



The tourism and peace nexus



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Previous findings on the relationship between tourism and peace are inconclusive.
- A methodological framework for studying the peace and tourism nexus is proposed.
- Tourism may play an inhibiting, subservient or mediating role in reconciliation.
- Tourism's contribution to reconciliation may be represented in a dynamic continuum.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 21 December 2015
Received in revised form
12 September 2016
Accepted 13 September 2016

Keywords:

Conflict
Peace
Reconciliation
Tourism
Political science theory

ABSTRACT

Tourism has been heralded as a contributor to peace, however, the inconclusive findings of empirical studies render the need for a consolidation of theory that has in so far relied on case studies and the adoption of the contact hypothesis. Informed by political science theory, this paper proposes a methodological framework that can guide future research and aims to serve as a benchmark for researchers interested in temporal issues pertaining to conflict, peace and tourism. Signalling a departure from the simplistic notion that contact through travel contributes to social integration, the paper adopts a holistic conceptualisation of the multi-faceted and complex system of actors, sectors and dimensions of tourism spanning at the social, economic, political and environmental levels.

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1. Introduction

A fortiori, tourism is a phenomenon entrenched in social structures, networks and behavioural aspects. Unsurprisingly, the tenet that tourism has the power to contribute to peace, through the improvement of human relations and perceptions and the cultivation of understanding among people, is widespread and time-honoured. Tourism is increasingly perceived as a force for peace and as such constitutes a primary component of sustainable development, as exemplified by recent reports of inter-governmental and international organisations (such as the WTO and the EU), which acknowledge tourism's social dimension and potential capability in fostering and sustaining world peace. The continuously increasing number of international tourism flows beyond the current figure of 1.1 billion (UNWTO, 2015) signifies a hopeful force, which is assumed to improve perceptions and

attitudes amongst people in today's diverse society. Such postulation is of particular interest nowadays due to current political events including increased terrorism and political instability in various parts of the world, which lead to negative prejudices and attitudes among people.

Discourse advocating the role of tourism as a peacemaker is based on the premise that contact induced by travel may positively influence international politics and foster world peace by reducing cultural and psychological gaps among people (Nyaupane, Teye, & Paris, 2008). Several scholars posited that contact through travel heightens tourism's role as an agent of change, which may bring down barriers among people and encourage cooperation among nations (Askjellerud, 2003; Causevic, 2010; Sarkar & George, 2010). Nonetheless, criticism has been put forward over the idealised position of tourism. Scholars have questioned the validity of the causal relationship between tourism and peace (Anastasopoulos, 1992; Pizam, Jafari, & Milman, 1991; Salazar, 2006), with Litvin (1998) suggesting that tourism is a beneficiary of peace rather than a cause of peace. The supporters of this premise argue that the

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increase in travel in the post WW II era is an indication of the way tourism benefits from peace and stability. In support of this argument, Rowen (2014) assumed that tourism's normative trajectory to reconciliation was symptomatic. Indeed it is widely acknowledged that tourism cannot flourish in the midst of conflict, with sceptics arguing that people always travelled yet such travelling tendencies have neither minimised the propensity of nations to enter into conflict nor eliminated gaps among diverse communities.

While the effect of peace on tourism development is well-established, the rhetoric on the contributory role of tourism to peace is fragile, with previous research findings remaining inconclusive of the nature of the relationship. Although the series of terrorist activities that took place during the 21st century have led to the reigniting of academic interest on the role of tourism as a social force that can promote international understanding and cooperation, little progress towards consolidating the literature has been achieved. First, much of the research conducted in so far has been descriptive in nature, lacking theorising from other fields such as political sciences. Second, most research findings are deduced from case study investigations, which although are prominent, often lack the generalizability effect that credits their validity. The contextual factors surrounding the development of tourism in previously and/or currently conflict ridden areas are inherently linked to the degree to which tourism can contribute to peace. Yet, these have been to a great extent described rather than theoretically underpinned. Third, the vast majority of research conducted has focused on the paradigms of 'peace' and 'tourism', with the construct of 'conflict' being largely overlooked. Nonetheless, the relationship between tourism, peace and conflict is an interdependent and reciprocal one, that calls for further research on the interplay of the constructs in order to answer pressing questions such as: a) what type of tourism is appropriate for peace-building; b) what forms of peace does tourism contribute to; and c) how do the conditions in which conflict arose in the first place impact the sustainability of the relationship between tourism and peace.

Although the literature on the tourism and peace nexus is anything but barren, this paper attempts to illuminate existing knowledge and address the above-mentioned gaps noted in the literature by adopting a theoretical stance and proposing a methodological framework that can guide future research. In doing so, the nature and causes of conflict are identified and discussed while the examination of the meaning of and approaches to peace is informed by political science theory. Ultimately, this paper aims to serve as a departure from the simplistic attempt to answer whether tourism contributes to peace and invite scholars to consider *what* tourism may contribute to peace. The paper begins by identifying the need for synthesising conflict and peace theory. This includes the suggestion that relevant theories on conflict causation and approaches to conflict resolution need to be examined concurrently. Second, it presents and discusses extant literature findings on the tourism and peace relationship to highlight the stance of this paper in the pertinent research milieu. The third part deals with the main contribution of the paper, a conceptual and methodological framework aiming to guide future research studies. Specifically, the framework captures the multi-dimensionality and complexity of the relationship between tourism, conflict and peace and identifies factors predisposing the degree to which tourism may contribute to peace. Additionally, the dynamic nature of the tripartite relationship is presented diagrammatically, whereby tourism is acknowledged as a potential channel of reconciliation and peace in the presence of cultivating factors pertaining to active intergroup behaviour and transformative stewardship. The paper concludes by recognising the latent capability of tourism in transforming the political, social and economic sphere of life by providing the space

whereby the narratives of peace can be produced, and discusses implications for progressing knowledge on the peace and tourism nexus in general and on tourism management in particular.

2. Conflict and peace: a synergetic theoretical consideration

There cannot be a discussion on conflict without a consideration of the specificities of the goal of peace, nor can we speak of reconciliation without reference to the type and conditions of conflict. In this section the constructs of conflict and peace are discussed and paralleled to each other, in an attempt to increase understanding of their dimensions, conditions and nature.

2.1. Conflict: nature and causes

Derived from the Latin word *confligere*, which means to strike together, conflict has been defined as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals" (Coser, 1956, p. 7). Mack and Snyder (1957) claimed that conflict is characterised by four conditions: a) the existence of two or more parties, b) a situation where resource scarcity exists, c) the presence of behaviour aiming at harming opponents and d) mutually opposed interests. Hence, it can be concluded that conflict is a human interaction involving persons, groups or nations that have incompatible interests (Coleman and Deutsch, 2000). Some scholars posit that conflict is submerged in behavioural paradigms, as it involves overt and coercive behaviour, claiming that for conflict to emerge it is not enough that a party acknowledges the contradiction in goals but decides to act upon it, leading to the other party to retaliate (Bar-Tal, 2011; Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, & Zartman, 2009). Others argue that incompatibility of goals maybe perceived by parties, but it is not always demonstrated through violence, concluding that some conflicts maybe violent or non-violent in nature (Boulding, 1962; Caselli & Coleman, 2013). It is generally accepted that conflicts may move from a passive or static position to an active, dynamic state and thus demonstrate various phases of escalation and de-escalation (Peleg, 2006).

In an attempt to identify the roots of conflict, several theories have been put forward. These theories are typically classified into two schools of thought: agency and structural theories. The agency analysis framework traces the causes of conflict into perceptions at the individual and collective agency level in its attempt to explain human behaviour. Within this school of thought, a dichotomy of theoretical foundation is evident with several scholars emphasising behavioural perspectives (also known as micro-level theories) as causes of a conflict whilst others support a classical view (or macro-level theories) in explaining the origins of conflict. Micro-level theories argue that conflict is innate, arising from a psychological need of humans to differentiate themselves and that conflict is essentially cognitive-based. On the other hand, macro-level theories postulate that conflict arises as a result of group interactions, whereby the use of power in intergroup relations is a predominant factor that may lead to the marginalisation, inequality and discrimination of some social groups. Contrary to agency theories, which propose that the roots of conflict can be traced to societal factors, structure theorising seeks explanation of behaviour in terms of the economic and political context in which behaviour occurs and postulates that political and institutional factors and resource-based competition lead to conflict (Wolff, 2006). A burgeoning research agenda has emerged exploring both micro-level and macro-level theories, with scholars concluding that the former fail to consider the wider political, economic and social processes as causal mechanisms, while the latter provide an inadequate explanation on why multi-ethnic societies have no

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