

TOURISM FOR PEACE: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS
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Abstract

The peace-through-tourism discourse has been appropriated mainly by politicians and the industry to advance their own particular interests and has been viewed as a panacea to solve the entrenched socio-economic problems faced by nations globally today. The counter argument is put forward by those analysts who draw our attention to the perceived 'evils' of westernisation and modernisation brought about by globalisation where tourism is one of its principal components. As the paper argues questions of whether and how tourism as a whole contributes to world peace is more complex and problematic. Following a brief exploration of the concept of 'peace', this paper examines the tenuous relationship between 'tourism' and 'peace'. In so doing, it considers the theoretical arguments of diverse thinkers and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of their various positions. The paper goes on to present a fresh conceptual framework for understanding the role of tourism in building a culture of peace. It should be noted that the interpretation offered in this paper has been influenced by the authors' biographies, cultural reflections, and experiences. The paper concludes that not only complexities of tourism and international relations are often ignored in textual representations but the proposition that tourism fosters peace and tolerance appears to have been rather exaggerated.

Keywords: Peace, globalisation, fundamentalism, terrorism, Neo-colonialism, SDGs, COVID-19.

Introduction

Tourism for Peace – Does tourism promote peace? Can tourism contribute to achieving the SDGs? Is tourism taken for granted? This paper explores theoretical arguments concerning the social impacts of tourism for peace and cultural understanding. The central focus is on the relationship between tourism and peace and its centrality to the sustainable development. The SDGs were adopted by UN as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. It assumes that each country can achieve its full potential. Tourism is mentioned several times in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. It is acknowledgement of the global significance of the sector. The key issue is about 'sustainability'. The term sustainability which came to prominence in the 1980s evokes lots of discussions. Although it is an imprecise concept, its utility lies in the notion of "a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987). Tourism in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development implies positive impacts on environment, society and economy, a force for peace and cultural understanding, (Avgeli, V., et al., 2020). It implies a partnership in which governments, businesses, experts, and scientists cooperate in achieving the SDGs, (Anderson, E., Bakir, Ali., and Wickens, E., 2015).

Number one in the UN Agenda is alleviating poverty; 'we pledge that no one will be left behind' (UN). However, it is debatable if tourism can achieve on this promise. Several commentators point to increase of poverty and social inequality, joblessness, and precarious work. Poverty alleviation is a global challenge. Dividing lines run between rich and poor societies, between people who have the means to travel as tourists and those who do not. Tourism sector has a

responsibility to ensure that people, the environment, and climate are not negatively affected. SDGs provide guidance for the sector to play a better role in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Goal 16 is to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Conflict, insecurity, weak institutions, and Covid-19 remain a threat to sustainable development. Number of people escaping war and conflict exceeded 79.5 million in 2020, (UN). Covid-19 pandemic threatens to increase and exploit fragilities across the globe. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals with the 169 targets represents an ambitious vision to transform the world and to promote peace and cultural understanding. The Agenda comprises 4 sections; the first is a political declaration; the second is a set of 17 sustainable goals; the third states the means of implementation, and the final section represents the framework for follow up and review of the Agenda. It integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development i.e., economic, social, and environmental. SDGs such as ending poverty, improving health, education, gender equality, tackling climate change, economic growth are serious commitments adopted by UN member states.

The role of tourism in sustainable development is mentioned several times in the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, tourism is viewed as a vehicle for peace and cultural understanding. Does tourism promote peace? A review of pertinent studies shows that there is a tendency amongst analysts to adopt one of two opposing orientations: One claims tourism is the magic potion for solving the entrenched socio-economic problems faced by countries. The other sees tourism as an 'evil' that generates conflict e.g., fundamentalism. These orientations are best seen as the ends of a spectrum of opinion with a variety of views lying between them. The peace-through-tourism discourse has been appropriated by politicians and industry to advance their own vested interests. The counter argument is put forward by those thinkers who draw our attention to the perceived 'evils' of 'globalisation'. This paper argues how tourism as a whole contributes to world peace is much more complex and problematic. The paper starts with a conceptual clarification of the term 'peace' and then it goes on discussing the key issues surrounding the debate regarding tourism for peace. The discussion begins by setting out what has become the legacy to the social analysis of tourism and peace and tries to provide an overview of wide-ranging contributions. Themes are drawn together to assess the various dimensions of the analysis of tourism as a vehicle for peace and cultural understanding

The Concept of Peace

What is Peace? The analysis of peace in several disciplines including sociology, history and psychology has created an extensive literature (Aron, Raymond, 2003; Beer, Francis, A 2001). Reading shows that peace is an intangible and elusive concept. It is difficult to quantify or measure. So how can it be studied it? Past studies suggest that it entails the absence of war, acts of terrorism and random violence. Peace is not static, but it constantly changes, and it is imperfect. It demands peaceful relationships between nations and governments. It also involves cease-fires, surrenders, and treaties. It embodies ideals such as harmony, freedom, good relations, and prosperity. In the context of tourism, it also requires peaceful relationships between host communities, individuals, and stakeholder groups (Butler, R. & Suntikul, W. 2013). At an elementary and fundamental level of analysis, peaceful relationships are characteristically manifested in social interactions. For instance, hosts interact with tourists on the beach, or at a bus stop or at a shopping centre. The absence of traits such as war and conflict are often employed in the analysis of the 'tourism for peace' proposition. Our reading shows that although there is no clear agreement as to how peace should be operationalised, there is consensus that the existence of tourism depends on peace. A key characteristic of research to date is the recognition of the important role that tourism plays in sustaining development. (Anderson, E., Bakir, Ali., and Wickens, E., (2015).

Tourism for Peace

Tourism is viewed as a force and agent of peace and somewhat conceived as an apolitical phenomenon. Tourism for peace is employed as a 'tool' for world peace - promoting peace and combating conflicts. Tourism fosters stability and peace (UN). It opens people's minds and hearts. It is the 'spirit' of tourism development - creates jobs, 'promotes culture and peace' in a sustainable way and brings hope. 'Tourism and Jobs a Better Future for All' was the adopted UN slogan in 2019. World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) provides evidence that tourism in India has created 41 million jobs in the year 2017. For UN, the sector has the potential to create jobs and boost employment prospects. <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/panorama/tourism-and-jobs-better-future-718262.html>. For proponents of tourism for peace tourism is not only the world's biggest business but also the world's biggest peace industry, (UN, 2019). A positive force that mitigates tensions by playing a central role in national and international politics and world peace. It is claimed that peace disturbed due to political hostilities between nations can be restored through tourism. The role of tourism in countering fundamental causes of conflict and violence needs to be examined. Is there any evidence? Bill Clinton praises tourism's power for peace and development. 'Travel industry is good for the earth, the children and the future. I believe that by simply expanding tourism and in ways that promote sustainability, [this] reminds people of our common humanity'. The growth of tourism in Croatia after the Balkan conflict and the dramatic rise in revenues in the decade following the Bosnian peace agreement is often cited as evidence by proponents of tourism for peace. It is interesting to note that although the idea of 'tourism for peace' is not a new phenomenon and can be traced for instance in 1929 with the marketing slogan 'Travel for peace' BTA (British Travel Association). This positive discourse is also found in slogans adopted by powerful organisations: 1967 'Tourism: Passport to Peace' (UN's International Tourism Year); 1986 'Tourism: A vital force for peace'; a conference organized by the International Institute for Peace. 'Tourism is the most effective weapon to save the world' (UN). For proponents of tourism for peace there is no doubt it does. Tourism is regarded as a vehicle for economic and social development (Butler, & Suntikul, 2013). More tourism = more jobs = more revenue = peace. Tourism is good for peace and peace is good for tourism. The connection is two-way (WTTC, 2019).

Several points of criticism have been made against this simplistic claim. Tourism is assumed to contribute to knowledge of foreign places, empathy with other people and tolerance from seeing the 'other'. Where is the evidence for such assertions? The great deal of harm that can be caused by tourism is often overlooked e.g., on the environment, culture, and identity. For instance, hosts' irritation due to tourist behaviour and dress code in Muslim countries are often ignored. Moreover, increased tourism flow is causing severe social stress to local communities. Recent studies have drawn our attention on issues regarding 'overtourism' arguing that tourism has been viewed by hosts in some European destinations as an occupation force, (Hardy, 2019). Can tourism help stability by providing jobs and promote peace and prosperity? Studies have shown that tourism has become a factor in the loss of dignity and self-respect for many in certain countries, e.g., the exploitation of women and children. Thailand and Cambodia in South-East Asia are examples of sex tourism destinations involving exploitation of women and children and human trafficking and smuggling (Sommez, and Wickens, 2008). In the Caribbean islands, tourism is a major cause of social and economic inequalities due to low wages and unequal opportunity for local workers, the high cost of local tourism investment and the exclusion of local traders and crafters from earning tourism income due to the all-inclusive resort complex. The locals of these islands view the foreign investors as being the real beneficiaries of the industry with their excessive duty-free concessions, access to tax incentives, privileges to open hotels and bring in their foreign products while rejecting local alternatives (Bhola-Paul, 2015). Furthermore, there is also evidence that tourism generates conflict. In Barbados, over the decades, there has been several conflicts and disputes over wages (resulting in industrial action), land ownership and access to beaches for locals (Pattulo, 2006). The conflict between locals and the industry are cited in several studies employing the concept of neo-colonialism and will be explored further below.

Tourism as Neo-Colonialism

Neo-colonialism refers to the asymmetrical economic relationships that exists between past colonies in the Caribbean, Africa and Latin America and their former colonial exploiters (Williams, 2012). The term neo-colonialism was coined after World War II and refers to the continuing

economic exploitation of former colonies and their continued dependence on the resources of the developed world. The term proposes that the economic structures of the post-colonial period mirror the same types of economic dependency and exploitation that existed during the period of colonisation. It is claimed that developing countries do not have the resources and expertise to develop large scale tourism; so, developing countries, due to their superior entrepreneurial skills and financial resources, set the agenda for development in most post-colonial territories. In so doing they maintain control over developing countries in ways that ensures their continued dependency on the developed world (Sealy, 2018). The Caribbean consists mainly of countries recovering from post-colonial, post conflict or post -disaster histories. They are thus highly dependent on tourism through foreign investment. International hotel chains such as Marriott, Sheraton, Starwood, Sandals, Best Western, Holiday Inn, Hilton, Renaissance, Radisson, Ritz Carlton, Four Seasons, and several others have invested heavily into Caribbean tourism. Many of these establishments are based in North America or Western Europe. Foreign domination of tourism has contributed to substantial leakage of foreign exchange revenues, social polarization, social exclusion, and environmental degradation. The economic leakages incurred by these resorts are said to be anything from 37% in Jamaica to as much as 90% in the Bahamas (Pattulo, 2006). These leakages occur due to repatriated profits, payments for imported goods, salary repatriation and tax avoidance (Sealy & Mouatt, 2020). Other leakages occur through opportunity costs related to resource damage or deterioration of the natural environment, informal currency exchange transactions, and offshore savings and investment (Meyer, 2006). These leakages ensure that very few benefits from tourism reach the grassroots communities of the host destination. In many circumstances grassroots communities are deliberately excluded from enjoying any benefits that tourism may bring.

Foreign enterprise, through the vertical and horizontal integration of tour operators, travel agencies, airlines and hotels, control and own the major share of the tourism supply chain. Collectively they are responsible for the biggest leakages that occur through the all-inclusive resorts. An all-inclusive resort is a self-contained holiday complex which contains restaurants, shops, and sports facilities. Since all of these components are booked and paid for in advance, tourists do not need to leave the resort while at the destination. 75 to 80% of the vacation expenses of all-inclusive package tours are pre-paid directly to these tour operators, airlines, hotels, and other global corporations headquartered in a foreign country (Kondo, 2008) with very little, if any, of the expenditure reaching the destination. Because tourists remain inside the all-inclusive 'bubble' and rarely venture out into local communities, the per-capita spending of visitors at the destination is considerably lower since there is no need for cash transactions at the destination to buy crafts or vacation essentials. Because tourists are warned not to venture out of the resort due to the 'health and safety' threat there are very few cash transactions at a local level. In Barbados, for instance, several local independent restaurants have been forced to close since visitors now take all of their meals within the all-inclusive resorts. The all-inclusive resort is, thus, another consequence of the colonial legacy, which encourages mass tourism tied to the colonial tradition of high-volume, low value-added, mono exports (Mycoo, 2006). The result is mass visitation but a lower economic multiplier impact within the host community. The Gambia Department for Tourism and Culture, as long ago as the year 2000, banned the sale of all-inclusive hotel packages amid fears it was affecting the local economy (Travel Weekly, 2000). However, this was met by a backlash from British tour operators who threatened to stop selling the destination. These powerful travel oligopolies create 'zero-dollar' tourism economies at the destination where the destination experiences an increase in visitors but a decline in expenditure making the tourism industry unsustainable. The all-inclusive resort concept is so much regarded as an unethical form of tourism that the the World Tourism Organisation and the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) are currently advocating for the development of ethical and fair models of all-inclusive holidays (Pololikashvili,2020).

'The legacy of slavery and the plantation society underpins much of the Caribbean's and Africa's contemporary culture, values and economic relationships despite the attainment of political independence' (Sealy, 2018). Foreign economic power plays a major role in development. It determines how tourism can be developed in a region, who benefits from tourism, how tourism

is marketed and how tourists behave (Sealy, 2014). It also contributes to the corruption of native cultures via commodification. Indigenous cultural attributes are purposely modified, objectified, commoditized, and corrupted for European and North American tourists through entertainment comprising fake performances (Wong, 2015). Many of the tour operator brochures portray the image of the Caribbean as a utopia with poor natives. This thematic framework of paradise often mimics colonial stereotypes, despite the fact that the Caribbean is socially, culturally, and environmentally different from the conjured-up images of the tourism brochure. Many hotels dress their staff in fake colonial costumes to promote a notion of black servitude while the brutal hardship and suffering endured by slaves during the colonial era are conveniently omitted from the narratives of hotel entertainment. Other assaults on culture and heritage raise their ugly heads from time to time. A recurring assault on black Caribbean women concerns some hotel managers' opposition to black female workers wearing their natural afro hair or braided or dreadlocked hairstyles calling it unprofessional and requesting that these women chemically straighten their hair. In Barbados, this form of abuse led to a female employee of a south coast hotel being dismissed for wearing a braided hairstyle (Sealy, 2015). The employee later won a case against her employer for wrongful dismissal. Almost every single ethno-cultural group that came to the Caribbean had been forced to acknowledge the superiority of the ruling culture while rejecting, destroying, or devaluing their own creole heritage (Beckles, 1990). As a result, a hegemony of American-European culture in terms of language, fashion, music, food, dress, and lifestyle pervades most of Caribbean society (Sealy & Mouatt, 2019).

Any recent evidence that power plays a major part in development? It has been reported that Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg has recently been described a 'Colonialist' by locals for purchasing a new chunk of Hawaii. Forcing locals to sell their land by auction has been described as 'inhumane', the 'face of Neo-Colonialism' (See The Times, 2021). Land acquisition by foreigners through all forms of bullying are not uncommon in the post-colonial or peripheral indigenous societies of the developing world. In Jamaica over 488 miles of coastline had been privatized by 1992 (Goodwin, 2008). The all-inclusive hotels argue that such measures are necessary to ensure that guests are not harassed by 'drug-pushers' and 'beach bums' who are kept 'at bay' by armed security guards (Eriksson, Noble, Pattullo and Barnett, 2009). In the Bahamas, hoteliers delineate specific areas of the beach to ensure that locals cannot utilize the facilities (Thomas, 2016). In Barbados, large tracks of land have also been acquired by foreign developers for exclusive golf courses. Many of these areas were previously places of recreation for locals (Sealy, 2009). Land acquisition by foreigners have created hostilities between hosts and guests sometimes even provoking violence towards tourists and other forms of protests over the decades in several post-colonial islands of the Caribbean.

It is evident that tourism for peace is based on the exploitation of the host destination and its people. Tourists go abroad not to see at all but only to take pictures. Hosts are asked by their guests to 'smile'; hosts have now become 'tourist' attractions. The commercialisation of tourism generates big profits for multinational corporations and the elite. In other words, it benefits just a few. Such arguments display a one-dimensional understanding of tourism (s). There are many types of tourism such as rural tourism, voluntourism, religious tourism, wine tourism, eco-tourism. They are deterministic. Several studies point to the complexities of tourism development arising from the ongoing globalisation. As Kofi Annan (former United Nations Secretary General) reminds us that 'arguing against globalisation' is like arguing against the 'Laws of Gravity'.

Tourism in the Context of Globalisation

Free market economies and technological innovations have given rise to the phenomenon of the transformation of the world into 'a small village' (Butler, & Suntikul, 2013). Borders have become

more porous. Tourism involves transfer of people, portable cultures, and values. Some evidence that certain cultures reassert themselves against the 'perceived' threats of Americanization giving rise to cultural resistance, rather than peace (Bianchi, 2006). Americanization refers to the influence of American culture on other countries outside USA. Some cultures view tourism as 'evil' and counteract it by returning to their traditional religious roots, leading to conflict. Tourism pulls cultures in different, contradictory, and sometimes conflicting ways. Destinations, tragically, have become a popular target for terrorists. In the recent past some popular destinations have experienced tourist deaths due to acts of terrorism such as bombings, shootings, and hostage taking. Several countries proclaim that they are now building their industry on the principles of responsible and sustainable tourism (Duffy, 2001). Responsible tourism is the concept of attempting to make a positive impact on the environment, society, and economy. We are told that this alternative model to development promotes peace and contributes to 'cultural understanding'. Is this Pandora's Box? Tourism provides employment – For whom? It breaks down political and religious barriers – Does it? It promotes international understanding and peace – Does it?

Covid-19 has revealed the potentially deadly consequences. It has changed perceptions of a world without borders. When will the industry recover from the effects of the pandemic? Will travel ever be the same? Will Covid-19 kill global tourism? The decline in international mobility and plummeting global demand has led some to ask whether tourism as we know it may come to an end. Globalisation helped elevate the virus to a worldwide pandemic. Ironically, the virus now seems to threaten global tourism itself. A glimpse of what the future may hold is threatened by new variants of covid-19 e.g., Indian, South African, Brazilian. The scale of devastation in India has been described as a 'catastrophe' and a Covid-19 'holocaust'. There are many unknowns around the industry's recovery and its contribution to achieving the SDGs. Covid-19 vaccination programmes are offering a glimmer of hope that life as we knew it before 2020 could be back within our reach.

Against this dire backdrop, several disputes over vaccines are threatening the industry's recovery and relations between countries. How quickly the world can expect to return to some form of normality? Is the vaccine a 'magic bullet' to end the pandemic? What will post-lockdown tourism would look like? Intergovernmental disputes are threatening the industry's recovery and peace: Borders e.g., Thailand and Myanmar; Latin America countries - protests and tensions; Russia and Ukraine; China and Taiwan. Hit by pandemic, the political landscape is being transformed. It divided countries and world into 'haves' and 'have nots', and rising animosities. Clearly tourism is a vulnerable system of industries and would urgently require a paradigm shift a fundamental change in the post Covid-19 world. The pandemic has been a threat to the industry and all assumptions should be questioned and turned upon the head. Thinking of doing things different has become an urgent priority. The current crisis requires a paradigm shift as we realize that travel is a vulnerable sector. Is the pandemic an existential threat to the industry, and to the world peace? We cannot predict what will happen next but there is an urgent need for global cooperation of all stakeholders. They should be looking ahead at how to minimize the impacts of this pandemic on tourism for peace.

Conclusion

The question whether and how tourism contributes to world peace is much more complex and problematic. Clearly the above analysis has demonstrated that current perspectives of tourism for peace translate into 'cookery-book knowledge'. Complexities of tourism and international relations have been ignored in textual representations. It is hard to prove any causal relationship between tourism and the development of peace. The above analysis has explored several assumptions on tourism and its role in peace and development found in past studies.

The world has been experiencing seismic changes. The recent outbreak of Covid-19 has intensified political, social, and economic inequalities that render some communities more vulnerable than others. The pandemic has created a global socio-economic emergency. Tourism's ability to play a major role in achieving the UN's ambition to transform the world by 2030 is

problematic for a number of reasons including increasing poverty, social inequality, Covid-19 pandemic, and rising global tensions. Tragic consequences will have major impacts on the UN's Agenda for sustainable development and the pledge not to leave anyone behind. Tourism has certainly a responsibility to ensure that hosts and guests are not negatively affected in the current global multidimensional crisis. Covid-19 has shown the fragility of our interconnected world and as such it should be seen as a global problem that demands global solutions. The world is still waiting.

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