

Classification of Paradigms and Approaches in the Present Tourism Research

- A Methodological and Theoretical Viewpoint

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In the current tourism studies, various paradigms and approaches are claimed by many different theoretical constructs to the extent that the situation might be called a 'jungle.' This paper attempts a methodological classification of these constructs according to epistemology, ontology, and fundamental principles.

Keywords: Methodology, Paradigms, Approaches, Tourism Studies

1. Introduction

In the current tourism studies, developing theoretical rigor is one of the most urgent and critical tasks.

Pritchard (2012: 11) states, for instance:

The number of tourism-related journals has grown from a dozen in the 1970s to around 150 today, over half of them established in the last decade alone. Yet, despite this growth much tourism scholarship continues to pursue narrow empirical studies at the expense of theoretical or conceptual writing. After half a century of sustained tourism enquiry our field still neglects its ontological, epistemological and methodological shortcomings. As a consequence, tourism scholarship has remained on the margins of many of the philosophical debates which have energised the wider social sciences during that time.

A serious challenge to theoretical development is posed by the fact that the research directions are too varied to be unified into a single theory.

According to Aramberri (2010: 11), for instance, 'one should not be surprised that tourism research cannot find a shared paradigm, that is, a framework underlying most theories and the methodology accepted by a majority of researchers.' One may call such a confused state of co-existing research a jungle. For example, Koontz (1961) had characterized the then American management theory area as 'a management theory jungle' and classified the varied management theories into six schools. It is necessary to attempt a similar

classification of today's tourism research. The following is such an attempt.

2. Predecessor of the Paradigm Classification

Chambers (2007) categorized the tourism research of recent years and presented five cutting-edge paradigms of tourism research as follows:

- **Authenticity:** This is the issue presented by MacCannell (1973), who presumed that tourists are usually satisfied only by staged authenticity around touristic sites, although they request true authenticity. It is a question whether tourists, particularly mass tourists, can recognise authentic objects. The study of authenticity in tourism has been subsequently developed by Wang (2000), who identifies four types of authenticity: 'authenticity as the original,' 'authenticity as construction,' 'deconstruction of authenticity (the approach of post-modernity)' and 'existential authenticity'.
- **Tourist gaze:** This was presented by Urry (1990) as tourism's defining characteristic. It was then thoroughly critiqued, and Urry and Larsen (2011) have consequently published an updated version of the theory. However, Wang (2000) offers an alternative concept: distancing action.
- **Hosts and guests:** Smith (1977) presented this theory to investigate the special relationship between developed countries as guests and developing countries as hosts. It is based on the core-periphery nexus, characterising the developing, hosting countries as 'pleasure periphery'.
- **Tourist destination life cycle:** This is the tourist

destination development scheme that Butler (1980) presented by adapting the product life cycle theory. It was the first scheme to describe the rise and fall of destinations, but it is a purely theoretical model without any positivistic basis. Hence, there have been many arguments about it and modifications have been made to the extent that Butler (2006) edited a two-volume book solely dedicated to the issue.

- Old tourists and new tourists: This is the idea based on the tourist classification study by Poon (2003), but it is also concerned with the more general issue of types and classification of tourists. For instance, Plog (1995) had already studied this issue, which still requires to be widely researched.

These five paradigms proposed by Chambers are certainly useful, but they are too limited to be a general paradigm classification framework for present-day tourism research, as Chambers herself admitted. For instance, it is necessary to make an epistemological division between empirical reality-restricted studies and empirical reality-transcendent or critical studies and at least present sustainable tourism on the thesis of sustainable development for today's paradigms.

In addition, Uriely (2005) makes a classification from modernity/post-modernity viewpoint, while Wang (2000) urges that today's tourism research must be based on modernity and not on post-modernity. Modernity in Wang's definition (2000) includes capitalism, while the tourism research presented by researchers such as Enzensberger (1958), Armanski (1978), and Sharpley (2009) are based on capitalism. While modernity- or post-modernity-based research is admittedly dominant in the present-day tourism research, as Aramberri (2010) describes, capitalism-based research should never be neglected either.

3. Epistemological Classification of Tourism Research

The most systematic epistemological classification of tourism research is presented in a book edited by Tribe (2009), in which Tribe and Ayikoru (2009) classify tourism research into four directions: positivism (including postpositivism), interpretivism, constructionism, and critical theory.

Tribe and Ayikoru claim the critical theory as their own direction, which is then further developed by Ateljevic, Morgan and Pritchard (2012). In the introduction to this book by these three editors, 'hopeful tourism' is presented as 'a new and unfolding transformative perspective in tourism.'

It is central for the epistemological classification of tourism research to first differentiate between empirical reality-restricted and empirical reality-transcending studies. The latter includes the critical theory presented by Tribe (2009), Ayikoru (2009), and others. Research based on the thesis of sustainability in the framework of sustainable development is epistemologically included in this classification type as long as it contains some criticism of empirical tourism for the sake of environment conservation. On the other hand, assertions in defense of modern mass tourism such as Butcher (2003, 2009) and Sharpley (2009), as well as Pons et al. (2009) within the theory of banal tourism are epistemologically reality-affirmative.

The methodological studies suggest that any type of transcending of empirical reality to make a value judgment is impossible within the scope of scientific theory. However, this assumption cannot hold for today's social sciences—including tourism studies because human beings with values and will for good or ill are necessarily involved with the work. As Tribe (2008: 253) warns, although a great amount of empirical reality-based, positivism-oriented research exists in tourism, one should be aware of the limit of such research. Wang (2000: 55) refers to Popper's (1969) theory of critical rationalism, which argues that human knowledge and techniques are always the product of deductive reasoning and therefore bound to falsification. All tourism research should be grounded on a refusal to urge any infinite validity.

4. New Frameworks to be Added

Besides the above-mentioned epistemological classifications and the related era-oriented thoughts, the following nine frameworks should be added to Chambers' five cutting-edge paradigms as present-day tourism research paradigms.

- Sustainable tourism: Many support this paradigm, which originated in the thesis of the UN Division for Sustainable Development. Two opposite opinions exist in regard to the

understanding of this thesis: one with an emphasis on sustainability, the other on development. Some say that the thesis of sustainable development is an oxymoron, so that it has come through a 'sustainable debate' (Wall, 2009: 40; Sharpley, 2002: 322-327), while Weaver (2009) comments that this thesis implies only a superficial 'veneer sustainability,' which is not a paradigm shift but at best a 'paradigm nudge.'

- Community/place-based theories: This framework is based on the concept that a tourist destination is never a single organisation such as a firm or household but is a geographical unit comprising diverse independent organisations. It is, consequently, more difficult for a destination/place to take unified action than it is for a firm or a government office. A typical instance of destination/place-based tourism research is the theory of tourism community by Murphy (1985) and Murphy and Murphy (2004). Seminal studies of regional collaboration are presented by Gray (1989) and Greiner (1972). As a pioneer study of the management and governance of regional collaboration, the work of Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) is remarkable, and its essential concept of 'collaborative advantage' has been intensively studied by Kanter (1994) and Huxham (1996). Wang (2011b) deals with the problems of collaborative relationships from the viewpoint of the motivation behind the alliance formation. Within this field, a notable framework for the regional partnership lifecycle is presented by Caffyn (2000). Furthermore, an assertion of community-benefit tourism initiatives presented by Simpson (2008) is notable for bringing out the possible disadvantages for a destination community of total involvement in tourism activities.
- Integrated tourism: This is theoretically a part of the above mentioned community/place-based theories. Its thesis is closely treated by Butler (1999) theoretically, and issues associated with the agricultural policy of the EU are mainly dealt with by Cowley and Gillmor (2008) and Saxena and Ilbery (2008) as integrated rural tourism. Some type of integrated tourism study approach is now an essential part of the general field.
- Tourist behavior/satisfaction: This is a core element of tourism research, especially from the viewpoint of tourism demand and tourist motives, but as its main issues are covered in the studies of consumer (customer) satisfaction (CS), the theoretical development of research particular to tourist behavior/satisfaction may be somewhat delayed. Nevertheless, the research of Dann (1977) is seminal, while theoretically detailed studies of tourist behavior/satisfaction have been carried out by, for instance, Pearce (2005, 2011) and Yüksel (2008).
- Tourism system: The tourism research from this viewpoint, which has been promoted by Leiper (1990) and, particularly, by Niel and Gursoy (2008), could certainly become a useful tourism study framework -including both demand and supply aspects- because it is grounded in characteristics different from the circulation of other, usual commodities: it understands tourism as a system of qualitatively different processes, which are preparation at home, movement to and from a destination, stay at the destination, and review at home. There are many researchers on this viewpoint (Ohashi, 2010: 232-234). Wang (2011a) refers to Leiper's theory of tourism system from the viewpoint of destination marketing and management.
- Mobility: The development of tourism is essentially a part of social mobilisation. The research from this viewpoint, in which Cresswell (2006), Urry (2007), and others have made systematic progress, is indispensable. While these orthodox studies have identified both the sedentary and nomadic as tendencies of mobilisation, Ohnmacht, Maskim and Bergman (2009) argue that mobility brings about and accelerates a new inequality based on 'unequal mobilities', which consists of strong and weak means of mobility, showing that mobility is always a unified entity composed of both movable and unmovable elements.
- Tourism forms: This is a framework from the viewpoint of different forms of tourism, such as religious, cultural, rural, and urban tourism. In this field, forms of alternative tourism are currently of note, which are developed in reaction against neo-liberalistic directions. The framework of sustainable tourism is one such form, and volunteer tourism, which Benson (2011) treats systematically, has also become

important in recent years. Wang (2000: 181) divides travel/tourism into high and low tastes. While common mass tourism is low taste, alternative tourism is high taste.

- Tourism/service innovation: Innovation is the most important challenge for tourism these days. Hall and Williams (2008) present a systematic overall study of innovation in tourism. It is advisable for tourism innovation studies to consider tourism as a part of the service sector because tourism is closely connected to the service sector and studies on service sector innovation are much promoted at present. In this field the classic work is Pavitt (1984), which argues that innovation in supplier sectors is decisive for innovation in the service sector. This has been further developed by Miozzo and Soete (2001) and by Tether and Metcalfe's (2004) theory of micro innovation systems, while Hirsch-Kreisen and Jacobson (2008) extensively research issues of innovation in low-tech sectors and Godin (2008) indicates probably discriminatory policies for innovation owing to the hierarchy of sectors.
- Destination/place branding: Although few orthodox tourism researchers treat with issues of destination/place branding, it is an indispensable aspect of tourism. Debord (1992) names today's society a spectacle society, that is, one overwhelmingly represented by brand. In recent years, Konecnik and Gartner (2007) have researched tourism from the viewpoint of destination branding, which is based on the theory of customer-based brand equity presented by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1998). Other brand theories are based on brand identity presented by Kapferer (2008) and theories on brand relationship presented by Schultz, Barnes, Schultz and Azzaro (2009). In addition, UNWTO and ETC (2009) presents a manual for destination/place branding, and Go and Govers (2010) deal with recent research trends in this field. Furthermore, Tasci (2011) treats the problems of destination branding and positioning without reference to Kapferer's brand identity theory to be one sided.

5. Tourism Research in a Broad Sense and an Inherent Sense

Because tourism consists of many elements and diverse sectors, it is researched within many scholarly fields. According to Pearce (2005), there are 17 disciplines as such, including psychology, sociology, geography, history, laws, economics, and management. While these studies in other disciplines are named tourism research in a broad sense in this paper, there must be a relatively inherent tourism study, which is relatively separated from the abovementioned tourism studies in other disciplines. This is a tourism specific study as a relatively independent discipline separated from other disciplines, which is the, or tourism research in an inherent sense, namely 'the inherent tourism study'. At the beginning of this paper the claim for building and promoting the theoretical studies of tourism is identified with the assertion for such proper tourism study.

It is necessary for the development of this proper tourism study to differentiate ontologically between the level of empirical object and that of the epistemological object of tourism. The empirical object concerns what can be directly perceived and grasped and what can accordingly become the research object of any discipline from its particular viewpoint. The epistemological object, on the other hand, is given meaning by a particular discipline from the essential viewpoint of that discipline (Weyermann und Schönitz, 1912: 63).

Tourism is, for example, researched in jurisprudence from a juridical viewpoint (for instance, the viewpoint of contracts), while it is researched in economics from an economics viewpoint (for instance, the viewpoint of costs, revenue, profit). This is the level of epistemological objects. To shape them, one needs the specific viewpoint of a coherent discipline. In the case of the proper tourism study, what is it and how is it shaped? There are two approaches.

In the first approach, the viewpoints of other disciplines are excluded, and the particular viewpoint of the proper tourism study -mainly, 'tourist needs for tourism' - is in focus. Among the tourism research frameworks listed above (in total 14), tourist behavior/satisfaction is eventually the core viewpoint of the proper tourism study. This is, nevertheless, essentially a demand-side view that

needs to be complemented by a supply-side view (Wang, 2000: 6; Pons, Crang and Travlou, 2009: 2). Thus, 'tourist system including tourist motive/behavior/satisfaction' is more complete as the viewpoint of the inherent tourism study. Not to mention, this discipline studies ontologically all dimensions and fields of tourism from this viewpoint, while the other disciplines function as a part of tourism studies.

This method to build the epistemological object of the proper tourism study has some resemblance to the method in which the modern theory of business administration (management) (Betriebswirtschaftslehre) was developed as an independent theoretical discipline in Germany around the beginning of the twentieth century. Commercial theories (Handelwissenschaften) - a theoretical, practice-oriented, heterogeneous mixture of varied knowledges and techniques associated with commercial activity- needed to be purified to the single commercial theory. This is the theory of modern business administration/management as shaped today.

The second method aims to integrate the many directions of tourism research. This is akin to the case of medicine, which integrates a diverse range of knowledge and techniques with the aim of curing disease. According to this method tourism study is necessarily inter-, trans- or post-disciplinary and holistic with a unified viewpoint. However, the research object of this holistic study is ontologically not tourism as an empirical object but tourism as an epistemological object, the epistemological viewpoint of which is the holistic touristic viewpoint. That is, the proper tourism study is defined as a discipline researching tourism as epistemological object from the holistic touristic viewpoint.

It is also worth noting here that Hall and Page (2009) point out the shift from a 'Geography of Tourism' to 'Geographies of Tourism' in recent years. Furthermore, there is no 'tourism industry' in the 'Industrial Classification for Japan' (revised in 2008) because, as explained, the tourism industry is related to so many sectors that it cannot be statistically grasped as a single sector. These circumstances justify the commonly used term, 'tourism studies'. In such a case, according to Krishnan (2009: 10), 'discipline' in the strict sense of the word and 'studies' as a field of research

lacking the solid theorisation owing mainly to newcomer (mostly after the Second World War), so to speak 'studies discipline', may be academically distinguished, but there is every possibility that the latter comes to 'disciplinisation' by its academic institutionalisation, which I presume is applicable to 'tourism studies'. On the other hand, according to Hollinshead (2012: 55) based on Coles et al. (2006) and others, tourism studies should 'trespass beyond the strictures of disciplinary purity' in order to be built as 'postdisciplinary studies'.

6. Summary

Tourism consists of so many dimensions and fields that calling for a unified theory is impossible or even unnecessary. It is, however, essential to build a single theoretical discipline of tourism in line with other social sciences for the sake of the proper development of tourism. For this, the first requirement is to classify the existing research directions. The classifications in this paper are summarized as follows:

- Epistemological classification
 - (1) Empirical reality-restricted studies
 - Positivism (including postpositivism)
 - Interpretivism
 - Constructionism
 - (2) Empirical reality-transcendent studies
 - Critical theory
 - Ethical/moralistic/norm-oriented studies
- Era-oriented thought classification
 - Capitalism-based studies
 - Modernity/postmodernity-based studies
- Classification by cutting-edge paradigms
 - Principles of tourism/travel-oriented studies (including tourist gaze studies)
 - Sustainable tourism-oriented studies
 - Tourist destination life cycle studies
 - Community/place-based studies
 - Integrated tourism-oriented studies
 - Tourist types/behavior/satisfaction studies
 - Tourism system studies
 - Mobility-oriented studies (including hosts and guests studies)
 - Tourism forms studies (including authenticity studies)
 - Tourism/service innovation-oriented studies
 - Tourist destination/place branding-oriented studies

In addition, there are many research studies on tourism in a broad sense that are promoted in other disciplines than the inherent tourism study. These are named 'approaches' here, and these must be included into the classification of tourism research in the widest sense.

The above classification is obviously neither complete nor comprehensive, but rather opportunistic and tentative and hence additions and improvements are indispensable. It may nevertheless assist in advancing the theoretical and methodological studies of tourism.

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