

## The Impact of Tourism Recreation after Covid-19

Arvind Chauhan, Asst. professor, Institute of Hotel Management Department, CSJM University, Kanpur.

### TOURISM ORIGINS

#### Introduction

To many tourism researchers, and readers of *Tourism Recreation Research* in particular, forty years is a long time, and makes this journal one of the oldest in existence. Such a state of affairs has tended to encourage the often mistaken belief that tourism itself and tourism research are recent phenomena. In fact, tourism itself is extremely old and well established in many societies. Furthermore, many of the aspects of tourism which are experienced today differ very little from the features of tourism even two millennia ago. The scale and participation in tourism have changed greatly over time, and the areas visited by tourists have grown in number, as have the equipment, infrastructure and facilities utilised, but the basics of motivation and behaviour remain very similar. There is an onus and responsibility on those tourism researchers who have been engaged in their craft even longer than the existence of this journal to at least briefly discuss the development of their subject in order to set some aspects of the misperception about the longevity of tourism to rest. As Walton (2005:6) has noted, "A problem in tourism studies has been a prevailing present-mindedness and superficiality, refusing deep, grounded or sustained historical analysis".

Some of the confusion over the development of tourism stems in part from a belief that whatever occurred before the advent of what is now known as mass-tourism was not really tourism. Perhaps even more alarmingly, mass tourism itself is perceived by some to have begun only half a century or so ago. It has recently been described as

"A brief blip on the historical record (that) is about to disappear. Mass international tourism has come and will soon flee. This 'universal' mass tourism is a recent post-World War Two phenomenon and blossomed upon technological development" (Leigh 2013: 18).

The author cited above is at least correct with the attribution of the growth of mass tourism to technological development but is about a century late in his timing and wrongly ascribes the phenomenon to the jet airliner and cheap energy rather than to the railway engine and steam power.

Looking back to the origins and early patterns of tourism is not a time-wasting exercise. If one is to truly understand the present, let alone speculate realistically about the future nature of tourism, then surely it behoves one to at least appreciate, if not completely understand, where tourism has come from. It is, after all, in many western countries and an increasing number of eastern and antipodean countries, a major social, economic, environmental and cultural force. Whether one believes the accuracy of statistics put forth by that global tourism advocate the UNWTO or not, there are very large numbers of people travelling internationally for tourism and several times that number engaged in domestic tourism who feature even less clearly in statistical surveys. To imagine or suggest that these massive temporary migrations are a product of the last half century is naïve and discourages researchers, particularly those new to the tourism field, from learning about and from the past.

#### Problems of Tourism Definitions

Most academics engaged in tourism research participate silently and perhaps willingly in a fiction, namely that the activity we study is that defined by UNWTO (2014):

"Travel refers to the activity of travellers while tourism refers to the activity of visitors: A visitor is a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited". (UNWTO 2014).

In reality almost all tourism research, at least that published in the leading academic tourism journals, deals only with travel for pleasure, in essence, travellers or tourists on holiday and at play. Armitage (1997: 11) cites Samuel Johnson as defining play as "to do something not as a task but for a pleasure", and this is an acceptable working definition to describe the subject of most tourism research. Our focus on travel for pleasure or play is not inappropriate, Huizinga describes "genuine pure play is one of the main bases of civilisation" (cited in Armitage 1997:10), thus the study of play, leisure, recreation and tourism would seem entirely justified,

whatever sometimes cynical academic colleagues may argue. To trace the origins of such a major activity in many societies would seem a necessary undertaking, yet published academic research on this topic is limited and apart from material in the *Journal of Tourism History*, few if any articles appear in the established tourism journals and even fewer books are devoted to this subject. Walton's *Histories of Tourism* (2005) is a notable and valuable exception, and equally uncommon is a special issue of *Annals of Tourism Research* (12:3) in 1985, edited by this author and Geoff Wall, entitled "*The Evolution of Tourism Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.*" In the editorial that opened that edition the authors commented:

"When tourism is viewed over a considerable time period, evidence for continuity as well as change becomes apparent. Change and continuity, fashion and tradition can all receive due consideration when studies are placed in an historical context" (Butler and Wall 1985: 287).

#### Tourism Patterns and Behaviour

Following on from this argument, it is, therefore, relevant to know that the elite in Roman society exchanged their location in the central part of Rome each summer to their villas on the surrounding hills to escape the stench and uncomfortable conditions, an activity mirrored in contemporary times by both the escape to the second home on holidays and also by the flight to the sun in less temperate climes. Thus a seasonal shift in location to take advantage of better climatic conditions is a long established activity among the affluent members of many contemporary societies. The ancient Romans also had their pleasure resorts, including spas and seaside communities some two millennia ago, and spas have been popular within specific segments of societies elsewhere in Europe (Patmore 1968) and Asia (Graburn 1995) for centuries also. Similarly from classical times, and almost certainly before then, travel to sacred sites has been well established amongst many societies. St Andrews in Scotland was visited by 33,000 pilgrims in 1337 (Butler 2011), and centres such as Jerusalem and Rome have received visitors in far larger numbers travelling for both religious and pleasure related reasons for many centuries. While members of the Crusades (Beveridge and O'Gorman 2013) did not experience much pleasure during their travails, those who were not professional soldiers were participating not for work related reasons but for reasons of obligation and self-enhancement, somewhat similar to many VFR tourists (visiting friends and relatives) and volunteer tourists (Tomazos and Butler 2012) today.

These travels and the activities engaged in by both the early and modern participants on their travels are important in themselves and in aiding understanding of the origins of contemporary tourism. Although today we have many technological aids to assist our enjoyment of leisure time, the actual activities in which we engage have not changed greatly in form or reason over the centuries. One of the chapters of Armitage's book (1997) is entitled "Gaping and Marvelling", a phrase which sums up the behaviour of many tourists regardless of the date of their participation. Whether it be to see the old Seven Wonders of the World, the birthplace of religious leaders, the fields of great battles, beautiful art and architecture or the wonders of nature, human kind has journeyed far and wide to 'gape and marvel'. This behaviour continues to the present, with vast numbers of tourists travelling today to see attractions such as the Pyramids of Egypt; Jerusalem and Mecca; Waterloo and Flanders; Florence, Venice and Rome; the National Parks of North America, Uluru and even Antarctica. Traditional and modern equivalents draw the curious and the faithful to witness and appreciate such sites and sights. When contemporary tourists visit such places, like their predecessors, they purchase mementoes, nowadays most often cheap copies of originals as souvenirs, many made elsewhere, as compared to the original art works that were purchased in the seventeenth century, but essentially following the same behaviour pattern, purchasing proof of their visitation.

#### In 1792 the behaviour of an English tourist to Italy was described thus:

One English gentleman who did not much care for sightseeing or art and thought that two to three hours a day was too much time to spend 'on a pursuit in which he felt no pleasure, and saw very little utility'... did not want to leave Rome after six weeks unable to claim that he had not seen all that his fellow Tourists had seen". So..."he ordered a post-chaise and four horses to be ready early in the morning, and driving through churches, papacies, villas, and ruins, with

all possible expedition, he fairly saw, in two days, all that we had beheld during our crawling course of two weeks."

Throughout its history, tourism has been characterised by both *inertia* and *dynamism*. Many of the old patterns of travel and behaviour still exist, albeit modified by technological advancement, reflecting human preferences for constancy and a dislike of change, while new destinations, new attractions, new methods of travel and reduced costs have all enabled both a vast increase in tourist numbers and a more varied selection of activities to be engaged in. Two key forces have been at work throughout the development of tourism, one is technological innovation, particularly in transportation, and the other is the democratisation of tourism. While the latter may derogatively be described as a movement from "Class to Crass", in reality it has been a positive social and economic trend in many societies and mirrors the creation of the broader "Society of Leisure" of Dumazedier (1967).

## Tourism Precedents

The inevitable conclusion of the above potted history of tourism is that there is "nothing new under the sun" in terms of tourist behaviour and little new in terms of where tourists go and what they need for enjoyment. Much of the hype over what has been incorrectly termed "New Tourism" (Poon 1993) reflects a lack of appreciation of the background and origins of tourism. Tastes have developed and been modified over the years, and much of what is seen as "new" is in fact a reflection that there now many tourists being able to engage in varieties of tourism which existed but were not noticed before. Almost all of the many "forms of tourism" have existed since the beginning of travel, for example, nature, green, wildlife, bird and whale-watching, big game, safari, and even ecotourism are all variations on a theme, travelling to observe (hunt, photograph, draw, collect) wildlife, while museum, art, architecture, heritage, and religious tourism all fall under what was known as cultural tourism and have been practised since the beginning of tourism. As tourism has grown exponentially in numbers of participants, what were forms engaged in by very few participants (and therefore ignored by most researchers) are now engaged in by many (although perhaps by no greater proportion in relative terms) and are thus worthy of attention by both the tourism industry and by researchers looking for a niche in a now overcrowded academic playground.

A few truly new forms of tourism have emerged, the most significant and longest-lasting being those activities related to mountains and wilderness. Before the Romantic Revolution in literature and thought in the nineteenth century, wild lands and mountains were viewed as dangerous and undesirable places to visit. The contemporary playground of the Alps was viewed as a major problem to be overcome or bypassed on the way to Italy. The change in attitude towards mountains and wild lands, epitomised by the Romantic Poets and by individuals such as John Muir (Hall 2010) saw the rapid growth of the appeal of mountainous regions. The establishment of national parks in the United States, followed quickly in Canada, and New Zealand, saw the Rockies and the Southern Alps, and then other scenic areas become major tourist attractions, their access made possible initially by railroad development and other forms of steam powered travel. Allied to viewing mountains was the later popularisation of climbing and walking in mountains and then using them as the setting for winter sports. The perceived health values associated with mountain holidays also followed rapidly and thus what had been regarded as useless lands quickly became popular holiday destinations. Few other true innovations in tourism have taken place. Cruise tourism reflects a wider use of once disappearing luxury ships used purely for travel to and from destinations; exploration as a form of tourism is far from new, although it is now far easier, safer and more comfortable than in earlier years; and the explorers and drifters (Cohen 1972) and long stay volunteer and gap year tourists are generally lower level versions of the grand tourists of the eighteenth century. Finally, the technological and architectural "wonders" of places such as Dubai are contemporary versions of the pleasure domes of Xanadu, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Brighton Pavilion. Ultimately, as Las Vegas has discovered by the usurpation of its role as the major gambling centre of the world by Macau, anything that humans have built to attract visitors will someday be eclipsed by something else built elsewhere. The extreme, the rarest,

the unique and the different will always attract the visitor, the real differences are in how they are reached and by whom.

The purpose of this overlong review has been to release some frustrations that have built up in this author over the forty or more years that he has been engaged in tourism research, caused by the ignorance or non-acceptance by some who should know better, of the fact that tourism has a long history. Perhaps more importantly, the tourism community generally has been limited in the extent to which it has revealed this history of tourism to students of the subject. Tourism is an iterative phenomenon, it builds on what has been established earlier, removing, renovating, replacing and preserving various elements of its earlier forms, and students of the subject need to appreciate what those earlier elements were if they are to understand the current forms and attributes of tourism. Only then can we hope that tourism developers will avoid many of the mistakes which have occurred in the past and prove capable of handling the mass tourist market successfully and appropriately, or, dare one say it, sustainably.

## **TOURISM RESEARCH**

### **Introduction**

Just as tourism itself has suffered, at least in this writer's opinion, from being treated as a recent arrival on the world scene, so too has tourism research often been ignored and unappreciated, both for its considerable history and also for its contemporary relevance. Established tourism academics (i.e. those of us with two or more decades in the business) have long become accustomed to having their research treated as lightweight, unimportant, and most seriously of all, out of place, particularly in assessments of research quality (Hall 2013). The comments made about tourism research in geography apply equally to all tourism research, "Although not taken seriously by some, and still considered marginal by many, tourism constitutes an important point of intersection" (Gibson 2008: 407). Tourism research is now published regularly in a large number of refereed academic journals and occasionally in journals affiliated to other disciplines. Undoubtedly one of the reasons for tourism research not being as widely respected or accepted as it should be is because tourism is not a discipline (Tribe 1997) but rather a subject highly suitable for academic study by researchers from several disciplines, including anthropology, business (management), economics, geography, history, political science and sociology. It is also discussed in fields such as leisure (and recreation), development studies, international studies, architecture, urban studies and agriculture and rural development. This multiplicity of interests in tourism, while potentially important and valuable for the creation of knowledge about tourism, in fact often results in internal (to tourism) criticism, disagreement, opposition and distrust, compartmentalisation, finding expression in what Aramberri (2010: 12) has perceptively described as "Mutually Accepted Disinterest". This is a condition whereby researchers in one discipline or side of the field "listen to the tirades... (of others)...with the same interest that one hears the rain fall or the grass grow".

The fact that Aramberri is correct in his analysis is depressing and does not bode well for tourism research in the future, just as it has hindered the development of tourism research in the past. As academic study in general has become more and more compartmentalised, with most researchers knowing more and more about less and less, there is much less willingness to read research publications in other disciplines. It is hard to stay up to date in tourism research with the number of journals and books on the subject, let alone remain current in one's own discipline. As a geographer this author long ago lost the battle to keep up to date in most aspects of geographical research, and if truth be told, also lost interest in doing so, as much of the research became peripheral to his interests (tourism and leisure related topics) and even banal in terms of some of the dogma and theoretical viewpoints being proposed. A quick perusal of the titles of articles in one's own disciplinary journals is not followed, as it probably should be, by a similar procedure for the other disciplines represented in tourism research because of time constraints, lack of interest, and in some cases lack of ability in statistics to follow arguments presented. One becomes well aware that a similar narrowing down of reading takes place within tourism research itself, with many tourism researchers not even skimming through most of the tourism journals (in part because of time constraints and limited library holdings) but selecting those most related to their specific research and teaching interests. *Annals of Tourism*

*Research, Tourism Management, Journal of Travel Research and Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, plus of course, *Tourism Recreation Research*, are probably examined, even if only briefly, by most tourism scholars on a regular basis. However, in addition to the above journals, some researchers might read *Tourism Economics* and *Tourism Analysis*, and even *Tourism Geographies*, but may well pass over *Tourism Culture and Communications* or *Leisure Studies*, while those tourism researchers of an anthropological and sociological bent are likely to do the opposite.

These statements are not meant to denigrate colleagues but rather to reflect comments heard at tourism conferences, from reading the bibliographies of doctoral theses (the level where specialisation is generally highest), and reviewing an increasing number of submissions to refereed journals. Thus, as in almost every subject studied intensively at universities, tourism academics have established t almost inevitably, “schools within schools”, not just as in this writer’s case, tourism within geography, but in some cases discipline X within tourism in turn within discipline X (names withheld to protect the guilty). Geographers like this writer are sometimes criticised for being students of all subjects and masters of none, but one might argue that geography instils a wider knowledge of, or at least familiarity and interest in, other fields than most disciplines. This is perhaps why in his survey of the most cited tourism authors from 1970 to 2007 McKercher (2008) found 9 of the top 25 to have graduate degrees in Geography, suggesting that their research writings might be of wider interest in tourism than to geographers alone.

### **From Factual to Fallacious**

None of the above deals with the development of research on tourism from its origins to the present, although some of the comments perhaps explain the present pattern and status of tourism research in academe generally. It is depressing to see fellow academics apparently regard tourism research as being like tourism, of only recent origin; for example, Aramberri (2010:11) states “The quick growth of tourism research that has been with us since the 1990s remains unabated”. Such a statement implies that at least before then tourism research was not growing, or at least not growing quickly and this view presumably is influenced by the late beginnings of tourism-related research publications in his field (sociology). Finding the earliest tourism research is difficult and one is hard pressed to know where to start. Certainly writing **about** tourism and travel is extremely old, the journals of Herodotus and Marco Polo are evidence of this, but they are more a **subject for** research rather than evidence of it. Similarly, guide books, which have a long history of value to tourist researchers (Bruce 2010), while representing considerable research about tourist attractions, infrastructure and facilities, do not constitute research about tourism itself. It is interesting to note that there are no references to what one might call “old” tourism research in Walton’s (2005) book *Histories of Tourism*, although of course the subjects examined therein are historical. Even in his excellent introduction to the book, there is no citation dated earlier than 1987.

Perhaps one cannot blame students entirely for an absence of early reference works in their bibliographies when even iconic scholars such as Nash (1995: 2) talk about an “early paper on tourism” that is dated 1979. This relates to the issue alluded to above, namely, the failure of many researchers to venture beyond their own discipline to find research on tourism. Thus if the earliest academic papers on tourism in a particular discipline appear in the 1970s, as is primarily the case for anthropology and sociology for example, it is not uncommon for researchers in those disciplines to comment that that period represents the beginning of research in tourism.

### **The Factual Era**

It is a human trait to look back and perceive patterns and order when those at the time might not have been aware of such or none existed. For example, Jafari (2001) has suggested tourism research has developed on four “platforms”, advocacy, cautionary, adaptancy and knowledge-based. The last named perhaps implies that there has been a shift from research that was heavily emotive and ideological to research that is more objective and accepting of a variety of approaches and implications. The problem with such patterns is that in general they reflect the creators’ opinions and biases and/or their disciplinary viewpoints. (What follows is no

exception to this interpretation; this writer was trained as a geographer and is thus more familiar with research related to tourism and recreation and leisure conducted from a geographical and perhaps environmental standpoint than of other disciplines). One could suggest that it may be more appropriate to summarise the content and focus (rather than the orientation and ideology) of previous research in particular periods, particularly the early years of tourism research, in trying to encapsulate the development of tourism research.

The earliest research works in tourism (alas mostly in English, reflecting this writer's linguistic limitations) are characterised here as *Factual* in the sense that they dealt with the real world and occurrences and patterns therein, mostly in a descriptive style. They describe the distribution of tourism and related phenomena, the impacts which it had, the changes which it brought about and also its relationship with other economic forces. Much of this research is not theoretical and many of the papers discuss case studies and are what might be described as "one off" pieces of work. Nevertheless, at a time when knowledge about tourism was extremely limited and the subject was given even less attention by most policy makers than in the present day, such work is interesting for what it tells us about early patterns, relationships and effects, and the role and scale of tourism.

One can find works describing research in tourism from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although not necessarily in academic sources. An article in *The Times* newspaper from 1860 cited in Gilbert (1939) describes in considerable detail the process of resort development, a theme also examined in newspaper articles in *The Nation*, an American newspaper, from the 1880s through to the first decade of the next century. The subject of the development of coastal and other destinations is one of the oldest in tourism research and is not unnaturally of considerable interest to geographers and urban researchers in particular. Gilbert's study (1939) mentioned above is one of the earliest, finding echoes in doctoral studies by Barrett (1958) cited earlier and House (1954), in the work on spa towns by Patmore (1968) and Gilbert's other significant contributions in this area (1949, 1954). Another relevant early research paper on tourist urban destinations is Jones' work on mountain destinations (1933). Also among American early researchers in tourism was Meinecke (1929) who contributed one of the first papers dealing with the impacts of tourism on the environment with his paper on "The Effect of Excessive Tourist Travel on California Redwood Parks".

Some other early publications in the first half of the twentieth century dealt with two specific themes, the use of land and the economic effects of tourism. Joerg (1935) and McMurray (1930) for example, include tourism in their papers on land use and planning. One of the most cited of the early papers is that of Brown (1935) on "The business of recreation" which examined patterns of tourist travel and related business development in destination areas and on routes to such areas. Research on the economic impact of tourism in destination areas is illustrated in papers by Carlson (1938) and Ullman (1954), the latter's paper on "Amenities as a factor in regional growth" represents one of the first such papers to begin to develop theory in the context of tourism and predates considerable work on the role of tourism and leisure in economic development.

### **Early Theoretical Era**

Barrett and Ullman (cited above) were some of the first tourism researchers to introduce models and theories to the tourism literature. The 1960s saw considerable development of this line of research, laying the foundations for the even more rapid use of theory and concepts in tourism and related literature that followed. It is important to emphasise in this review of literature and research relating to tourism, that if current researchers ignore such early research on recreation and leisure, then they miss much of the underpinning of current tourism study. A great deal of excellent and highly innovative research was undertaken and published under the guise of leisure and recreation that has tremendous relevance to tourism, particularly in the 1960s and especially so in North America.

Two areas of study stand out in this regard, one relates to travel (and demand, and the other to carrying capacity. In the context of travel and demand, one of the earliest and most innovative papers was by Ullman and Volk (1961) on developing a model for predicting attendance and the benefits of visitation to specific attractions. In many respects this paper laid the groundwork

for the subsequent vast literature using econometric modelling and forecasting. A little later was the groundbreaking publication by Clawson (1959) *Methods of Measuring the Demand for and Value of Outdoor Recreation*, followed a few years on by *The Economics of Outdoor Recreation* (Clawson and Knetsch 1967) which built on Clawson's earlier work and that of his co-author Knetsch ( 1963, 1964). Much of this work has been ignored by most tourism researchers, perhaps because the term recreation is used rather than tourism, perhaps also because such work appeared in government reports as well as journals such as *Land Economics*, and partly perhaps because it appeared in America at a time when most related European research was focused on tourism. Regardless, references to these works are rare indeed in the tourism literature. Equally important is research such as that by Ellis and van Doren (1967) comparing gravity and systems models for predicting recreation flows and Wolfe (1967) on *A theory of recreational highway traffic*. Williams and Zelinsky's work (1970) discussing patterns in international tourist flows is one of the few early papers that is quoted in contemporary research (Gibson 2008) and warrants a modern review to see how such patterns have changed since then.

In the area of carrying capacity and the management of natural areas there has been nothing to equal the seminal research undertaken in the 1960s by the US Forest Service. Innovative papers by Wagar (1964) on carrying capacity and the relationship between quality of visitor experience and numbers of fellow visitors encountered, and Lucas (1964) on determining optimal numbers of encounters between different types of users are still of direct relevance to tourist destinations, even if the concept of carrying capacity has fallen out of favour in recent years, despite its relevance to sustainability (Butler 2010). Work by US Forest Service researchers has led to widely used current management policies such as *Limits of Acceptable Change* (Stankey et al 1985) and the concept of the *Opportunity Spectrum* (Clarke and Stankey 1979). The current management of many natural areas, key destinations for tourists generally and ecotourists in particular, is based heavily on the initial research done during this period. Finally, and perhaps the most glaring omission from most tourism researchers' lexicons, is the work of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) of the United States government (ORRC 1962). This *tour de force* introduced new methodologies and models to the broad field of leisure (including recreation and tourism) and made contributions which can still be found in contemporary work. The twenty seven volumes of highly innovative research into demand and supply elements were brilliantly reviewed and summarised by Wolfe (1964).

### Theoretical Explosion

The decade of the 1970s can justifiably be described as a period of rapid theoretical development in tourism research. Many of the theories and models that saw the light of day in this decade are still widely and frequently cited in contemporary tourism literature. This is ironic because at a time when increasing weight is being placed on empirical research, quantification and applicability (Hall 2013), reference is still made to theories mostly developed from thought and experience rather than hard data. Even where data were used (e.g. Plog 1973), the data sets and analyses performed are limited by contemporary standards. Most of the well known models, theories and concepts such as those of Cohen (1972), Christaller (1963), Doxey (1975), MacCannell (1976) (Plog 1973), (Stansfield and Rickert 1970) and Butler (1980) are based on those authors' impressions, observations, and intuitive thoughts, as well as considerable reading, and rarely on empirical evidence. It is fairly certain that most of the papers cited above would not be accepted today for publication in blind-reviewed academic journals. They are very much products of their time, a period when few models existed in the tourism literature but they have become obligatory starting points for many subsequent research studies. This is not to criticise them unfairly but with hindsight one has to admit that subsequent testing and evaluation has left all of them wanting in some aspects, indeed, it is a credit to the innovativeness of their creators that they are still cited today. One thing characterises all of these studies (except MacCannell's), namely that they dealt with the real rather than the conceptual world of tourism, in particular the nature of tourists and relations with those living in tourist destinations, and the effect of tourism development on destinations. This is perhaps why they still have relevance today.

## Conclusion: Paradoxes and Fallacies

(Fallacy: an incorrect or misleading notion or opinion based on inaccurate facts or invalid reasoning Hanks 1988: 401)

As befits a lapsed historian, this author has spent much time on the origins and evolution of tourism and research and will spend much less on the contemporary scene. This is justified by the argument that current researchers in tourism should be aware of the origins of recent and current research. However, it would be amiss not to take advantage of the opportunity to make a few more remarks, hopefully not too cynical or critical about the recent past and current scene.

One thing that has characterised tourism research in recent decades, reflecting the multi-disciplinary nature of research on the subject, is the borrowing of concepts and models from established disciplines and applying them to tourism. Paradoxically this can be a good way to introduce new ideas and thoughts into tourism research (this writer could hardly argue otherwise given that the Product Life Cycle (Butler 1980) was “borrowed” from the business literature), but it can also support the impression of tourism as a second rate subject with no theories or concepts of its own, as argued much earlier (e.g. Smith 1982). Both views are probably correct depending on circumstances. The negative impression can be seen in manuscripts submitted to leading tourism journals that pay scant attention to existing research and publication in tourism. These often present concepts or models from other fields which have been “parachuted” onto often inadequate tourism data, presumably in the expectation of getting a “quick if dirty” publication of an often sloppy and poorly referenced piece of work that almost certainly would not have been accepted in the author’s home disciplinary journals. Unfortunately not all of these papers get rejected, probably confirming both the poor impression of tourism amongst researchers in other fields and the low opinion of our subject by some tourism journal reviewers, who seem to take the view if a paper has a model or concept from their parent discipline, it must be applicable for tourism. Thus some scarcely relevant ideas, generally not based on any research or field knowledge of tourism, get considerable play in some areas of tourism.

There is, perhaps, in tourism research a rather too easy acceptance of ideas and concepts from elsewhere, which may result in ignoring the realities and the differences of tourism from some other aspects of human social and economic behaviour. This criticism applies in my opinion to the application or mis-application of some economic and management concepts just as much as it does to ideas from the “softer” social sciences. The paradox is that by sometimes inappropriately and uncritically accepting the ‘greatness’ of ideas and individuals from outside tourism, perhaps on the basis of “improving the scholarship” of the subject, we actually do tourism research a disservice and continue its image of being second rate. Perhaps in order to make tourism research more acceptable to researchers in other subjects in the context of research assessments this practice appears to have increased in recent years but without the desired effect.

There is one area of study, however, that is of critical relevance to tourism, more so in an era of sustainability than ever before, that has been virtually ignored in our research. The vast bulk of current tourism research is in the two areas Aramberri (2010) insightfully describes as the two ‘blades’ of his scissors analogy, namely social/cultural theories and management aspects of tourism. One area that is clearly missing in tourism scholarship is research on the environmental aspects of tourism. If sustainable development is based on a triple bottom line, then tourism research needs to pay much more attention to the relationship between tourism and the environments in which it occurs. Such work is almost totally absent. Most of the major tourism journals approach the subject from a social sciences or management perspective. Only in the *Journal of Ecotourism* and the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, and to a limited extent *Tourism Geographies*, can one expect to find an occasional article which deals with this critical area of study. When one thinks of the impacts of human activity on natural environments generally, on water, wildlife, and flora, plus tourism’s relationship to climate change and global warming and all the implications that go with these topics, one despairs at the general lack of attention to such topics by tourism researchers. Part of the reason is the focus of the tourism

journals, but just as serious is the absence of environmentally trained researchers and teachers working in tourism research. One can also fault environmental researchers for paying scant attention to tourism as an area of research, but their own disciplinary research panels would almost certainly give short thrift to requests for multi-year projects on tourism compared to established research topics in biology, forestry, water and atmospheric sciences.

While this writer does not think tourism research should be driven solely or even primarily by its applicability to management issues, and certainly not by industry needs or preferences, it is argued that we ignore the need for research on current problems relating to tourism at our peril. We have both an opportunity and an obligation to address these problems and in an era when the ‘value’ of research means more than just an academic contribution to knowledge, however disturbing that may be to academic purists and theorists, we should be taking advantage of this opportunity. It has been argued elsewhere (Butler 2012) that if industry (or government) does not take advantage of sound academic research on tourism, that is its own failing and not our responsibility. Equally, however, if we produce obscure pedantic mind-numbing papers on abstract theories that mean little to more than a very few self-selected individuals with shared interests, it will not be surprising if we find our research ignored or worse, assessed as of little value or worth. Hitching the tourism wagon to current “hot issues”, coining meaningless and sometimes inappropriate terminology for what are virtually non-issues, and generally engaging in navel-gazing to the extreme do little to improve the image and worth of tourism research.

On a positive note, it is encouraging to see the rapidly growing output of research in tourism from Chinese scholars. While quite understandably, but unfortunately for monoglot English readers such as this writer, most of this research is in Chinese, although journals such as *Tourism Tribune* and *Management of Tourism* include English abstracts and references for papers which are both informative and useful. Chinese research is covering a wide range of topics from philosophical issues to sophisticated statistical analysis and one can only hope that more of this work, some with non-Chinese authors, is published in English to reach a deservedly wider audience.

If tourism research is to contribute seriously to knowledge, even if only about tourism, it should return to a more factual approach, examining tourism in the context of the world in which it exists with an emphasis on the topic as a whole, rather than trying to develop new niches for further personal aggrandisement resulting in fragmentation of effort and interest. The present polarity between highly personal subjective interpretation often using tiny non-representational samples or advanced statistical analysis of often unique data producing significant (in the statistical sense) but completely irrelevant findings needs to change if tourism research is to be taken seriously and the results to have real meaning. In recent years research topics have expanded greatly which is beneficial, but at times the focus has moved from reality to impressions and then fallacies, such that producers of papers on tiny numbers of highly personal interpretations with little merit for generalisation or contributing to knowledge often claim the high moral ground through obfuscation of meaning and rejection of analysis, replacing facts with feelings. The necessity amongst almost all scholars to publish to survive means that the present scale of production of manuscripts heavily outweighs their value. Tourism research, like many other fields is becoming dominated by a combination of “so what?” and “the emperor has no clothes” writings.

There are many issues and unknowns to be explored in what is one of the most exciting and challenging subjects to be studied. Tourism is too important a subject to deserve the denigration and non-acceptance to which it is sometimes exposed, and as tourism researchers we have an obligation to produce results and publications that do the subject and its significance justice.

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