliott 1983; Murphy 1985; Farrell 1986; Reed 1997; and Whittaker 1997) pay little attention to historical change, offering largely managerial solutions. On the other hand, the *political economy approach* (Lea 1988) focuses on changing structural issues concerning the global economy (Cheong and Miller 2000). Here, scholars (e.g. Hall 1994; de Kadt 1979; Britton 1982; Lea 1988) looked at development within the context of international, hierarchical structures. Consequently, “a more critical approach in development studies is revealed in research that examines issues of unequal development, and the hierarchical relationships that embody the hegemonic power of developed nations and transnational corporations” (Cheong and Miller 2000: 373).

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Tourism as Growth

“The contrasts are pitiful. It is a charmless sight to see fat American widows heaved up onto a camel’s back in idyllic Tunisian oases or African vendors clustering like flies around topless Swedes on Gambian beaches. Gradually the village economy is distorted; the primary aim is no longer to see to its own needs, but rather to cater for the consumerist whims of foreigners. Locals leave their fields and fishing boats and become touts, flunkeys or donkey-guides. Thieves and whores arrive.”

(Harrison 1981: 58)

In order to offer a coherent genealogy it is necessary to examine the paradigms within which tourism development operated. Both schools of thought discuss international tourism development with a focus on developing countries and are largely influenced by North American and European development and economic theories. The *functional approach*, which argues for the economic benefits of tourism development, can roughly be associated with the years following WWII and it remained the dominant approach until the mid-seventies.

The period following WWII focused on the rebuilding and modernisation of Western economies and the rise of the middle classes as a result of substantial expenditures. According to Dowd those expenditures were financed through “proportionately high and always more unpopular taxation” (2000: 154). The discourse framed around economic growth and affluence in the West informed tourism development policies. Both the tourism industry and tourism academics spread the good news about tourism development’s positive economic impacts, the significance of the sector, and the importance of tourism as a *job creator* and *foreign exchange generator*. The economic growth that followed WWII was characterised as the impetus for the growth of the mass tourism phenomenon at an international level. Technological advances (e.g. the introduction of jumbo jets) as well as paid holidays in growing Western economies allowed for more and more people in the industrialised capitalist world to travel regularly to destinations abroad (Poon 1994).

Many countries continue to stress the importance of tourism as an integral aspect of their development strategies (Lickorish 1991). Indeed, many entrepreneurs and governments in the developing world are still investing in the tourism industry in anticipation of economic benefits. However, these efforts have not necessarily been accompanied by appropriate planning and preparation (Tosun and Timothy 2001).

Tourism Political Economy: A Critical Moment

The economic boom didn’t last long as inflation started to develop due to crop failures and market shortages in the 1970s and “[a]s corporate profits and real investment began a long decrease in national economies, businesses (led by U.S. banks) increased their efforts in the international arena” (Dowd 2000: 161). Changing economic conditions gave rise to a newly-formed skepticism, inspiring social movements such as the anti-war movement, human rights movements and the green

movement, all of which attempted to reshape the dominant discourse of affluent Western societies and question issues of dominance, economic and power imbalances, and environmental impact.

As argued by Mosedale, “in the late 1960s, and early 1970s, at a time when positivism was *de rigeur*, critics such as Harvey (1973) argued that spatial positivist science was not only unable to answer the questions and solve the pressing problems of the time, but also there was no room in the positivist approach to consider the necessary questions’ (2011: 1). Consequently, Britton’s analysis, following a radical *political economy approach*, stresses that two sets of factors need to be considered in order to develop a model of the articulation of international tourism in Third World tourist destinations. First, it is essential to understand “how the industry manifests itself: and who benefits from tourism development” (1982: 332-3). In order to do that the historical forces that shaped the common characteristics of these economies need to be appreciated. Second, the power and dominance of certain activity components and ownership groups should be analysed, as well as the organisation and commercial structure of the tourist industry *per se* (Britton, 1982).

Tosun and Timothy (2001: 352) draw on the example of Turkey to describe the context in which tourism emerged in most countries of the developing world:

“[c]rippling debts, low export potential and the loss of remittances from Turkish workers living abroad have meant that since 1981, with the encouragement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Turkish governments have prioritised the development of the tourism industry. The intense intervention of the international donor agencies in the economy of Turkey has accelerated the implementation of outward-oriented neo-liberal development strategies”

This illustrates the extent to which international bodies influence decisions on tourism as part of the development of the Developing World, reinforcing the latter’s dependency on the Western economies as a result of the aforementioned distortions in their social and economic organisation. Britton (1982) raises some significant questions about how the power of the core metropolises in capitalist production impinged upon developing countries. In this sense, the political economy approach shifts the discourse, from tourism as a tool for economic growth, to the political dimensions of tourism development, and offers a critique of tourism as an extension of dependencies in an imperialist (globalised) context. Since, the publications of Britton’s article, of course, new terms such as globalisation, sustainability, community politics have enriched the discourse in tourism studies.

Tourism and Sustainable Development

In the 1980s the concept of sustainable tourism emerged and eventually gained ground as the way to ameliorate the negative effects of economic development, mainly in Third World countries. As Hall and Lew (1988) argue, the idea of sustainable development quickly entered common vernacular bringing with it a heightened environmental awareness and a growing social consciousness expressed mainly in the North-South debate. Since the publication of the World Conservation Strategy (1980) and the Brundtland report (1987) the concept of sustainable development has been located in the centre of public debate attracting both support

and opposition. Although the report's initial concern was with environmental degradation, the concept of Sustainable Development eventually came to embrace sociocultural and economic issues.

The Brundtland report questioned the conventions of continuous growth. Capitalising on the growing environmental movement, and influenced by a 'dependency theory' approach, it argued for a development that would fairly distribute the benefits to individuals and groups in the present (intragenerational equity), in addition to conserving resources for future generations (intergenerational equity) (Hunter and Green 1995). Development instead of growth could be the new motto. Wheeler, very graphically describes this fashion noting that "the pace of any tourism development should be slow, controlled, sympathetically planned and manageable and, of course, sustainable" (2003: 228).

In the global context, however, sustainable development in general, and sustainable tourism development in particular, fail to integrate the issue of power; who gets what, where, how and why (Buswell; in Hall 1994). Tourism and sustainable tourism should be examined in the context of the political, economic and social system; both in the local and global scale of international relations. As Hunter and Green (1995) note, the studies of sustainable tourism are limited to a defined and often limited geographical area. Still, the implications of the motto of the environmental movement *think globally, act locally* should be elaborated and a holistic approach should be considered. As Butcher (1997) points out, the most pressing needs are not local at all; they are universal (ample food, employment, health care, housing, water, etc.). According to Butcher (1997) the involvement of global institutions (World Bank, IMF, etc) that have committed themselves to sustainable tourism projects exhibits a staggering hypocrisy. "It represents an old Phenomenon – the denigration of the third world by the 'civilised' West – but in a new politically correct and morally coded guise" (Butcher 1997: 33).

What is important to stress here, is the influence of social, human rights, and environmental movements in pushing the agenda for social, economic and environmental equality, in a way that changed the discourse and informed policies. The recognition of those popular demands/grievances, as well as the adaptation of the 'language' social and environmental movements were using, indicated a shift in the dominant discourse of tourism development. The implications and applicability of the concept however have raised the question: Is sustainable tourism an ethical alternative or a marketing ploy? (Lansing and De Vries, 2007). In an attempt to answer this question we look at the players involved in the implementation of the concept, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Governments and Regional Tourism Offices, NGO's, along with Large Tour Operators such as TUI and Thomson calling for ethical, sustainable, community, ecotourism. Lansing and De Vries (2007) blame the lack of an operational definition for sustainable tourism.

Instead, we argue that the linguistic adaptation of those popular grievances in an environment that indicates it is business as usual can be viewed through the lenses of hegemony as *repackaged grievances*. This process involved the creation of a range of new, alternative tourism products, alongside mass tourism. This included alternative, eco, green, sustainable, responsible, ethical, pro-poor and community tourism. Initially many of these forms of tourism emerged as a response to mass tourism and

reaction to its accompanying negative impacts (Hunter and Green, 1995; Marien and Pizam, 1997; Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Butler, 1999; Holden, 2000; Wheller, 2003). It is important to note here that the starting point was often the language and the demands of the aforementioned social and environmental movements. However, the tourism industry assimilated these demands for social equity and environmental conservation and repackaged them into morally acceptable forms of tourism, while the power relationships of international tourism remained largely unchallenged.

Crisis in the Noughties

The financial crisis of the noughties, reshaped the discourse again, by refocusing it on economic growth. It created a state of urgency and emphasised *fixing the economy*. Once again tourism came to be seen as a significant export earner, income generator and job creator. UNWTO's latest press release (2015a) claims an increase of international tourist numbers by 4.7% in 2014 and forecasts a further increase by 3-4% for 2015. According to UNWTO's Secretary-General:

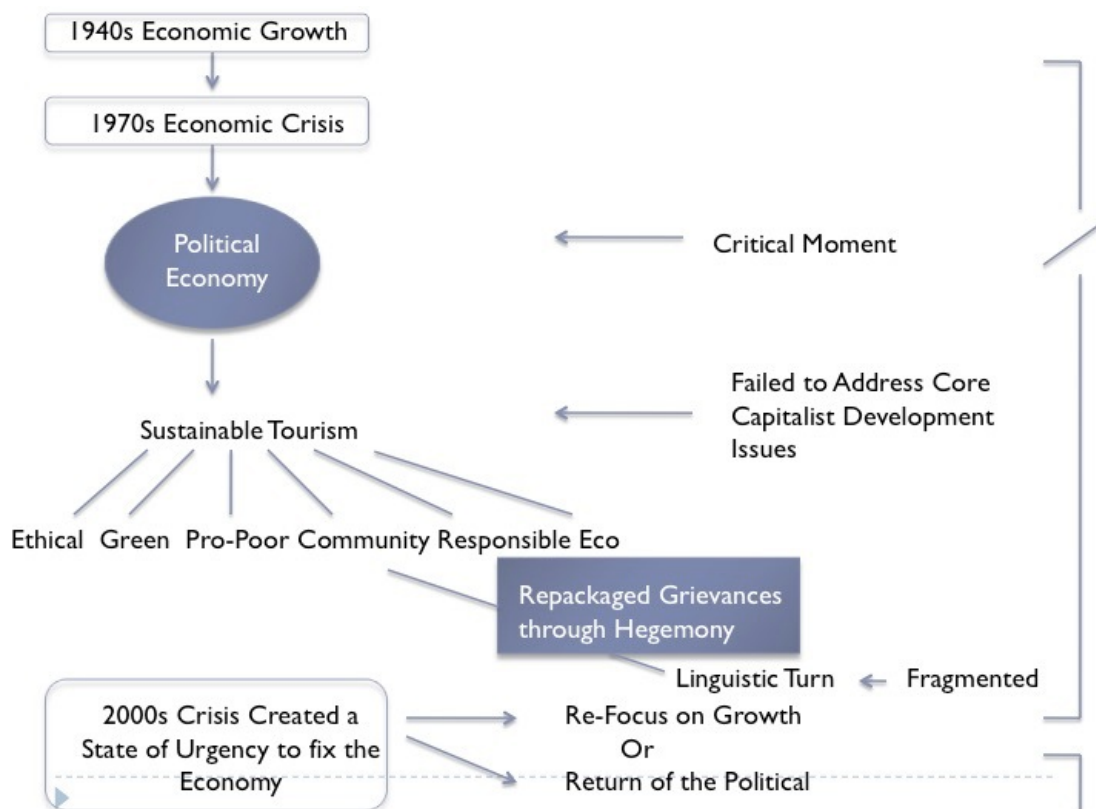
“Over the past years, tourism has proven to be a surprisingly strong and resilient economic activity and a fundamental contributor to economic recovery by generating billions of dollars in exports and creating millions of jobs. This has been true for destinations all around the world, but particularly for Europe, as the region struggles to consolidate its way out of one of the worst economic periods in its history”.

(UNWTO, 2015a)

The rhetoric asserting the importance of tourism for other sectors of the economy such as agriculture, construction and telecommunications in the developed states, and the significance of sustainable tourism for “ever more complex national and international markets” (UNWTO, 2015b, online; visited on 27/01/2015), are seen as part of this focus on growth, through the consumption of both traditional tourism as well as ethical consumption products.

We argue that this dominant discourse, focusing on growth, is presented as apolitical, technocratic and inevitable. It is enforced and enhanced by the *there is no alternative* imperative. This, however, is situated within a political stance to further the neoliberal agenda with minimum resistance. We propose an analysis of tourism development discourse(s) (Figure 1) through the lenses of PDT and hegemony in an attempt to re-shift the discourse towards a radical understanding that calls for the return of the political, offering a counter-discourse of irreducible contest over power. In so doing, this should bring to the fore grassroots political and social movements' critical accounts (Tadajewski *et al*, 2014), sensitised towards progressive, democratic decision-making.

Figure 1: A Genealogy of Tourism Development



Conclusion

This paper explored the genealogy of tourism development, situating the analysis within the socio-economic and political structures that influenced development discourses in general, and tourism discourses in particular. In doing so, we claim that the development of social, human rights and environmental movements played a significant role in the birth of sustainable tourism and other related forms. These popular demands/grievances, however, were managed and repackaged in the shape of ethical, morally acceptable products without the structures of inequalities changing. Today, even this discourse has been pushed back as the salvation of economic growth dominates the development discourse. We argue for the return of the political, an analysis that incorporates power and hegemony in an attempt to develop a counter-hegemonic discourse, vital for a critical and progressive transformation.

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