Annals of Tourism Research 71 (2018) 1–12

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Annals of Tourism Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/annals

A structural approach to social representations of destination collaboration in Idre, Sweden

Ioanna Farsari*

Dalarna University, School of Technology and Business Studies, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Associate Editor: Scott McCabe

Keywords:
Structural approach
Social representations
Collaboration
Sweden
Cognitive mapping

ABSTRACT

Collaboration is a social activity shaped by interactions. Taking a structural approach in social representations theory, the present research used a cognitive mapping method to analyse and compare the mental models of actors regarding collaborations in Idre, Sweden. Tourism actors share a core system in their representations which develops around packaging and selling of the tourism product to an international market, indicative of a hegemonic representation. Issues of quality, shared responsibility, trust, inclusivity and power were also revealed and should be taken into account in planning tourism and collaborations in the area. Findings indicate that actors hold multiple representations of collaboration, which reflects the social complexity apparent in the tourism destination, and the evolutionary character of social representations.

Introduction

Collaboration is important for the success of any tourism destination (Fyall, Garrod, & Wang, 2012). The fragmentation and multidimensionality of the tourism product which is comprised of several components and providers, together with the dominance of Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (SMTEs), in an increasingly globalised environment, make collaboration essential for destination competitiveness (Gursoy, Saayman, & Sotiriadis, 2015; Zach & Racherla, 2011). Collaboration is also important in a policy-making context, in avoiding conflicts, producing legitimate policies and improving coordination (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999). Collaboration can be seen as a means of problem solving, as well as a policy goal for sustainable tourism development (Vernon, Essex, Pinder, & Curry, 2005) and as essential for the successful implementation of projects and the governance of destinations (Beritelli, 2011).

A variety of theories are used in collaboration research. Fyall et al. (2012) make the distinction between: resource-based theories, which develop around the scarcity of resources; politics-based theories, which develop around power relationships; process-based theories, which examine the development and evolution of collaboration; chaos-based theories, which examine the role of uncertainty and self-organisation in collaboration; and relationship-based theories, which focus on stakeholders' representation and mutual dependency. This last strand of research, around relations-based theories, has received considerable attention within destination collaboration research, and has employed theories, such as social exchange theory, to understand collaboration on the basis of expected mutual benefits (e.g. Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Ramayah, Chow Lee and Chyaw, 2011); stakeholder theory, to examine salience and representation of stakeholders (e.g. Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Currie, Seaton, & Wesley, 2009; d'Angella and Go, 2009; Jamal and Stronza, 2009); and network theory, to examine how actors' relationships influence decision-making and the competitiveness of destinations (e.g. Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011; Baggio, 2011; Dredge, 2006). Despite the wide variety of theories used in destination collaboration research, and the focus on the social relationships between tourism actors,

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: ifa@du.se.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2018.02.006
Received 28 January 2016; Received in revised form 8 February 2018; Accepted 12 February 2018
0160-7383/ © 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

to the knowledge of this author, no research has used social representations theory.

Social representations theory was developed in 1961 by Moscovici within social psychology as a framework to explain the understanding of psychoanalysis by different societal groups. It is the theory of everyday knowledge, of common sense; it examines socially shared beliefs, which allow people to communicate, interact and behave comprehensibly (Moscovici, 2001). It has since been applied beyond the field of social psychology, to the social representations of hazards, science and biotechnology pain, organisational cognition and change, sustainability, national identity and marketing among others.

Moscardo (2011) advocated the adoption of a social representation approach in tourism studies in order to emphasise the social construction of knowledge regarding tourism. Tourism destinations are complex amalgamations of divergent groups and views (Baggio, Scott, & Cooper, 2010; Farsari, Butler, & Szivas, 2011). Their dynamic interactions influence their apprehension regarding collaboration, which in turn influences the way collaborations are executed and, ultimately, their success. The aim of this research is to examine collaboration as a social action, the meaning, content, and practice of which are dynamically shaped and understood in a social context based on the actors' interactions. Social representations theory is used here as the theoretical framework to examine collaboration in Idre, Sweden. It is argued here that a thorough understanding of the social construction of collaboration, facilitated by the use of social representations theory, will contribute to our understanding of how collaborations develop and function, with both theoretical and practical implications. Adding one more theoretical lens in the understanding of collaborations can indeed contribute to the body of knowledge (Beritelli, 2011) and to supporting stakeholders by providing knowledge that is necessary to make informed decisions regarding their collaborations (Fyall et al., 2012).

Theoretical background

Destination collaboration

Much of the research in destination collaboration has focused on collaborative policy and planning (Beritelli, 2011). Research into collaborative planning has often adopted a stakeholder theory approach to examine stakeholder representation in the planning process and the influence that this representation might have upon the development of sustainable tourism (e.g. Currie et al., 2009; Jamal & Stronza, 2009). Other research has examined conflicts and consensus building in stakeholder relationships in planning and policy (e.g. Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Healy, Rau, & McDonagh, 2012) or factors influencing cooperative behaviour (e.g. Beritelli, 2011; Pesämaa & Hair, 2008). Public–private collaborations in tourism have formed another field of inquiry (Gursoy et al., 2015) with the focus recently having shifted to governance and the role of networks (Dredge, 2006). Issues of power and connectivity in policy networks and their influence on public governance and policy debates have formed an area of inquiry within this strand of research (e.g. Bramwell & Meyer, 2007; Pforr, 2006). Research in networks and collaborations has developed as another strand, that of interorganisational relationships between tourism firms to examine destinations as amalgamations of various stakeholders, related interests, and services (e.g. Baggio et al., 2010; Dredge, 2006; March & Wilkinson, 2009; Scott, Cooper and Baggio, 2008; Zach & Racherla, 2011). Finally, chaos and complexity theories have been employed to study collaborative planning in an effort to address the complex, unpredictable character of tourism policy-making (Lew, 2014; Plummer & Fennell, 2009).

Although, these studies have examined relationships among tourism stakeholders, most draw from stakeholder, social exchange and network theory to examine how relationships between stakeholders influence their cooperative behaviour, and the management and marketing of destinations, and how stakeholders collaborate to achieve mutual benefits. Relationship-based theories (e.g. social exchange theory, network theory, game theory, stakeholder theory) emphasise the roles of trust, power (Fyall et al., 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012) and informal forms of collaborations (Beritelli, 2011), while complexity-based theories contribute to the understanding of the self-organisation and evolution of collaborations (Fyall et al., 2012). On the other hand, theories such as institutional analysis, rational choice theory and transaction cost economics emphasise the importance of formal collaboration (Beritelli, 2011). Several authors have rejected the use of a single theoretical framework to study collaboration and instead they used multiple theories (e.g. Baggio et al., 2010; Beritelli, 2011; Fyall et al., 2012; Wang & Xiang, 2007). These authors have argued on the benefits from the adoption of multiple theories to derive theoretical constructs and inform decision making with regard to destination collaboration.

Social representations theory

Social representations theory offers a framework for understanding the collective creation of meaning (Moscovici, 1988). Social representations are a system of values, ideas, beliefs and practices that a social group might share and which helps group members identify the world around them as well as their position in it (Moscovici, 2001). This system is socially constructed through interactions and communication and allows individuals to develop a social identity, the feeling of membership in one social group or another (Wagner et al., 1999; Rateau, Moliner, Guimelli, & Abric, 2011). Moreover, social representations are not static; they change over time due to interactions and negotiations with regard to meaning, which lead to the accommodation of variations within subgroups (Abric, 2001). Social representations allow an understanding of the interplay between collective shared meaning and individual experiences, and of how this in turn influences behaviour (Walmsley, as cited in Lin, He, Jin, Tao, & Jiang, 2013, p. 1931). Social representations are thus important in collaboration. The social representation of collaboration among tourism actors will affect their commitment to the shared goals and guide their practices for the realisation of those goals.

Moscovici (1988, p. 221) argued that there are essentially "*three ways that a representation becomes social*": the hegemonic, the emancipated and the polemical. According to Moscovici, a *hegemonic* representation reflects a "homogeneity and stability" of beliefs

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7416229

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/7416229

Daneshyari.com