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Research Paper

Comparing enclave tourism's socioeconomic impacts: A dependency theory approach to three state-planned resorts in Mexico

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ABSTRACT

Based on a dependency theory approach, this study examined enclave tourism's socioeconomic impacts. A survey assessing residents' perceptions of the economic and social impacts of tourism was conducted in three state-planned destinations in Mexico. A review of the literature revealed that enclave tourism has been largely criticised as an ineffective socioeconomic development strategy on a macro level. However, the empirical evidence obtained from the survey showed that tourism brings significant benefits on a micro or personal level: a phenomenon clearly recognised by locals. At the same time, from a dependency theory perspective, the results indicate that enclave tourism reinforces unequal power relationships between state-planned resorts and locals. The associated socioeconomic costs are shaped by this type of tourism development and by the locals' economic dependence on it. Unlike previous research, this study contributes a new application of the dependency paradigm to understand more fully tourism's socioeconomic impacts on a micro rather than on a macro level.

1. Introduction

Enclave tourism development has taken place – and continues to occur – in many places worldwide. Particularly in developing countries, it is largely characterised by foreign investment, repatriation of tourism revenues and social and spatial regulation. Through enclave tourism strategies, developing countries thus become involved in a globalised economic system over which they have little control (Britton, 1982). Because of the predominance of foreign capital in enclave tourism, developing countries experience domination and control by the international tourism industry. Through this kind of tourism, emerging economies develop a dependence on foreign capital and international tourism flows. Enclave tourism has, therefore, been frequently criticised as a socioeconomically unsustainable form of tourism development due to its limited economic benefits and the associated social costs for local communities (Davis & Morais, 2004; Mbaiwa, 2005; Shaw & Shaw, 1999).

The enclave tourism model has been adopted in many developing economies and remains the prevailing development model in some countries. Despite the socioeconomic importance of this model, it also encourages a dependence on foreign tourism in economically depressed areas, as well as bringing other associated costs and the likely proliferation of resort enclaves. However, except for quite specific cases in Mexico (see, for example, Brenner, 2005; López-López, Cukier, & Sánchez-Crispín, 2006; Manuel-Navarrete, 2016; Manuel-

Navarrete & Redclift, 2012; Torres & Momsen, 2005a; Torres & Momsen, 2005b), relatively little attention has been paid to enclave tourism's socioeconomic impacts, particularly in Latin American contexts. By incorporating new empirical evidence on these impacts of enclave tourism in contexts not yet studied, a broader, worldwide understanding of this tourism phenomenon could be achieved.

Comparative studies on the socioeconomic impacts of enclave tourism can be quite useful as a way to fill this gap. Through comparative research, differences and similarities in these impacts in varied contexts can be identified. Because comparative studies help to detect underlying general processes across different contexts (Mills, 2008), they can, in turn, help to develop new conceptual or theoretical propositions in tourism impact studies. However, despite this research method's significant contributions, there still appear to be some limitations in previous attempts to carry out comparative studies of enclave tourism's impacts.

Based on a comparative methodological framework, the present study sought to analyse enclave tourism's socioeconomic impacts as perceived by residents in different local communities. To meet this objective, research was carried out on three state-planned destinations with enclavic tourism in Mexico. The interpretation and analysis of results were grounded in a dependency paradigm, which has often been used to explain dependency relationships between 'centres' and 'peripheries' on a macro level (i.e. between countries). However, its

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underlying propositions appear to be useful when explaining relationships at a meso and micro level, in this case, between local communities and enclave resorts and their associated impacts. This study, thus, aimed to contribute a new application of dependency theory to develop a fuller understanding of tourism's socioeconomic impacts on a micro rather than macro level.

2. Literature review

2.1. Enclave tourism

Enclave tourism is a well-established concept within analyses of tourism development mainly in developing countries. The concept has been broadly applied to the spatial concentration of tourism in resort areas where large numbers of tourists consume a homogenous set of products and services (Naidoo & Sharpley, 2016). Therefore, it refers to a type of tourism development featuring social and spatial regulation of tourism-related mobilities and relationships between tourists and locals (Saarinen, 2016). Enclavic spaces tend to receive financial support from development agencies and local government organisations (Edensor, 2000). Although most of these spaces are marked by intensive foreign hotel chain participation, in some cases this type of development is characterised by the entry of several dominant domestic business groups of the hospitality sector (Clancy, 1999). In enclave destinations, many businesses are foreign-owned, and tourist revenue is thus either retained or repatriated (Anderson, 2011). Foreign capital is used to create and maintain ownership of most tourism and hospitality companies, leading to a leakage of foreign exchange earnings (Brohman, 1996). Manuel-Navarrete (2016, p. 3) reports that enclave tourism spaces 'are carefully staged and designed, regulated, planned, commoditised and privatised'.

As such, enclave tourism is characterised by a minimal local economic impact, and this form of tourism is often regarded as being socioeconomically unsustainable (Mbaiwa, 2005). According to Shaw and Shaw (1999, p. 68), these 'enclaves are operated by global capital and transnational organisations through a series of spatial networks, which, unless they are strongly regulated by the local state, allow only limited economic benefits to accrue to the host communities'. Manuel-Navarrete's (2016) research integrated an analysis of historical structural patterns of segregation with the categories, canons and narratives extracted from the life stories of tourism agents. The results reveal that through exclusionary enclave tourism, tourism business owners generate economic benefits by controlling tourism spaces and monopolising appropriations of tourism revenues. However, Manuel-Navarrete also argues that boundary work-practices are not solely a consequence of tourism but, instead, are historically entangled with past boundaries and their associations with practices of domination, resistance or collaboration.

The presence and operations of transnational organisations pose significant threats to small local businesses. Small and medium-sized enterprises provide the most employment in regional economies, and these firms are more likely to develop reciprocal links with other local businesses in comparison with large foreign corporations (Hall & Lew, 2009). Thus, enclavic entrepreneurial activity may reduce local businesses' significant contributions to local and regional employment and to links with other economic sectors.

Nonetheless, enclave tourism development can also lead to strategic entrepreneurial responses. Small local entrepreneurial activities – either formal or informal – may react to enclavic tourism development by both seeking opportunities and engaging in behaviours that create competitive advantages and sustain performance. This may result in a series of distinctive sales strategies whereby local sellers seek to maximise their scant opportunities. These strategies are used particularly by informal-sector organisations in order to survive within the highly competitive market environments that enclavity imposes (Shaw & Shaw, 1999).

In addition, the regulation of tourist-resident interactions in enclave tourism is largely dependent on travel patterns shaped by external capital and control. In enclave tourism development, '[t]he collective nature of Fordist tourism also contributes to the relatively undifferentiated nature of mass tourists. Mass tourism consumers often demand Western amenities provided in a protected "tourism bubble" (Torres, 2002, p. 91). Tourists are characteristically cut off from social contact with the local population (Edensor, 2000). These developments contain all or the great majority of facilities and services needed by tourists who have little desire or limited possibilities to leave these enclaves (Saarinen, 2016).

Thus, these tourists characteristically seldom visit other places in the countries to which they travel. This is because, through their pre-paid trip, they are supplied with almost everything they might need, including accommodation, food, transportation, sporting activities, entertainment and other items (Anderson, 2011; Britton, 1982). Within enclave tourism space, tourists' performance is socially and spatially regulated. Tourists are subject to control, and their activities and movements are arranged to facilitate maximum expenditure and to keep them away from potentially offensive and uncomfortable environments (Edensor, 2000, 2001). This, of course, limits tourists' movements and reduces their spending and sociocultural interactions with locals in the destination. As a result of its limited economic and social impacts, enclave tourism has been regarded as a problem in Third World tourism development, in particular (Brohman, 1996).

Nonetheless, due to its expected socioeconomic significance for and adoption by tourism dependent economies, this form of tourism has been analysed mainly in the context of developing countries. Shaw and Shaw (1999), for example, have highlighted the emergent links and inevitable tensions between external capital and local entrepreneurship in and around different enclave resorts in Indonesia. They further report that enclave tourism means that local people and informal enterprises are relegated to a marginal 'other' status, as local businesses are generally limited to peripheral locations both geographically and economically. Shaw and Shaw (1999) also found empirical evidence that enclave tourism is associated with exclusivity, external control and limited or structured interactions between tourists and locals, thereby widening social and cultural gaps between them.

In a similar vein but using the concept of sustainable development, Mbaiwa (2005) examined the expansion of enclave tourism in the Okavango Delta in Botswana. The cited study's results reveal that this form of tourism's advantages are relatively few compared with its disadvantages, having a minimal economic impact on rural development mainly because enclaves have weak links with the domestic economy. Anderson (2011) similarly explored the socioeconomic impacts of enclave tourism in Zanzibar, Tanzania. In line with previous studies, the cited author reports that enclave tourists spend more in their origin country than any other type of tourists do and enclave guests spend less in the destination versus other types of tourists, especially in terms of buying items from local businesses.

2.2. Perceptions of enclave tourism's impacts

Enclave tourism's impacts have been studied mainly from a socio-economic perspective. As tourism impact studies in general have found, local people have reported enclave tourism's socioeconomic impacts as both positive and negative. These individuals' perceptions and attitudes have, for decades, been the most accepted and established method to identify tourism's benefits and costs because local people witness changes in their everyday life and environment and they can describe their relationship to tourism (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Dyer, Gursoy, Sharma, & Carter, 2007; Getz, 1994; Husbands, 1989; Monterrubio, 2016; Pizam, 1978; Tosun, 2002; Tyrell & Spaulding, 1984; Vargas-Sánchez, Porrás-Bueno, & Plaza-Mejía, 2011). At an individual level, indicating changes as positive (i.e. benefits) or negative (i.e. costs) is certainly a subjective process, but, according to the *Interorganizational*

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