THE INCEPTION OF THE RATIONAL PLATFORM

Prof. Korstanje M.
Department of Economics
University of Palermo, Argentina&
Geoffrey Skoll
Department of Criminal Justice
Buffalo State College, US

Abstract
This is not an attack to managerial literature nor marketing, which are valuable instruments to make people's life better. Rather, this essay-review focuses its criticism against RP (Rational Platform), elaborated by some policy-maker who are camouflaged of social scientists. The inception of rational platform, following the legacy of Jafar Jafari, is based on the "instrumentalisation" of some concepts and protocols of science; however, it is aimed at protecting the financial interests of status quo. In addition, RP conforms as the fifth platform to those formulated by Jafari a couple of decades back. The RP constructs its legitimacy alluding to scientific protocols such as the peer-review process, impact factor indexes, journal rankings, some naïve methodological discussions, but at the bottom their results consist in the administration of opinion polls to know further on the preferences of a great variety of segments. Subject to demographic variables such as gender, income and age of tourists, these questionaries' are "simulacra" of scientific research. Its explanations are of second order associated to profits and business-related programs.

Introduction

Today, tourism is considered one of the fastest growing industries, not only because of the income it generates, but also its resiliency in the face of hazards of late modernity. In this context, many universities adopted tourism in their undergraduate and graduate curricula. This raises an interesting question: can the study of tourism be a science, now or in the future?

A couple of decades back, Jafar Jafari (2001) proposed a conceptual model for the evolution of tourism research. He identified four platforms: advocacy, cautionary, adaptance, and knowledge based. Since his seminal text, many studies have used one of these four platforms to classify the information related to tourism. Some studies, which examined the positive aspects of tourism, were part of advocacy platform; others,

focused more on economic and social problems brought by tourism were framed as part of the cautionary platform. Jafari and his followers believed that the maturity of the discipline would be measured by the number of published papers, journals, and scholarly conferences in tourism fields. Needless to say he was wrong, because tourism has advanced considerably over the last years, but without an agreed upon epistemology for applied research. Secondly, there was a fifth platform J. Jafari did not take into consideration at time of elaborating his model: the rational platform.

To fill this gap, in this essay review we will explore the ebbs and flows of this new platform as it has been forged in the last decades by a number of scholars (Boyer, 1997; Tribe, 1997; Hall, 2005; Botterill, 2001; Schluter, 2003; Cohen et al, 2005; 2006; Coles & Hall, 2006; Dachary & Arnaiz Burne, 2006; Santana-Talavera, 2006; Monterrubio Cordero, 2011). This work aimed at exploring the discourses around tourism fixed by the international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and World Tourism Organization as they relate to the foundation of a new rational platform. One of the troubling problems of tourism research has been the obsession with defining tourism instead of establishing shared methodologies and an epistemology for its study (Guzmán, 1986; Thirkettle & Korstanje, 2013).

Conceptual Debate

Originally, tourism research focused considerable attention on the cultural encounter of hosts and guests, as well as the impacts of tourism on local cultures (Graburn, 1983; Smith, 1989; Meethan, 2001). That work triggered a second wave, monopolized by geography, which created a conceptual framework that treated tourism an organizer of territory. To those specialists, tourism was based on the link between human beings and their soil. Demography was of paramount importance to understand and predict the trajectory of human flows like migration and tourism (Crang, 1997; Urry 2001; 2007).

In the 1980s tourism research turned to claims by local natives about the economic and social effects of tourism. The industry was seen to involve similar costs to hosting societies regardless of their locale. (Butler, 1999; Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Scheyvens, 2010; Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). When the tourism industry was seen as an instrument for boosting regional economies, less attention was given to the role played by capital (Britton, 1982) and the historical distinction between center and periphery as criteria for the failure or success of tourism programs (Kadt, 1979). Hopes and promises of development induced by central industrial countries to control peripheral nations became in a problem. Induced by the idea that loans would serve to improve the infrastructure and attract an international contingent of tourists, local governments asked international banks for credit. Needless to say, local destination finances did not improve. Instead the incurred debt created increased dependency in the underdeveloped world. The specialists at the World Tourism Organization and the World Bank attributed limitations of adopting tourism as main industry were related to so-called cultural pathologies, such as political corruption, instability, and civil war (Esteva, 2000; Korstanje, 2011).

For example, de Kadt wrote a series of reports explaining how history and the cultural values of hosting communities were the real reason for the failures of financial aids given to periphery. The social problems created by a legacy of colonialism justified everything legitimizing the belief in rational planning as the door to divide the First, civilized, world from the Second, developing, and Third, uncivilized, worlds. Somehow,

the world was led to think that plenitude and happiness only could be reached through the paradigm of development and tourism.

As Jafari put it, the cautionary platform did the correct thing in denouncing the adverse consequences of tourism industry, but it created an attachment to the doctrine of sustainability. The program of a sustainable environment is based on the need to protect the tourist product, from dysfunctional aspects of the economy. The persistence of academic themes such as cultural shock or sustainability suggests a need for intervention. But the problem lies in that both the theory of colonization and that of development fall into the same fallacy of ignoring the political role of tourism in the configuration of the global economy. We are not talking of mobility, but rather of the finance that placed the United States as the unique power of the world. To some extent, the studies of colonialism inaugurated by de Kadt, overly valorized culture while minimizing criticism of the pervasive role played by World Bank in issuing loans which never would be repaid. This financial strategy paves the way is obscured by culture as a pretext for the failures of peripheral nations to relieve their poverty (Rist, 2002).

Recently, the attacks to World Trade Centre, the SARS outbreak, and other natural disasters posed new challenges for the tourism industry. How to protect the tourist destinations from the risk and the uncertainty generated by the system? Policy makers, once again, launched to construct programs of mitigation of risks to benefit the industry (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Sacket & Botterill, 2006; Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006).

A snapshot illustrated the evolution of tourism research over 40 years. One of the common aspects all these studies have is the over valorization of rationality of maximizing profits from tourism destinations. From sustainability to terrorism, the research in the tourism field has appealed to the application of closed-ended questionnaires given to tourists at international destinations. Although researchers do their best not to fall into ethnocentrism, incorporating a wide diversity of nationalities, the outcomes of research come from the tourist voice alone. Instead of explaining why events happen, as the founding parents of the discipline wanted to do, the rational platform alludes to second order explanations. This means that correlation among variables takes on more importance than a full explanation of facts. For example, I may infer that males perceive fewer risks than females. I conclude also that gender is a sensible variable related to risk, which is a second order explanation. But this leads me to a fallacy simply because females are socialized to express their emotions more than males who tend to re-direct their fears onto secondary emotions such as hate.

Rational Platform

The rational platform attracts considerable efforts in business and managerial literature. Their applied research, unless otherwise resolved, is designed to justify or reject a product or a market segment of potential clients. Tourists are not viewed as agent of change but as consumers whose attitude and hopes should be mapped to conduct correct business plans. With the passing of years, this platform, which prioritized the study of demand in lieu of the overall tourist system, did not pay sufficient attention to study the signification of tourism. It focused on trends of market segmentation and the income of stakeholders so as to coincide with a discourse fabricated by World Bank to lead the world to a generalized financial hegemony. The rational platform frames each theme to be studied depending on the interest of each market segment. For example, researchers studied tourism as cultural tourism, patrimonial tourism, dark tourism, ethnic tourism, and so forth. Every topic allows the

creation of a new segment so that the travel corporations may adjust their marketing accordingly. Tourism management believed that diversification is the key for business success. This view of tourism corresponds with the need to protect destinations as products, by the identification of those pathologies which may affect their touristic appeal. In this vein, rational paradigm reconstructs an "engineering of marketing" based on five points: a) culture, b) patrimony, c) territory, d) sustainability and e) risk. Though it bows to the rites of science, such as the peer review, its main aims are not scientific research, but the valorization of tourist destinations, according to calculations of profits.

In recent years, the rational platform prioritized the key impact factor as well as the production of bibliography over other goals to proclaim the maturation of an incipient tourist science. The reputation of scholars does not rest on any other aspects than the number of cites in the media (McKercher, 2005; Ryan, 2005; Jamal, Smith y Watson 2008; Zhao y Ritchie, 2007). Though, to some extent, these types of studies were necessary to boost a discipline, there are some points which should be noted.

a) The scholars who contribute to a discipline are not the most cited ones.
b) Prizes are not awarded by the most cited scholars.
c) The self citation is very present in tourism fields.
d) Quantification of cites does not reveal the prestige of a researchers. An investigation may be cited only 20 times by the references of the discipline, while other may be cited by 700 students.
e) The quality of journals is not given by the key impact factors, but the content of its publications.
f) Key impact factors create peripheral knowledge which is ignored by top ranked journals. The rational paradigm has monopolized the production of first ranked journals.

The conceptual corpus we have labeled as the rational platform originated in the United States. It has undergone a radical rupture with the epistemology of history, ignoring the view that tourism is a modern activity which surfaced through the acceleration of technological development and improved working conditions. This pushes scholarship to treat practices of tourism as not feasible earlier than modernity, despite evidence of tourism widely documented by archaeology, As a result, tourism expertise has built an ethnocentric discourse. First and foremost, the ideology presumes that practices today are unique in history—that is, tourism is an artifact of modernity. Tourism not only marks a technical supremacy that other civilizations lack, but also confers on travelers an aura of selected people. Second, citizens are marked by their abilities to be mobile. This paves the way for the reproduction of capital by the desire for credits precisely in those nations where the material conditions for tourism do not exist.

To explain this better, one might see the main traits of rational platform as the following.

1- The belief that tourism should be measured by the profits it generates.
2- Tourism, which is an economic activity, is characterized by ongoing mobility and landscape transformation. Its undesired aftermaths may be mitigated by the rational use of resources to preserve local a environment or patrimonial assets.

3- In the West, labor is considered a valuable instrument for progress. In tourism fields, work and leisure are dissociated. The tourist space represents a geographical point which may be ordered by the economy. The tourist site must be protected from other external factors that threaten its functioning.
4- The rational platform prioritizes attractiveness and client loyalty as main criteria for research. Reports resulting from this logic not only yield plans of actions, but also are future oriented. The importance of research is directed to good practices as written in manuals or guidebooks.

The rational platform is by nature anti-scientific, because it follows the needs of forming management plans. Moreover, the platform defends the diversification of products as resources and the preservation of destinations to enhance competition among them. Tourism management is a solution in search of a problem cloaked in a disguise of science. Consequently, the presumably scientific literature ends with what should be done, instead of observing what is. Future examinations should correlate the discourse and documents issued by the International Monetary Fund, the World Tourism Organization, and the World Bank, with the emergence of the rational platform as a pseudo-scientific paradigm in the 1980s and 1990s. Perhaps the so-called indiscipline of tourism studied by Tribe (1997) was an all-encompassing program to create a hegemonic voice.

Conclusion

The appetite for captivating more segments engenders two consequences which lead to the fragmentation of discipline. The first corresponds with the accumulation of definitions, all of them conducive but limited to businesses alone. The ever-growing number of definitions about tourism prevents to achieve a "unified epistemology" to work on. In parallel, RP calls to the importance of "multidisciplinary approach" to understand the complexity of tourism. That way, discursively, scholarship has adopted the belief that maturation of discipline depends on the richness of used methods and voices. This discourse, far from being the sign of indiscipline as Tribe put it, is conducive to the elaboration of development-related programs for some peripheral nations to ask credits and financial aide. The high degree of dependency between centre and periphery has been solidified by the needs RP has created beyond West. In this review, we explore the main thesis and contradictions of two authorative voices of RP, to understand its impacts on the documents issued by World Tourism Organization respecting to the possibilities tourism offers for pour countries. What we want to discuss is that the four platform brilliantly studied by Jafari needs to be complimented. A fifth, associated to globalize economies, was added during 90s. The RP platform does not investigate to know further about neither tourist's mind, nor the context where tourism evolves. Rather, it is oriented to work as a conduit to accumulate profits and protect the tourist destinations. More interested in "the good practices", RP is strongly concerned by giving a diagnosis not only to identify but also to solve rapidly the glitches of the system. At the time, RP formulates the question, the response is already fixed.

Last but not least, although RT was constructed to give a solution to the managerial plans of destination maintenance, which is a valuable goal, but this did not suffice. The RT asked to receive the status of scientific platform to gain legitimacy against other classic disciplines. RT instills the needs to improve destinations accepting the international loan as the only valid sources. If the plan does not work, exegetes of RT

will have the correct answer. Failures of development resulted from the cultural incompatibilities proper of solicitant non-western societies. Since its goals are related to conduct polls over the needs of tourists, their investigations are diversified as much as number of segments can be found. At some extent, the flourishing of more segments (diversification) of new forms of tourism (eco-tourism, heritage-tourism, patrimonial tourism, and dark tourism) is functional to the divergence and problems to keep a unique epistemology. This happens because RT`s studies are pieces of engineering more interested in keeping the tourist destination, than objectivity proper of science. Since tourism is defined from the perspective of demand, which means that the tourists' needs, we have a lot of subtypes of tourism(s). The authorative voice of science, RT proclaimed, accelerated the neo-liberal programs marketed by third world. The supposed indiscipline, a couple of years ago denounced by senior epistemologist John Tribe, at the bottom covers a more pervasive nature.

References

Botterill, D. (2001). "The epistemology of a set of tourism studies". *Leisure Studies*, *20*(3), 199-214.

Boyer, M. (1997). "Tourism, a specific epistemology". *Loisir et Société*, *20*(2), 455-477.

Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (1993). "Sustainable tourism: An evolving global approach". *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *1*(1), 1-5.

Britton, S. G. (1982). "The political economy of tourism in the Third World". *Annals of tourism research*, *9*(3), 331-358.

Butler, R. W. (1999). "Sustainable tourism: A state- of- the- art review". *Tourism Geographies*, *1*(1), 7-25.

Cohen, E, et al. (2005) Presentación 7-10 Julio ARAMBERRI. *Política y Sociedad*, vol. 42, (1), 3-6.

Crang, M. (1997). "Picturing practices: research through the tourist gaze". *Progress in Human Geography*, *21*(3), 359-373.

Dachary, A. C., & Arnaiz Burne, S. M. (2006). "El estudio del turismo:¿ Un paradigma en formación?". *Estudios y perspectivas en turismo*, *15*(2), 179-192.

Esteva, G. (2000). "Desarrollo". En Viola Andreu (Compilador). *Antropología del Desarrollo.* Barcelona, Editorial Paidos.

Guzmán, L. F. J. (1986). *Teoría Turística: un enfoque integral del hecho social.* Bogotá, Universidad Externado de Colombia.

Hall, C. M. (2005). *Tourism: Rethinking the social science of mobility.* Upper Saddle River, Pearson Education.

Jafari, J., (2001). The scientification of tourism. In *Hosts and guests revisited: Tourism issues of the 21st century*, Smith, V. L., & Brent, M, editors. New York, Cognizant Communications, pp. 28-41.

Jamal, T., Smith, B., & Watson, E. (2008). Ranking, rating and scoring of tourism journals: Interdisciplinary challenges and innovations. *Tourism Management*, *29*(1), 66-78.

Kadt, de E. J. (1979). *Tourism--passport to development?: Perspectives on the social and cultural effects of tourism in developing countries* (Vol. 65). A World Bank Research Publication.

Korstanje, M. E. (2011). "Un estudio critico sobre el patrimonio turistico: capitalismo vs (des) protección". *Revista Hospitalidade*, (2), 3-37.

McKercher, B. (2005). A case for ranking tourism journals. *Tourism Management*, *26*(5), 649-651.

Mansfeld, Y. & Pizam, A. (2006). *Tourism, Security and Safety: from theory to practice.* Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Meethan, K. (2001). *Tourism in global society* (p. 130). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Monterrubio Cordero, J C. (2011) *Turismo y Cambio socio cultural: una perspectiva conceptual.* México, Plaza y Valdés.

Rist, G. (2002). *The history of development: from western origins to global faith*. London, Zed Books.

Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2003). *The competitive destination [electronic resource]: a sustainable tourism perspective*. Oxford, Cabi.

Roehl, W. and Fesenmaier, D. (1992). "Risk perceptions and pleasure travel: an exploratory analysis". *Journal of Travel Research,* Vol. 30 (4), 17-29.

Ryan, C. (2005). The ranking and rating of academics and journals in tourism research. *Tourism Management*, *26*(5), 657-662.

Sackett, H. & Botterill, D. (2006). "Perception of international travel risk: an exploratory study of the influence of proximity to terrorist attack". *E-review of tourism Research.* Vol. 4 (2), 44-49

Santana-Talavera, A. (2006) *Antropología y Turismo. ¿nuevas hordas, viejas culturas?*. Barcelona, Ariel.

Scheyvens, R. (2010). *Tourism and poverty*. Oxford, Taylor & Francis US.

Scheyvens, R., & Momsen, J. H. (2008). Tourism and poverty reduction: issues for small island states. *Tourism Geographies*, *10*(1), 22-41.

Schlüter, R. (2003). *El turismo en Argentina: Del balneario al campo*. Buenos Aires, CIET

Smith, V. L. (Ed.). (1989). *Hosts and guests: The anthropology of tourism*. Univ of Pennsylvania Press.

Thirkettle, A. & Korstanje, M. (2013) "Creating a new Epistemology for tourism and Hospitality Disciplines". *International Journal of Qualitative Research in Services.* Volume 1, (1): 16-33.

Tribe, J. (1997). "The indiscipline of tourism". *Annals of tourism research*, *24*(3), 638-657.

Tribe, J. (2006). The truth about tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *33*(2), 360-381.

Urry, J. (2001, November). Globalising the tourist gaze. In *Cityscapes conference*.

Urry, J. (2007). *Mobilities*. Oxford, Polity Press.

Zhao, W., & Ritchie, J. R. (2007). "An investigation of academic leadership in tourism research: 1985–2004". *Tourism Management*, *28*(2), 476-490.