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Canavan, Brendan

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Tourism, Creativity and Sustainability

B. Canavan

University of Huddersfield
Queensgate, West Yorkshire, HD1 3DH, UK

B.Canavan@hud.ac.uk

Abstract

This article explores tourism creativity from the perspective of hosts; previously under-represented in the still nascent literature, and discusses in relation to sustainability. The creative responses of hosts to tourism in three small islands are reviewed. Findings illustrate the commercial, cultural and coping creativity of communities, stimulated by the processes of exchange and change which tourism engenders. This creativity helps residents to exploit advantages, ameliorate disadvantages, and shape tourism in a more sustainable manner. Tourism creativity is an important process for those involved in sustainable management to consider.

Keywords: Tourism; Sustainability; Creative Strategies

1 INTRODUCTION

This research contributes to the emerging field of literature exploring tourism and creativity. Dynamics of creativity are explored using fieldwork, ethnographic observation of and in-depth interviews with tourism stakeholders, in three small islands at different stages of tourism development. These islands face different challenges in terms of sustainably managing their tourism industries; challenges which may be better addressed through the creative outputs brought by tourism induced exchange, change and stimulation of creativity.

Creative tourism arguably has the potential to tackle issues of tourism management (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Creativity can reinvigorate local culture for both residents and tourists (i.e. Crespi Vallbona and Richards; 2007). Emphasised is that creativity provides activity, content and atmosphere for tourism, and tourism in turn supports creative activities (Richards, 2011). It is thus linked to added value for both the visitor and visited at the same time as contributing to the uniqueness and authenticity of a destination (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). As such creativity stimulated by tourism may link to more sustainable management of destinations.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism driven processes of exchange and change may contribute to a stimulation of creativity, various outputs of which may be relevant from a sustainable management perspective. These areas of creativity will be briefly reviewed, related to the sustainable tourism literature, and then explored through three small island case studies.

2.1 Exchange

Social, cultural and economic exchange is a characteristic of the service-intensive tourism industry, which essentially engenders large scale interactions between people and between people and landscapes (Dieke, 2003). These exchanges have the potential to facilitate and stimulate reappraisal of and change in these relationships and landscapes. Input from new migrants attracted by tourism will for example influence local economic and social landscapes (Damer, 2000). Likewise inputs of tourists who bring and share their own originating and guest cultures (i.e. Canavan, 2015). And who frequently seek to get closely involved in local lifestyles (i.e. Crespi Vallbona and Richards, 2007). Noted is the increasingly active participation of tourists in local way of life, and involvement in actively producing own experiences (Vainikka, 2013). Many tourists do choose to a greater or lesser extent to acculturate and become closely involved with host cultures and physical sites (Suntikul and Jachna, 2016).

Social, cultural and economic diversity brought through these exchanges is associated with the cultural plurality, multiplicity, fusion and innovation that tourism destinations frequently exhibit (Canavan, 2015). Tourist destinations have been described as more entrepreneurial and more liberal (Chaperon and Bramwell, 2013). The nature of tourist hosting, involving social interactions and cultural exchanges, means destinations may be particularly multicultural, culturally experienced and sophisticated, and by association open-minded and tolerant (Brown, 1998; Tapper, 2001; Shunnaq *et al.*, 2008). Outputs such as higher levels of economic entrepreneurship may be stimulated as a result (see Boissevain, 1979).

2.2 Change

Exchange may influence changes; in attitudes, behaviours, values and ways of doing things. Outer interactions relate to inner reflections (Tan, Kung and Luh, 2013). The demonstration effect, used within tourism studies to identify cultural impacts of tourism, usually upon hosts, applies the principle that observing tourists leads indigenous residents to change their own attitudes, values, behaviour and consumption patterns as they emulate (Yasothonrikul and Bowen, 2015). Hosting tourism can also provoke reflexivity in terms of questioning of and concern for defining local identity (Picard, 2008). Society may analyse itself through appreciation of what incomers report back and respond with altered routines and forms of cultural presentation (Simpson, 1993; Tapper, 2001). For example, Michaud (1997) describes in a Thai Hmong community how cultural tourism has had a salutary impact in the form of a catalyst for questioning implicit cultural limitations, and also what aspects of that culture need to be preserved in light of wider social changes.

Demand for certain infrastructure, facilities, services, attractions and forms of cultural presentation may further influence and shape local sociocultural landscapes (i.e. Mundet and Coenders, 2010). Similarly, cycles of seasonality linked with tourism may lead to adjusted familial routines and altered traditional calendars as individuals try to exploit the peak season (Andriotis, 2005). Social roles, events and routines all evolve with tourism development over time, as do local facilities, infrastructure, natural and cultural landscapes and even sense of local identity (Hampton and Christensen, 2007; Lim and Cooper, 2009).

2.3 Stimulation of Creativity

Exchange and change can lead to a stimulation of creativity (Canavan, 2015). New knowledge, ideas and other inputs brought can be associated with innovation, entrepreneurship and evolution; both cultural and commercial. What could be described as an 'attention effect' may be stimulated, whereby indigenous communities are motivated by outsider interest to explore, revive and reinterpret traditional aspects of local identity (i.e. Stronza and Gordillo, 2008). Tourism provides impetus for the rediscovery, reinvention, importing and creation of cultural products for tourists' entertainment and consumption (Boissevain, 1996), and hosts own enjoyment (Canavan, 2015). Such 'cultural creativity' can stimulate revivals, reinterpretations and new arts and cultural practises. Stimulated also may be 'commercial creativity' or a desire to exploit economic opportunities. Hence tourism can be generative in that it leads to the creation and recreation of new meanings for cultural objects and practises (Mathieson and Wall, 1992).

Tourism has in many places become an integral part of culture, and interaction with tourists is frequently a central component in the definition of ethnic identity and authenticity (Picard, 2008). An example of such a complex dialogue is Maltese handicrafts, with some products and styles originally intended for external audiences being appropriated into local culture (Markwick, 2001). Tourism potentially becomes over time an authentic demonstration (Cohen, 1988) and integral part of local landscapes and identity (Lim and Cooper, 2009). Furthermore, host cultures may evolve alongside and adapt to the presence of guest cultures, co-opting many aspects of cultural meaning and expression into local tradition, practise and identity (Cohen, 1988), as per the Bai Chinese indigenous community where: "Tourism has become central to the Bai in the ancient town of Dali. It is now part of their culture and part of their ethnic identity" (Zhihong, 2007: 256). Even those cultures that may react to or reject tourist hosting (i.e. Sanchez and Adams, 2008), through the processes of cultural reflexivity, resistance or ritual stimulated (see Boissevain, 1996), inevitably find themselves still shaped by.

2.4 Creativity and Sustainability

Conversely tourism can be destructive, in that many negative impacts can be caused or worsened by tourism development. Degradation, homogenisation, intrusion upon and consumption of natural and cultural resources frequently accompany tourism development (Andriotis, 2005). Where such landscapes have been damaged, lost are the abilities to differentiate destinations, target niche tourists, or compete other than on price. Such places may become attractive to neither host nor guest (Mihalic, 2000).

Thus there is a need for more sustainable forms of tourism development which preserve the unique attributes of destinations (Fennell, 2008). Through outer interactions bringing a sharing of knowledge, perspectives and expertise (Brown, 1998), creativity can potentially contribute to the complexities of sustainable tourism development; noted as requiring innovative management and marketing strategies (Tao and Wall, 2009). Inner reflexivity meanwhile may be linked to reappraisals of natural resources (Rodriguez *et al.*, 2008) and valorising of cultural assets (Richards, 2014), encouraging their subsequent conservation. Examples from the sustainable tourism literature credit an expansion of conservation ethos and resource re-evaluation to the financial and social inputs brought by tourism interest and example (i.e. Reimer and Walter, 2013). Finally, creative coping and adaptation strategies for minimising, modifying and avoiding the inconveniences of hosting tourism, may help to control, exploit and shape for the better (Chaperon and Bramwell, 2013).

To illustrate, the interest, participation and co-creative input from tourists means that these can play an important role in reinvigorating local culture (i.e. Crespi Vallbona and Richards; 2007). Likewise it provides an

opportunity for indigenous communities to share their particular knowledge, resources and ways of life with wider audiences, gaining civic pride and cultural dynamism in the process (Ireland, 2003; Saarinen, 2006). In Hamilton and Alexander's (2013) Scottish cases for instance, conclusion is that tourism co-creation has enabled the recapturing, showcasing, sharing and organic evolution of local culture. Contemporary consumers meanwhile assign more value to products and services in which they feel they have been able to have an influence (Suntikul and Jachna, 2016). Tourist involvement is thus linked to added value for both the visitor and visited at the same time as contributing to the uniqueness and authenticity of a destination (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This article is based upon extensive fieldwork in three small island case studies (Table 1). Fieldwork involved field trips to tourist attractions, attending events, participant observation of and with island tourists, reviews of government statistical data, local news, media and literature. These were used to immerse within local setting that fostered both data collection; building rapport with interviewees (McGivern, 2006), and data analysis; helping to understand, interpret and contextualise results (Connell, 2005).

Subsequently, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with tourism stakeholders; an approach chosen to capture findings both within local context and participants own words: Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004. A total of 46 interviews lasting for an average of 30 minutes were conducted (25 Isle of Man, 11 Lewis & Harris, 10 Belle Ile). These interviews were live recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Purposive sampling was used to access a range of tourism stakeholders who were contacted via phone, email or in person, in order to request interviews. Snowball and network sampling occurred to an extent due to the nature of building contacts within small island tourism networks.

Analysis followed an inductive process based upon pragmatic use of principles of social constructivism to explain how data is created (see Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). A constructivist approach to grounded theory was used to interpret data and build conclusions (see Thornberg, 2012). The technique, allowing for a back and forth approach to data construction, and emergence of concepts through data analysis, rather than a testing of preconceived hypothesis (as per Thornberg, 2012), was felt to be valuable in this research context. Emergent patterns were categorised and analysed using traditional colour coding/copy and paste techniques. Allowing results to arise organically from the cases (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007), patterns which emerged during analysis were related back to concepts discussed in the literature.

Table 1: Case Studies

Lewis & Harris	Belle Ile	Isle of Man
The largest and most northerly island in the Outer Hebrides archipelago located off the coast of northwest Scotland, British Isles. Mountains dominate the south, becoming expanses of peat moorland further north. There are numerous sea lochs, lakes, and tarns throughout the island. Rare flora and fauna present include golden and sea eagles. The resident population is concentrated in the port of Stornoway. Economically the Outer Hebrides lag behind other Scottish islands and regions leading to high levels of outward migration (http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk). Tourism is a focus for development, albeit the isolation and limited infrastructure of the island curtail.	Largest and most populous of the French Atlantic islands, situated off the southern coast of the Breton peninsular. The economy is dominated by tourism with around 450,000 visitors per annum, two thirds of employment is tourism related and four fifths of local property are second homes (insee.fr). Tourism infrastructure centres on the largest town and port, La Palais. This is the location of the Vauban Citadel, the island's main attraction besides its mild climate and attractive coastal scenery. Belle Ile has a long history of hosting tourists, with artists such as Claude Monet helping to popularise the island during the late 1800's. A somewhat exclusive image has been retained.	A unique culture shaped by Celtic, Norse and English influences reflects the island's geographic position located in the centre of the Irish Sea, and its largely independent status as a self-governing crown dependency. A diversity of natural habitats from moorland to wooded glens, coastal heath, cliffs and dunes, characterise. From the 1890's to the 1960's the Isle of Man was a significant British tourism destination. Visitor numbers have however since fallen to around one third of past levels (Isle of Man Digest 2010). Nevertheless, the annual TT motorbike festival remains a large scale tourist event attracting upwards of 40,000 visitors.

4.0 FINDINGS

Fieldwork observations and interviewee descriptions were of tourism driven processes of exchange, change and stimulation of creativity. Creativity could be linked to coping commercial and cultural outputs. These outputs appear to play an important role in shaping local tourism developments; potentially in a more sustainable manner.

4.1 Exchange

Varying degrees of resident involvement with tourism were noted in the three cases. This ranged from relatively passive sharing of space and atmosphere, to potentially deep, personal and perhaps permanent connections formed. Much discussed across cases was appreciation of the atmosphere brought by tourists; associated with entertainment and social opportunities. Participants spoke of forming friendships, business partnerships and even marriages with tourists. Hence emphasised was the potential for occurrence of deep and mutually rewarding exchanges between residents and visitors.

Networking, ideas and knowledge exchange, were described and shown to stimulate commercial creativity, as business ideas and partnerships consequently emerged. Observed was frequent entrepreneurial activity associated with tourism, such as supplementary seasonal employment, informal retail or letting out spare bedrooms. Such entrepreneurship was motivated by tourism demand, and often inspired by interactions with or observations of tourists. Likewise cultural creativity was recorded, as stakeholders involved with arts and crafts incorporated new ideas and found new outlets for their pursuits. Many island immigrants described their involvement with and contribution to local cultural activities.

“It was talking to them (tourists) that gave me the (business) idea” (D. Manager, Lewis & Harris).

“Everyone was coming in and asking ‘where can I get an ice-cream’ and there wasn’t. So I thought why not I do it like?” (E. Manager, Lewis & Harris).

“Yeah we’ve made a lot of contacts through (tourism) and that gives you a platform for a lot of exchanges and so on” (G. Arts and Crafts, Isle of Man).

4.2 Change

In turn, research suggested that the exchanges between hosts and guests led to changes in attitudes, values and ways of doing things. For example, social exchanges resulting from tourism were linked to sexual relationships by young residents in each case. This was something made possible as a result of the added social opportunities and anonymity the presence of unknown people brought, and sense of social permissiveness they introduced.

Also recognised was a stimulated sense of civic pride amongst inhabitants reminded of the value of their locale (as per Stonza and Gordillo, 2008). This was linked to evidence of domestic tourism, whereby residents were motivated by observing tourists to likewise explore island landscapes (see also Canavan, 2013). Spreading of conservation ethos as a result of tourism generated funding, awareness and resource reappraisal, was described by special interest group members in each case. Also discussed were the inputs of new migrants to economic, social and cultural landscapes.

“Yeah and also awareness, that’s also the key. If people don’t know there is anything there to look after then why the hell would they look after it?” (K. Conservationist, Isle of Man).

“It really reminds you that where you live is somewhere beautiful, worth visiting” (KA. Resident, Isle of Man).

4.3 Coping

Research additionally identified examples of coping creativity, whereby host culture adapts when confronted by wider change (Boissevain, 1996). Particularly in Belle Ile, where impositions of tourism are most significant, coping strategies such as altering routines, or escaping to less well known sites, were ways islanders avoided some of the adverse impacts.

“It is difficult sometimes... you adjust your routine... go out earlier and later when they (tourists) have gone” (B. Resident, Belle Ile).

“The (tourists) don’t come up here, they don’t know about. That is where we go if we want peace” (C. Employee, Isle of Man).

5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 Stimulation of Creativity

Commercial and cultural creativity was identified in each case through the tourism orientated festivals, crafts and facilities, frequently co-developed, managed and participated in by island residents for a variety of economic, social and entertainment reasons (see Canavan, 2015). Cohen's (1988) discussions of emergent authenticity, new meanings and play illustrate how communities may react to tourism. These can see new cultural practises and identities emerge over time as a result of hosting tourism. Tourists also input into this process through their presence and expectations influencing and stimulating hosts, and through their desire for cultural exploration, participation and co-creation of experiences (Richards, 2014).

For instance, the TT Festival on the Isle of Man originates from and is still popular with tourists who shape the atmosphere and dynamics of the event. The TT and motorbikes are additionally enjoyed, participated in, and have become internalised by Manx residents as an important component and signifier of local culture. Thus the TT is an example of the co-creative output of and on-going dialogue between cultures in a tourism destination (Richards, 2014), as it is of the potential for such creation to become an authentic and integral part of local identity over time (Cohen, 1988).

5.2 Creativity and Sustainability

Such creativity may play an important role in managing local tourism in a more sustainable manner. Adaptability has been associated with communities more able to accommodate tourism; ameliorating negatives, enhancing positives, and thus sustainably managing the industry (Scheyvens and Momsen, 2008). Hence coping creativity can help island residents to avoid and exploit tourism. Commercial and cultural creativity meanwhile may be associated with harnessing the positive economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism, helping to ensure these benefits are distributed throughout a community; for instance through widespread participation in entrepreneurship, and stimulating an awareness of cultural and natural resources that might encourage their conservation.

5.3 Conclusion

Research identifies sources of tourism creativity in three small islands. Creativity is stimulated by the exchanges of hosts, tourists and landscapes, and associated changes in these which may subsequently emerge. This creativity is in turn linked to particular outputs which may foster sustainable industry management. Commercial, cultural and coping creativity are informed by observing, interacting with, and incorporating the behaviours, values and actions of diverse hosts and guests. These contribute to more entrepreneurial, reflexive and resilient communities that are better able to exploit the advantages, ameliorate the disadvantages, and appreciate the resources which underpin local tourism.

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