Chapter 2

A Brief Debate on Alienation, Authenticity, and Tourism

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to present a brief discussion on alienation and closely related topics and their relation to tourism. Although there is not any consensus on the definition and content of alienation, there are a variety of thoughts on the issue. Alienation could be defined as the state or perception of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and estrangement from both the society and the self. As an industry and social phenomenon, tourism is an interesting domain of research for alienation studies. Work alienation and relation of work to the alienation are also discussed due to the increased significance of work especially after industrial revolution. After some debate on authenticity, which could be regarded as a derivative of alienation, some recommendations are made for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Multidisciplinary nature of tourism provides the researchers with various interesting topics. Indeed, both as an industry and a domain of research, tourism could be linked to many different areas such as management, culture, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, technology, and etc. On the other hand, while some topics are more relevant in contemporary context (such as marketing issues - this does not mean marketing topics are totally irrelevant in the debates on the earlier times in history), some others, such as alienation, seem more timeless when their long history is considered. This long history of the thoughts on alienation, however, did not result in a far better understanding of the topic although it is

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not a total mystery. Human psychology, structure and functioning of the society, nature of human are all the main topics of alienation debate. Since the extent of alienation discussion is so wide, it is also a relatively difficult domain of study.

Not surprisingly, the wide content of discussion of alienation have been recognized by many thinkers on the issue. Kahler even argues that the history of man is, in a sense, the history of alienation (Kahler, 1957). Similarly, all philosophies and ideologies assert that human beings live in alienation according to Ionesco (1968, cited by Chiaburu, Thundiyil, and Wang, 2014). These arguments illustrate the complexity and significance of alienation throughout the history. The complexity of the issue does not decrease when it is examined in the scope of tourism probably due to the complexity of tourism itself. Examining only the work-related factors of alienation might have provided the researchers some useful limitation and more contemporary base for their research but tourism is not only an industry but also a social phenomenon. Although the common topic is tourism, studying tourism and tourism industry or management might differ in many respects. Thus, tourism, maybe not as old as alienation debate, has also some older roots than one might think at first glance (though obvious to tourism researchers) but the contemporary form of tourism brought new issues especially linked to its industrial characteristic. Moreover, working life and work alienation topics might be considered similarly. The role of work might have changed throughout the history but it could be argued that the industrial revolution and the process followed have had some major impacts on the role and significance of work in the society and in the individual’s life. These all made studying alienation more interesting but more challenging. The complexity does not seem to decrease at least in the near future as can also be assumed from the rest of this chapter.

This chapter presents some views on alienation and inevitably its relation to authenticity. Tourism is also included in the discussion in terms of its relation to these concepts. Alienation debate is quite wide and the views included in this chapter may constitute only a part of the discussion on the concept. The purpose of this chapter is to present a brief discussion and highlight some points that could be of use for researchers.

BACKGROUND

Discussions on work alienation or alienation’s relation to work usually start with referring to Marx’s thoughts on the issue (see e.g. Mottaz, 1981; Nair and Vohra, 2009; Chiaburu et al., 2014). This is quite understandable when Marx’s critical views on capitalism are considered. Seeman’s (1959) study is also among influential works (Chiaburu et al., 2014). Marx was one of those who brought Hegel’s views on alienation more into economic system and its social implications (Shantz, Alfes, Bailey, and Soane, 2015). Many arguments, one of which is alienation, could be built on the industrialization and the major changes it brought to the society. However, alienation is not an issue that could be discussed only in relation to capitalist or industrialized societies. As also indicated above, the wide scope of alienation makes it relevant to almost anything.

Nair and Vohra (2009) mention that the focus of alienation studies has usually been on blue-collar or factory workers and they indicate the relative ignorance of service industries such as tourism. It might be because of the very basic critical views, such as Marx’s, that have been developed in relatively earlier phases of industrial age or capitalism.