Retracing the Steps: Tourism as Education
ATLAS Conference, Savonlinna, Finland
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1 Introduction

An examination of tourism history for a conference on culture ought to bring fresh insights. This paper will discuss a perspective on tourism which is conspicuous by its absence from most current debate. It will propose the view that tourism should be considered more than it is now as an educative activity. This is not just in the narrower sense of formal schooling, but in the broader sense of discovering the world. For example, tourists might occasionally be taking part in formal educational visits. However, all tourists are always involved in receiving experiences which add to their store of knowledge. They make discoveries about places, people and events, in an informal, heuristic mode of learning.

Few people in the business think of tourism as much else than a way of making money out of travelling for leisure. Yet tourism is a powerful, cultural tool. It can do what neither the mass media nor classroom teaching can do: give people the chance to discover the world for themselves. Like all tools, it can produce either well-crafted or misshapen results. Abundant evidence can be quoted to show the benefits and the damage which tourism can produce. The point is that tourism has an effect, and in cultural terms this is to modify the store of knowledge of both visitor and visited by the addition of new experiences. These discoveries are forms of experiential education.

This paper sets out first to re-examine tourism's historical role. It will look at tourism in the United Kingdom, and some of its history and culture. Worldwide, the dominant paradigm sees tourism as a product of the growth in income and leisure for an increasing spectrum of industrial society. This paper will advance a different view. It can be stated that tourism represents the outcome of the desire to extend known territories, to explore them and relate them to existing knowledge. Theories from general communication studies will be used to analyse touristic processes and to suggest a new concept. In doing so the paper will attempt to change the paradigm towards one in which tourism is seen as enabling people to explore the dynamic information environment which surrounds them.

2 Background

Existing historical studies of tourism have adopted various viewpoints, timespans and geographies. Pimlott (1947) and Feifer (1985) surveyed western European tourism over most of the period from the Roman Empire to the present. Withey (1998) took aspects of Europe and North America from 1750 to 1914. Other writers have taken narrower remits, for example Hibbert (1969) the Grand Tour, Delgado (1977) Victorian excursions in Britain, Brendon (1991) Thomas Cook and package holidays. Studies of particular areas have included those such as Stafford and Yates (1985) and Blume (1982). Jordan and Jordan (1991) examined the history of one form of transport and tourism. Vaughan (1974) and Buzard (1993) have studied the connections between tourism and the printed media. A relatively early study of the Grand Tour (Bates, 1911) and a more recent one by Brodsky-Porges (1981) have taken tourism as their basis, as has the rather brief account by Kalinowski and Weiler (1992). There are many histories of various kinds of tourism at attractions; examples include Tinniswood (1989) on historic houses, Hudson (1987) on museums, Allwood (1977) about international exhibitions, Thacker (1994) on gardens, and Marling (1997) on Disney's theme parks. All of these works refer to education or have a significance for it in some way, but none of them takes a view across the whole sweep in order to identify some general principles. Tourism primarily brings money, not enlightenment.

The present author has previously made a brief survey attempting to draw together ideas on the growth of tourism, the media, education and attractions (Machin, 1997). That, in turn, built on an earlier paper (Machin, 1989a) suggesting a model, which would relate the means of discovering the world to the subsequent processes of debate and the pursuit of change. There is not the space here to detail the whole argument, but as described in the latter of the two papers, the model takes a cyclical form consisting of discovery, interpretation, decision-making and action (Figure 1). This cycle was termed holodynamic, reflecting the integration of the full range of processes which contribute towards the production of change in human groups.

The Environment As Data: Building New Theories For Tourism
How tourists relate to places
Sail Gives Way to Steam
A return visit discovers just how much has been achieved in this iconic restoration
Richard III and the Battle of Bosworth Reenactment
Visits to Leicester and the battlefield event, 2013
Along The Way
Recollections and Reflections of 60+ Years Learning about the World and its Ways
On the Edge of the New World
Shaping New England

Figure 1: The Holodynamic

Within the discovery phase are the channels of one-to-one contact, travel (including tourism), the mass media and formal education. Then, having discovered new information via these channels, an individual interprets it in the light of previous knowledge, enters into decision-making either alone or with others, and next takes actions based on the outcome. This in turn leads to further discoveries. Travel and tourism introduce the individual to new encounters which supply new knowledge. The same individual is exposed to other information through contacts with the home environment and people within it, as well as whatever range of mass media and formal education they may be engaged in. It is noteworthy that a relatively short portion of the average human life-span has formal education within it, heightening the importance of the other channels, including travel.

In other papers, the present author has made further suggestions about the relationships between tourist cities (Machin, 1989b), attractions (Machin, 2000) and general communications; and about the nature of dynamic information environments, or datascapes (forthcoming).
General communication theory is of great use in analysing touristic processes, and two particular approaches will be used in reviewing tourism history below. Lasswell’s formula (1948) asks “Who – Says What – In Which Channel – To Whom – With What Effect?” in analysing acts of communication. Braddock (1958) added two more questions: “Under What Circumstances – With What Purpose?”, which we might see as creating ‘Lasswell/Braddock Statements’. McNelly (1959) produced a model which dissected the stages by which news reports were passed from journalist to press agency to regional and then national news editors before reaching the public in print. At each stage stories were written and modified according to journalistic ideas about their readers’ preferences, and their own aims and objectives. In essence, McNelly demonstrated that a number of people would modify a message in travelling from its source to its ultimate receiver. It is possible to adapt the McNelly Model to show how in tourism messages about places are also created and modified in passing from source to consumer. This occurs for example in travel reports, holiday brochures and visitor interpretation at attractions.

An example is given by Machin (2000). A curator specifies what he or she wants to say about an artefact in a new museum. The visitor manager, knowing well the public and the museum’s marketing strategy, advises variations in the message. The specialist historian modifies it again for accuracy and historical opinion. A scriptwriter chooses simpler words and sentence structures, and adds a greater sense of excitement. The designer lays out the text with weight and spacing which will affect the reading sequence and registering of ideas, and then adds illustrations which affect them even more. Finally, individual museum visitors read selectively and interpret the messages according to their own experience and interest, and the circumstances of the visit. Ambient conditions such as noise, temperature, humidity, the activities of other visitors, the time available and the mood of the visitor are only some of the factors affecting the communication process on-site.

Clearly an extremely wide range of factors can come into play in any given situation. The permutations caused by variations in ambient conditions, the mix of people and the actions and events which might occur are of a very high order. Historical analysis is well suited to handling infinitesimal possibilities like these. It recognises the interplay of people, places and events, relying on the anchor points of perspective, selection and evidence to argue cases.

It is possible to use historical analysis to see the results of the McNelly model in action in tourism. The table in figure 2 suggests some examples of the range of communications transactions inherent in different modes of tourism past and present, out of an infinity of possible combinations. A brief review of these will illustrate how relevant the Lasswell/Braddock formula can be. The discussion will be mainly based on British examples.
3 Pilgrimage

Feifer (1985) has shown how the European pilgrimage in the middle ages contained recognisable components which match the modern tourism industry. Pilgrims had “guidebooks, accommodation bureaux, travel agencies, a range of inexpensive souvenirs and nearly all the accoutrements of present-day tourism” (Feifer, 1985 p 31). Hindley (1983) details the need for the equivalent of a passport – testimoniales – and correct dress, appearance and equipment, including some cooking and eating utensils, and the best guide books. One of these, Poloner’s Description of the Holy Land, gave advice to those about to travel there, and the 12th century Liber Sancti Jacobi the same for pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Specialist ship-owners held licences to take pilgrims from English ports from the late 14th century (Feifer, 1985). A network of hospices and inns provided overnight accommodation. According to Feifer all the elements could be purchased as a package in Venice for a journey to the Holy Land.

Many examples can therefore be identified to fit the Lasswell/Braddock formula, two being given in Figure 2. Those who could read might use guide books, those who could not might rely on their literate companions. The Liber Sancti Jacobi was a multi-volume production which set out routes, religious interpretations and discussions of conditions and cultures along the way to Santiago. Its authors spread ideas and reinforced attitudes by comments such as this about the Basques: “debauched, perverse, trecherous and disloyal, corrupt and sensuous drunkards” (quoted in Feifer, 1985 p37). Pilgrims glad of its guidance during the dangerous journey would be very susceptible to accepting its contents at face value.

The most effective messages would have been those in the shrines being visited. At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the pilgrims joined a guided tour which might take three hours and be accompanied by lectures and liturgical performances (Feifer,
Spas and Resorts

The motivations for tourism in UK spas and resorts was first for healthy bathing in spring-fed baths or the sea. Londoneers were the main participants, but there were medicinal springs close by which would have sufficed, such as Barnet, Dulwich, Sadler’s Wells and Hampstead Wells. Travelling to places like Bath was expensive and therefore more exclusive and gave a change of scenery and society. Social encounter quickly became more important than health. Hiring a house on the Royal Crescent in Bath for the season was certainly out of reach of most people. Beau Nash took charge of the town’s social scene during the 18th century, imposing more appropriate behaviour on the rich, but in the eyes of society, often coarse visitors who were visiting (Gadd, 1971). Like Tunbridge Wells, Buxton, Harrogate, and the other towns, Bath built its Assembly Rooms as the social venue. It was Nash who set the fashion for socialising in public rather than private residences (Pimlott, 1947). The spa towns used their Deep Wells and other attractions to set the tone for their visitors’ culture and social records. These Masters of Ceremonies worked through regulation and debate, but spread their rules, reputation and image through print in the popular guide books which were being turned out by travel writers at that time. Assembly Rooms were show pieces, focal points for the town elders who controlled activities through the communications offered by meetings, handbills, and books of advice.

The inland spas set the style for the coastal spas. Scarborough, Margate, Weymouth and Brighton copied Bath and built their own Assembly Rooms and other social amenities (Walvin, 1978). So the seaside resorts started life as health centres, but grew as places of entertainment. During the 19th century pleasure boats and railway trains delivered more and more visitors. These were often on day visits, with less wealth and different ideas about what entertainment should be. The growth of the excursion business required new competition and new businesses. Satisfying the appetite of the tourists, Blackpool invested in piers with dancing, concerts and boat rides; a Pleasure Beach with amusements, an aquarium, a winter gardens, a number of theatres and an opera house, later the Tower and Palace Ballroom (Turner and Palmer, 1976). Every other coastal resort had to follow suit as best as it could. Pearson (1991) has surveyed the spread of the new attractions and recorded cinemas, theatres, and hairdressing parlours, and laundromats as how they developed and spread. These attractions were also the tourist mode which largely began in the 19th century – the excursion.

6 Excursions

Carried by the coastal sail and steam ships of the 19th century, mass travel was spreading round the coasts from cities like London, Bristol and Glasgow (Pimlott, 1947). City dwellers could afford the time and expense of at least a day of enjoyment and exploration. Excursion ports like Rochester, Hastings, Ramsgate and others were visited.]

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1985). After an hour’s rest there were masses and communion. Other sights and sounds included the activities of other religious sects and lay people. Pilgrims brought their own particular interpretations to what they experienced in Jerusalem, in Bethlehem and the Jordan Valley. Some made the trip once, others several times, but all must have returned home full of travellers’ tales both accurate and inaccurate.

Most shrines became incorporated into substantial buildings: St James of Compostela, St Peter’s and the Lateran Basilica in Rome, the Church of the Sepulchre, Jerusalem and numerous other churches, abbeys and monasteries. The authorities in each one worked with architects, decorators and builders to create structures which spoke to their visitors, and doubtless each specialist modified the design by their work. The height of these buildings made them landmarks by which travellers could navigate and find the movements and symbols of the connections with heaven. Their iconography is what made them function successfully, the design, wall paintings, stained glass, memorials, monuments, rituals and liturgies made them eloquent showpieces (Anderson 1971, Bottomley 1978, Reyntiens 1990).

4 The Grand Tour

The Grand Tour as practised from Britain started in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I as a way of training noblemen for court duties (Hibbert, 1969). The idea spread as general education for the nobility, and then became a mark of status for the wealthy. Young men were sent with tutors to guide, control and educate them by formal talks and reference to text books which publishers had prepared for the new market. Languages must be learnt almost immediately. Notebooks and written notes were necessary for recording details of sightseeing and meetings. Learning Italian from the natives might be compulsory once in the country (Trease, 1967). Of course serious knowledge became social chat-chat on the return home, and used merely to obtain social status. Foreign words, cuisine, fashion, even servants, were brought back besides broader philosophical, political, and scientific ideas. John Locke decided the Tour was not about “building up men” but merely with “tricking out a fine set of gentlemen” (Locke, 1975). Towns (1969) shows that the desire for the tourists to have fun out of a scramble for entertainment during the 18th century. This is a little misleading: in the broader sense of education adopted in the present paper, even gaming, dancing, carousing and visits to brothels produced a new set of experiences, the more so being partaken within a different country. Vicarious education in ways decided by the young traveller, was replacing the didacticism of a paid tutor. In the 18th century the tourist took a similar line to those of today, when the pleasure and interest of travel depends on the customer being in control of what is done and experienced. If the Grand Tour was a kind of university course, by the 1700s it was much more like the university course as it is today. In the course of the Grand Tour, teachers, leaders of society, church officials, writers and artists spoke about life in foreign places to impressionable young men. They did so through lectures, guide books, conversations, architecture, and books, plus the artefacts and paintings that were bought as souvenirs. The purposes were varied but the overall effect was undoubtedly to widen the horizons of those who went. Some prejudices might have been formed by ignorance and xenophobia, but at the very least the youngsters’ views were no longer limited to their own country. The relevance of the Lasswell/Braddock formula is clear.

5 Spa and Resorts

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Industrial exhibitions had been held in 1761 and 1797 in first London, then Paris, to demonstrate processes and products (Allwood, 1977). The Great Exhibition of 1851 (Gibbs-Smith, 1981) was the real forerunner of many world expositions. It also helped establish Thomas Cook’s pre-eminence (Brendon, 1991) and led to a revolution in museums (Hudson, 1987) by inspiring the creation of the first full-scale folk museum by Artur Hazelius in Stockholm, at Skansen in 1851. It was also the 1851 event which showed how popular the exhibitions and presentations of the world’s wonders could be (Allwood, 1977). The Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893 directly inspired developments at Coney Island (Kasson, 1978). The 1939 New York World’s Fair contributed directly to Disneyland, which also grew out of the fact that the new Disney studios in Burbank had become an industrial tourist attraction before World War II (Marling, 1997). Applying the Lasswell/Braddock formula, many people had been saying many things, about the wide world, through many channels to many other people.

7 Package holidays

Much of the ground of package holidays has already been covered above. Thomas Cook, like other philanthropic early operators, had wanted to improve peoples’ lives through religion, teetotalism, the development of fellowship, and education (Brendon 1991, Speake 1998). More recent operators have been more straight-forwardly commercial, trying to attract mass markets for a variety of attractions and events. Those have included sport stadia and arenas, where the primary purpose is not to offer a package holiday, but to attract spectators to events.

8 Examples

This review of tourism history has suggested that each period and each form of tourism can be seen, in line with the Lasswell/Braddock formula, to be built around, indeed, to depend upon, the communication of messages. Each question of the formula can be answered for each tourism mode. Inherent in the communication processes of tourism is the attraction itself. Word of mouth, printed and electronic media promote the visit, but the experience of the visit depends on the attractions. These might have been deliberately created for tourists, or they might belong to the everyday fabric of life, the landscapes and towns which visitors can find enjoyable. This might be a single building or an open space, or it might be a more extended area.

In medieval Britain the dominant man-made feature of the landscape would have been either a church or larger religious building, or a castle. One symbolised religious power, the other secular power. Both were designed to exploit the symbolism of the building. Castles might be less accessible to people: it was the church or cathedral to which everyone related. While it might be misleading to use modern terminology for a medieval institution, it is important to acknowledge that churches and modern tourist attractions shared some features which operated at a level separated from both early religion and modern tourism. They were designed to communicate, Reference was made to earlier works which did so. Modern tourist attractions use a range of visitor interpretation like exhibitions, guide books, audiovisual equipment, interpretation panels, people working as tour guides, visitors taking guided tours, or even in the context of an enlargement of the present day visitor experience (see Machin, 2000). Tourists, such as a world wide, pietistic officials and pilgrims journeyed around the country using churches and steeples as landmarks. They would often visit churches to worship while on their journey. It would be anathema to many people to refer to medieval churches as a tourist attraction or heritage centres as that would be to use inappropriate, modern terminology; but they were fulfilling the same functions. It would be an anathema to many people to refer to medieval churches as a tourist attraction or heritage centres as that would be to use inappropriate, modern terminology; but they were fulfilling the same functions.

The castle would share similar functions as a showcase of secular, feudally-structured power, communicating its might through its architecture and what decoration it might have, including the banners and devices of heraldry. The castle would share similar functions as a showcase of secular, feudally-structured power, communicating its might through its architecture and what decoration it might have, including the banners and devices of heraldry. Every age had its showcases. Architectural examples would also embrace the larger medieval inns, the Georgian terraces of Bath and the hotels and railways stations of the Victorians. Theories of tourism have focused on the communication processes and their performances showcase events. Indeed, there is a direct line of cultural development which starts in church liturgy, is joined by a strand which comes from staging inns with courtyards, another from market-place entertainments like fairs, and a third from the hall of the manor house, which by the Tudor period produces the theatre of Shakespeare (Leacroft, 1988). A different line runs from church memorials, painted and stained glass, through private-house ‘cabins of curiosities’ and picture galleries, takes in public art galleries and museums, and then into industrial, trade and international exhibitions, to divide the one into folk museums and all the other varieties of museum (Hudson, 1987); the other is joined by a line from fair grounds and pleasure gardens which then heads towards the great kursals and amusement parks of the coastal resorts before producing the modern theme park (Weightman, 1992; Pearson 1991) – with help from international exhibitions.

It is possible, of course, to show that the connections which were at work were more complex than those just described. The point is that all the different expressions of communication in which someone went to church, whether to worship or to visit, using various media, and in differing circumstances, to entertain, inform, inspire, and persuade – and with all kinds of results. Every age had its travellers for business and pleasure, and every age needed its own showcases to serve them.

9 Conclusion

Tourism’s origins were either primarily connected with education or at least had indirect connections. Present day discussion tends to undervalue the influence that tourism has in helping people to discover their world. There are many communication processes at work within tourism, some clearly obvious but others less well acknowledged. They give it the power to act as an important medium of information and understanding, the one-to-one contacts, the mass media, and formal education. Tourism can supply what the mass media and education cannot, namely the ability of a person to see the world for themselves.

Theories drawn from general communication studies can aid the understanding of tourism as a channel of knowledge. The suggestion introduced in this paper is that throughout history people have created showcases of their beliefs, values and culture and that these have formed a central focus for tourists. The study of them in relation to the communication processes concerned can be of great value.

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