Chapter 1

Discussing Tourism as a Rite of Passage: A New Fresh Paradigm in Tourism Research

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ABSTRACT

This chapter recapitulates the discussion originated by John Tribe respecting to the dispersion of produced knowledge in tourism. We critically give a new fresh paradigm in order for readers to understand what tourism is. This chapter centers on themes I am not accustomed to discuss but are very important to the epistemological advance of the discipline, precisely in a moment where the epistemology of tourism enters in a serious crisis. Though I here am synthesizing my experience as author, reviewer and editor, no less true is that it situates as a complementary platform to expand the current understanding of tourism and its intersection in culture.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter centers on themes I am not accustomed to discuss but are very important to the epistemological advance of the discipline, precisely in a moment where the epistemology of tourism enters in a serious crisis. Though I here am synthesizing my experience as author, reviewer and editor, no less true is that it situates as a complementary platform to expand the current understanding of tourism and its intersection in culture. Some decades back, J. Tribe holds the sway tourism-research

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was experiencing an irreversible fragmentation, which led investigations to shaky foundations. Besides, the flexibility of Academy respecting to the methodological borders of the discipline wreaked havoc to coordinate efforts in sharing a definition of tourism. This suggests that what tourism means or its evolving facets seem to be a matter of dispute to date. While academicians have advanced a lot in the study of tourism, they failed to construct an epistemological root of the discipline, which ushered their studies into a climate of indiscipline and conceptual dispersion (Tribe, 1997, 2006, 2010). In his seminal text, which is entitled the *Scientifization of tourism*, Jafar Jafari called the attention to the rise of a new knowledge-based platform in tourism fields, where any individual interpretation would set the pace to more objective evaluations not only based on empiricism, but in blazing the trail of other tourism-related researchers in the years to come. As Thirkettle & Korstanje put it, the struggle for emergent schools to monopolize and impose their own interpretations prompted a much deeper dispersion almost impossible to control. Instead of coordinating efforts to forge a more efficient and harmonized method, tourism-related scholars adopted transdisciplinarity as a vehicle towards scientific maturation. From its onset, applied-research in tourism has been influenced by a business-centered paradigm in which case, tourism was naively defined as an industry in lieu of an ancient social institution. Rather than achieving the desired results, studies focused on the needs of finding new segments (demand) to satisfy the needs of suppliers.

As this backdrop, the economic-centered paradigms not only were sensitive to the international demand, leaving other issues unchecked, but posed money as the necessary factor to optimize destinations worldwide. After WWII there was a consensus respecting to the promises of tourism towards development, which of course, toyed with the idea that tourism would be an industry alone (Page & Connell 2006). The emergence of tourism-management as an all-encompassing model in order for governments and states to organize territories more efficiently, was one of the aspects that cemented the possibility to understand tourism as a mythical or ancient institution. As Van Doorn observed, exclusively interested in forecasting international trends, the role of tourism-researchers was originally orientated to boost the organic image of destinations and eliminating every self-defeating risks which would jeopardize their well-functioning (Van Doorn, 1993). The overconfidence in the evolutionary progress of activity was vital to introduce the needs of measuring over others forms of knowledge (Getz, 1993; Millar, 1993; Fretchling, 1993) and the reasons why during 90s decade, marketing and management not only monopolized the conceptual framework but also excluding other more critical voices from the main operations center. Those studies which claimed that tourism scholars adopted a profit-oriented paradigm were gradually excluded from the central journals and
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