



Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinnings of Tourism Geography

KEYWORDS

Tourism, Geography, Concept, Trend, Tradition, Paradigm.

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ABSTRACT *In today's world, tourism is one of the most important forces for change which revolutionised the world. Tourism Geography displays the study of tourism in geographer's perspective. It emerged and developed mainly in the western world. Research in tourism geography being fascinating and challenging has occupied a prominent position in human geography. Approaches to study tourism have witnessed a number of evolutionary phases. This Article offers a conceptual look at issues and perspectives related to how field practioners apply knowledge to make decision and solve problems. The study draws from utilization literature, and aims at locating this knowledge use in a conceptual framework. Conceptual and theoretical understanding related to various issues, factors and dimensions of Tourism Geography is presented in the historical geographical perspective.*

While the Field-specific focus is deliberates and has its limitations, this research could potentially contribute to both tourism and utilization literature.

Introduction

Tourism in its recent form is rather a recent phenomenon but travelling has been a characteristic feature of human society and lifestyle (Chand, 2010). Although It existed even before the recorded history but the approach of journey was different. In twentieth century, the nature of tourism become fully transformed from ancient unorganized, conventional pilgrimage and/or cultural travel to highly technical, advanced, recreational and special interest travel along with the advanced concepts like sustainable tourism (Hall, 2006). Recently tourism is accepted and expected as an important part of modern day lifestyle.

In the past ages, people were tourists because of their trades and religion,

Whereas now they are tourists because tourism is their religion (Robert Runcie)

Geographers specialize in the study of location, environment, climate, landscape, and economic aspects etc. The geographical approach in tourism treats aspects like tourism locales, the changes that tourism brings to landscape, dispersion of tourism development, physical planning, and economic, social and cultural problems. No doubt, tourism is fundamentally and intrinsically a geographical phenomenon. Tourism can't be exist in seclusion. Geography provides a strong concrete platform for tourism activities. Research in tourism is conducted at different geographic scales ranging from global, national and regional through local. The interactions of processes and changes at each scale have traditionally been the hallmark of positivist empiricist geography (Johnston, 1991).

Three major zones of tourism activity: 'the tourist generating zone' 'the tourist receiving zone' and 'the zone of interaction and interpretation' (Leiper 1990) are a part of geographical entity. The tourist generating zone represents the home of a tourist from where journey begins and ends, and is no doubt geographical in nature. A tourist comes from a place and its geographical location, socio-economic characteristics, demographic aspects and political setting largely affect the decision making of a tourist. These areas represent the main tourists' market of the world. The

tourist receiving zone, on the other hand is that important geographical location which not only attract and receive the tourists but also provide a natural environment of leisure and comfort. It is the place of interaction between the host and tourists. The third major zone of tourism includes the routes travelled between 'tourist- generating area' and 'the receiving area' forming key elements of tourism spatial system. It represents the location of main transportation component of the tourist industry. Tourism is a destination based phenomenon and the distribution and location of these destinations are studied by geographers. Physical geography, environment geography, cultural geography, economic geography and behavioural geography are some of the main streams of geography which are intensely interrelated with tourism activities. On the one hand, historical monuments, religious destinations and cultural places attract and affect the decision making of tourists; on the other hand, spatial pattern of tourist places, livelihood of their communities, their social and cultural practices are largely affected by the interaction with tourists.

Tourism Geography as a concept:-

Tourism is defined as travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes. The word 'tourism' was first used in 1811 and 'tourist' in 1840. Etymologically, the word is composed of two words-'tour' and suffix 'ism', The word tour is derived from the Latin, 'tornare' and the Greek, 'tornos', meaning a circle which depict the movement around a central point or axis. English meaning of this word is 'one's turn'. The suffix -ism is defined as 'an action or process'; or the action of movement around a circle i.e. the act of leaving and then returning to the original starting point. In Sanskrit literature, there are three terms used to explain the purpose or nature of tourism viz. (a) *Parayatan* (b) *Desatan* (c) *Tirthatan*. Tourism as a phenomenon is basically resulting into interrelationships between man, space and time. A satisfactory and meaningful definition of tourism must include all these three basic elements mentioned above.

Hunziker and Krapf (1941) defined tourism as "the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with

any earning activity." In its early stage, travel and stay for economic or business purposes was not considered as a 'tourism activity' but as the trends and the purposes of visits changed and due to the technological advancement and globalization, economic visits were also considered as tourism activity. Tourism Society of England (1976) defined it as "the temporary, short-term movement of people to destination outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities take place during the stay at each destination. It includes movements for all purposes". By the end of 1980s, tourism was defined on the basis of economic mobility and socio-cultural impacts. Jafari (1977) described tourism as, "the study of man away from his usual habitat and the industry which responds to his needs, and the impacts that both, he and the industry, have on the hosts' socio-cultural, economic and physical environments." In 1990s, by the researchers and different agencies, tourism is defined on the basis of leisure and recreational activities. The International Association of Scientific Experts in tourism (1981) defined tourism in terms of particular activities selected by choice and undertaken outside the home. World Tourism Organization repeatedly presented and evaluated the definition of tourism according to world tourism research trends. WTO (1993) defined tourism as "the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". Tourism is generally defined on the basis of two broad concepts 'supply-side' and 'demand-side'. Gunn and Var (2002) described, "tourism itself is an abstraction. It does not exist in a discrete or tangible way it is not even a discipline...it is a field made up of many physical programme and action parts". United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2004) articulated tourism as, 'activity engaged in outside a person's usual environment for any purpose other than the pursuit of remuneration from within the place visited'. But recently tourism is not merely an activity for past time and environment, it is considered now as an 'enriching and energizing activity' (Hans 2008). On the basis of above mentioned observations, it can be brief that the term tourism is vast and the nature of tourism is dynamic which changes according to the innovative trends in the discipline. A glowing customary definition of tourism is however, difficult to suggest because of the vastness and interdisciplinary characteristics. It is not easy to bind such a concept in limited words. In a generalized form tourism can be defined as "an enriching and refreshing activity which involves travel outside a person's usual environment for the purpose of business, leisure, comfort and recreation and mental rejuvenation".

Initially tourism was one of the credibility and legitimacy of serious academic investigation of a 'fun related activity' but even when acceptance was generally forthcoming, the treatment of tourism within the literature of human geography has remained extremely uneven (Daniels, 2006). To understand the Geographical approaches to the study of tourism which moved through a number of evolutionary phases, can be discussed under following four eras: the era of descriptive research; the era of positivist- empiricist research; the era of eco-centric research; and the era of specialization research.

a) The era descriptive research (Pre 1960):

During the age of industrial revolution when the people had both time and money in hand, they started a sought of temporary leisure and mobility especially in western world. This movement affected significantly to the economy of both origin and destination area. Before 1930's, the

study in tourism was mainly related to define its typology because this was the infancy stage of tourism geography research. It was until 1930's that scholars other than historian started to make contributions to tourism, catching the attention of geographers, and later, economist and planner (Graburn and Jafari, 1991).

In this era, the research was mainly carried out under the shades of three core standpoints. Firstly and most important geographically, tourism was conceptualized as a significant form of land use which reflects the geographical traditions of research on 'human-land interactions'. Because these leisure movements motivated the local traders and business man to establish special sort of landscape to attract tourists, earlier geographers showed a deep interest in this significant form of land use which reflects the geographical tradition of man- land relationship tradition along with analysing its economic impacts on regional destination setting. Gilbert's (1939), Christaller (1955), Carlson (1938), Deasy 1949, Selke (1936), Brown (1935), Carlson (1938), Eiselen (1945), Deasy (1949) and Crisler and Hunt (1952) contributed in this direction and analysed the spatial system of tourism along with economic impacts of tourism at regional levels during this period.

Secondly, another category of geographers were keenly interested in "tourist movements and motivations". To find out what a tourist wants' and what can a destination provide is also a challenge for tourism geographers. In this context, Ogilvie (1933) identified the tourist motivating factors and the factors which influence the movement of tourists over space. Maslow's hierarchy of need model (1943) suggests that lower needs in the order of hierarchy warrant priority, attention and satisfaction. Cooper (1947) examined the role of seasonality and travel motivations in decision making of tourists in America.

Human Geographers mainly from the field of social and cultural geography were not much interested in the study of tourism in this phase so as an academic subject tourism geography was trivial and the related studies were not given much attention. Brown (1935) offered an invitation to geographers for writing from the geographical point of view in a virtually virgin field. But till 1960s, there was not any direct research work on leisure and tourism. Tourism research in its early phase was confined to western countries only. Researches were conducted mainly in U.S.A, Britain and Germany. The inclination of work was towards economic geography but few studies were also carried out in the direction of the spatial distribution of tourists' destinations and seasonal impact on tourists' motivations.

b) The era of positivist- empiricist research (1960-1980):

Tourism became an issue of great interest for policy maker and stakeholders, that's why inputs for tourism industry started to come in form of development of sea side resorts and beaches. As a result of this, it was perhaps the first time when reliable data on tourism began to emerge at global level and the geographical study of tourism entered in a truly positivistic approach. It was largely used to describe and record the spatial information in geographies of tourism (Ateljevic 2000). Issues such as effect of scale; spatial distribution of tourism phenomenon; modified migration patterns; impact of transport innovation on tourism and tourism area life cycle were typical foci of tourism geography research. Wolfe (1961) and Karaph (1961) conducted their research in this direction. Wolfe conducted a research on "Cottaging in Ontario". This study provides

a base for later works on 'Second Home' development as he called tourism places as a second home for man. In a pioneer paper, Kraph (1961) concluded that tourism has a special function in developing countries, a function which he defined in terms of a series of "economic imperatives". It is more than 50 years but Kraph's prominence on 'tourism's contribution to economic growth' and the notion that 'tourism had a special function' in this regard is still widely held among the world.

During this phase, tourism research in geography at regional level was popularly conducted by regional geographers. The core areas of study were exploring the new potentials of tourism which may modify the patterns of migration, balance of payments, land use, and general socio-economic structure of the origin and hosts. Christaller (1963), Piperoglou (1966), Willam and Zelinsky (1970), Young (1973), Jafari (1974), and Turnar (1976) presented some of the pioneer works in these fields.

To strengthen the conceptual and contextual frame work of tourism geography, the emphasis was laid on theory and model building by tourism geographers. In the notion of positivistic approach, Taylor (1971), Malamud (1973) and Bell (1977) applied the gravity model in tourism geography research for locational analysis and to examine the role of distance and distance decay in tourism industry. In 1976, a 'Travel Model' was introduced by Marriot. He included the three basic elements of tourism: access route; return route; and recreational route. In the same line, to study the role of distance, Kaminske C.F. (German Scholar 1977) devised a 'distance gradient' for international tourism. Briton (1980) presented a model of tourism development known as 'An Enclave Model of Tourism Economy'.

Some scholars tried to find out the status and development of tourism geography research and published influential work on it. Mitchell (1979) noted in the introduction to a special issue of *Annals of Tourism Research*, "The geography of tourism is limited by a dearth of published research in geographical journals." Pearce (1979) commented that the geography of tourism was not coherent and lacked a conceptual and theoretical base. These arguments reflect the research gaps in tourism geography research at that time. Yet economic aspect of tourism remained dominant even after 1970s but through the efforts of young scholars, new concepts like tourism area life cycle; tourism and migration patterns; land use pattern; socio-economic structure of the origin and hosts; role of transport innovations like jet transport on tourism; distance gradient and tourism; were introduced. Tourism research in term of temporal-spatial analysis was the speciality of research during 1970-1980. Concepts such as leisure and comfort were used at global level. The positivistic and holistic approach was dominant during this phase but socio-cultural aspects were also introduced in tourism research.

c) The era of humanistic and eco-centric research (1980 to 2000):

The third era of tourism geography research (1980-2000) can be considered as a mature phase of tourism research. Butler (1980), Pearce (1981), Mathieson and Wall (1982), Patmore (1983) and Smith (1983) and Pigram (1989) were the leading tourism researchers in the field. There has been rapid development and expansion was noticed in the last few decades which cause many social and environmental problems. All these situations demand more environmental and host friendly tourism activities. So the concept of sustainable tourism development- "achieved virtual global

endorsement as the new tourism industry paradigm in the late 1980s" (Godfrey, 1996). The term sustainable is transformed to tourism from the concept of sustainable development. The research work proposed during this phase can be categorized under two main approaches: behavioural approach; eco-centric approach

It was during this period, 'behavioral approach' was used frequently to study the 'behaviour of tourists' and to 'construct tourist behavior models'. Several research studies have been conducted on travelers, their needs and motivations. The emphasis was laid on the concepts like leisure, comfort, hospitality and tourism along with impact of tourism on environment. Some studies paid attention to changing livelihood patterns of a particular community and acculturation of the host society through tourism phenomenon. Pearce and Smith (1983) adopted 'Behavioural approach' in the field of tourism geography. In this phase, the new concept of 'rural tourism' progressed in the field of tourism geography research. Bouquet and Winter (1987) studied the socio-cultural implications of rural tourism development. In the late 1990s, principles and models were attempted to make the subject more scientific. Greifswald (1992) built a model related to leisure and tourism. This was popularly known as 'Greifswald Model of Recreational Geography'. Its purpose was to draw together – in one major overview – the societal origins of tourism and leisure by considering tourism and recreation as basic human needs with available leisure time.

During 2000s, 'eco-centric' approach was introduced and the newly emerged sub-themes under this approach were 'sustainability' and 'ecotourism'. The term ecotourism firstly introduced in 1989 (*Dictionary of Etymology*, 2012). Rural tourism as a sustainable activity also became an ascendant theme in western world. **Cui Fengjun Liu Jiaming (1998)** defined tourism environmental bearing capacity as the bearing intensity of tourism destination during a period which doesn't do harm to the present and future people in its current state and which can be accepted by the residents. A 'Simulation Model' for tourism was established by Sanderson in 1994. This model was a part of 'Population-Development-Environment' The PDE approach integrates the interactions between population, economic, social development and environment. Hunter and Green (1995), Mieczkowski (1995) and Helen and Der (2000) studied Sustainable tourism and Eco tourism in a holistic manner. Anderies (2000) established a model called as 'Minimal Model', which included three key elements: Tourist; Natural Environment; and Capital. This model is used to predict the economic and environmental impact of any given policy related to tourism. Batta (2000) provided a systematic analysis for the interaction of tourism with environment and ways to achieve sustainability.

In this period (1980 to 2000), research work was done to strengthen the subject. Both quantitative/positivist and qualitative/behavioural approaches were frequently used. Spatial models were prepared on the economic, sociological and environmental aspects. This phase was marked with the introduction of behavioural approach for the first time in tourism geography research. Eco-centric approach was introduced to study the inter-relationship of tourism and environment and also to make tourism as an eco-friendly phenomenon. The burning issue for research in tourism geography was 'environmental impacts of tourism' and the concepts like rural tourism and eco-tourism emerged in the field.

D) The Era of Specialization(Post 2000):

In the era of specialization, tourism research became more problematic, applied and specialized in nature. The advanced concepts like medical tourism, sports tourism, village tourism, water-based tourism, tourism and development and phoenix tourism were dominant in the tourism geography research. Gustafson (2002) tried to explore the inter-relationship of tourism and migration. He studied the retirement migration to Southern Europe. It was a type of mass tourism in which retired persons visited different parts of southern Europe and Spain for months. Stevens (2003) examined changing pressures that tourism had placed on regional forests and alpine vegetation over the past half century and their role in regional vegetation change. Pant (2003) studied village tourism and its importance to the economy of villagers. Hussain (2003) analysed sustainable livelihood through tourism and pointed out how tourism provides sustainable livelihood to the poor communities or peoples. Higham (2004) presented a work on sport tourism, which was a unique study in this area. It sharply focused on the planning, development and management of sport tourism destinations. Hall (2006) highlighted the inter-relationships between tourism, leisure and recreation. The author discussed how new conceptualizations of tourism and leisure are advancing knowledge and creating understanding for research. Weaver (2006) worked on sustainable tourism. His work was an important contribution to make tourism research more scientific, specified and problem oriented. Gayle (2007) studied the dimensions of water-based tourism. To reduce the seasonality patterns of tourism in Kerala, Kerala approached policies

towards 'monsoon tourism' (Hans 2008), this was also a kind of specialized theme in itself. The study addressed a broad range of water based recreation activities, sustainability and their future directions. Sharpley (2009) challenged sustainable tourism development paradigm. The author discussed the evolution of the concepts like sustainable tourism development, its manifestations and limitations and he proposed alternative approaches to tourism development which, nevertheless, retain environmental sustainability as a prerequisite of tourism development. Chahuan (2009) focused on the status and scope of aero sports tourism in Himachal Pradesh. This study is an example of advancement and specialization of tourism geography research. Paul and Senija (2011) worked on phoenix tourism. They studied post conflict tourism in the context of the renewal of the destination and its people and how war inherited sites are transformed in to a cultural heritage through catharsis.

Conclusion:

It can thus be concluded that the trends in tourism research took a shift from holistic to specialized view. Although the concepts like economic impacts of tourism, sustainable and eco-tourism, seasonal effects on tourism etc. remains valid even today yet hill tourism and planning, trekking tourism, water sports tourism, medical tourism, space tourism etc are emerging as special areas of research in tourism and 21st century is a period of advanced tourism geography research.

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