

Event Tourist and Tourist Event: A Conceptual Conundrum in Event Tourism

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Introduction

Young (1991) defines a tourist as someone who travels away from home, and therefore did not restrict the definition to those who travel for pleasure. Etymologically, tourist took its origin from 'toure' a Greek word for Lathe, symbolizing a circular movement or a journey at which one returns to the starting point. Young (1991) is of the view that definition of tourism should start by identifying who a tourist is. In its most simplistic term, tourism is the summation of all the experiences and activities of a tourist. Also Pileus (2012) defines tourism as the composite of activities, services and industries that delivers a travel experience to individuals and groups who travel more than 80km away from home for pleasure. However from the perspective of event, Olokesusi (1981) defines tourism as the movement of people within or outside a state or nation for leisure, sports, conferences, education and other purposes.

The word "tourism" was used for the first time in 1811 while the word "tourist" was used for the first time in 1840 (Tourism, 2008). But it was not until 1910 that Schulland, an Austrian economist attempted to define it. A floodgate of definitions then followed: (Herizikar and Kraaf (1942); Pearce, (1989) Pearce and Singh (2008), Holloway, (1992) Cooper et al (1998; 2008) Leiper, (1979; Goelldner and Ritchie (2003); Weaver and Lawton (2004) Okpoko (2004); Okoroafor (1995).

Weaver and Lawton (2006) insist that every tourist must simultaneously meet certain spatial, temporal and purposive criteria:

- i) Spatial Component: To become a tourist, a person must travel away from home. The W.T.O and most national and regional tourism bodies have stipulated minimum distance threshold of 80km.
- ii) Temporal Component: The length of time involved in the trip experience determines whether someone is a tourist and the type

of tourist. Most countries adhere to a WTO threshold of one year as the maximum time an inbound tourist can remain in the visited country and six months for domestic tourists.

iii) **Travel Purpose:** The purposes that do qualify as tourism are domiciled in three major categories:

- i. Leisure and recreation
- ii. Visiting friends and relatives
- iii. Business

Some of these travel purposes are event related:

Sports: Sport related tourism involves the travel and activities of athletes, trainers and officials as well as spectators or fans. High-profile sporting events, such as Olympic Games, World Cup finals etc. have substantial tourism-related and other “spin-off” effects.

Travel for religions purpose: Pilgrimage activities constitute by far the largest form of tourism travel in Saudi Arabia and Israel by millions of Muslims and Christians. According to Singh (2004) religious travel is also extremely important in India’s domestic tourism sector. For example: the six-week MahaKumbh Mela, festival drew an estimated 70 million Hindu Pilgrims to the city of Allahabad in 2001.

Business: This is the third most important reason for tourism related travel at a global level. Business tourists are constrained in their travel decisions by the nature of the business that they are required to undertake. The largest category of business travels involves meetings, incentive travels, conventions and exhibitions; most of these activities are events.

Visiting friends and Relatives: This is one of the most important purposes for tourism. The destination of this category of purpose is predetermined by the place of residence of the person who is to be visited. Wedding, traditional ceremonies, child dedication, anniversaries and sundry celebrations are social events that stimulate such tourism travels. From the foregoing account, triple bottom lines emerge:

- i) Individuals who travel to share the experience and activities of events; they constitute the origin and the demand end of the tourism continuum.
- ii) Events or themed public functions that attract or stimulate individuals to leave their homes. These events represent the destinations and the supply end of the tourism spectrum.
- iii) Event planners and organizers, programme co-ordinators and stage managers that constitute a significant part of the event tourism industry.

The above scenarios are accommodated within tourism in conceptual and paradigmatic framework and fits into the tourism typology called event tourism.

Conceptualizing Event Tourism

Tourism has characteristics that set it apart from other economic activities, and therefore, poses some analytical problems. Cooper (2010) observes that as a service sector activity, tourism does not fit into the traditional world of an industry or economic sector. Even as a service sector it is distinct:

- i) It is purchased usually without inspection,
- ii) It consists of a range of goods and services which are purchased and or used, often in sequence e.g. reservation, agencies, financial services, transportation, accommodation, food and attractions. Thus, tourism has a unique composite nature with many-faceted components that constitute the “tourism products” supplied through many markets. Consequent upon this, therefore, the definition of tourism could not be ascertained to be unequivocally consensual neither are its boundaries clearly delineated. Tourism has become subjected to a plethora of definition by experts from their various perspectives, offering their views on its contents and scope. This situation led Peace and Butler (1993) to state that many disciplines that have studied tourism bring with them all their conceptual and methodological baggage.

Leiper (1995) in his attempt to define tourism describes it as a system comprising origin, travel route and destination. The origin and the destination are the demand and supply sides of tourism. The supply side is deemed to be an aggregation of all the businesses that

directly provide goods and services, and which have indirect interaction with the demand side, consisting of the leisure, recreational and tourism pursuits of the tourist. This represents the system model of tourism. Cooper et al (1998) defined tourism from an industry perspective and describe it as the sum total of all the individuals and organizations that provide the services and products needed by tourists. Cooper's industrial model appears to align itself with the supply unit of Leipers system.

Concerns as to the exact nature and structure of tourism led to its conceptualization as an industry or a system or merely a collection of markets. Wilson (1998), relying on Nightingale's (1978) definition of an industry and market as a vehicle for forms to sell goods or services with similar characteristics; and as a collection of businesses that use similar processes to produce basically uniform goods and services, concludes that tourism is a market and not an industry. We, therefore, arrive at other triple conceptual bottom lines. While Leiper (1995) defines tourism as a system; Cooper et al (1998) and Wilson (1998) see it as an industry and a market, respectively.

However, Wilson (1998) insists that treating tourism as a market or more correctly as a set of markets is more pragmatic. Tourism transactions like those for any other commodities involve consumers or tourists, the goods and services they demand and the business and industries supplying them. The complex nature of tourism product necessitates several transactions between buyers and sellers to provide all the elements of a tourist travel and activities.

Till date tourism is studied within different disciplinary paradigmatic frame work from which variety of definitions and conceptions develop. This creates an identity problem for tourism: is it a sphere of activity, a system; a member of systems; a sector; a series of sectors; an industry, a collection of industries; a market or a set of markets; a loose interrelationship of businesses concerned with the supply of tourism goods and services or simply a phenomenon? There is no generic term that adequately describes it and facilitates its analysis. According to Wilson (1998), it cannot be considered simply as an industry, it is best described as a set of markets, or a sector of the economic systems. He went further to suggest that the various definitions of tourism are based on the characteristics of tourists and tourism simply. Faulkner and Russel argue that tourism cannot be

viewed as a single industry and advocate a multidisciplinary approach to its study.

Theoretical framework

Stabler et al (2010) observe that there are fundamental and unresolved issues concerning definition and conceptualization of tourism. Therefore, there appears not to be a consensus arrived at as to how to articulate a theory of tourism that clearly defines and conceptualizes it to inform the future direction of its study. However, there appears to be some agreement that tourism is inherently different from other forms of human and economic activities and appears to breach a single disciplinary boundary that requires a specific methodological framework.

Lorenz complexity and chaos theory

Lorenz (1963) propounded complexity and chaos theory which Faulkner and Russel (1997) adopted for the study of tourism. The adoption of this theory is based on the thinking that tourism has some characteristics similar to those of natural systems. Complex and chaos theory or better known as chaos theory recognizes that many human systems are characterized by openness, complexity, non-linearity, the operations of which are non-deterministic, dynamic and unpredictable. The theory posits that such systems, which appear to be disordered, unstable and subject to seemingly random and entirely unconnected often exogenous events do have a discernible underlying pattern.

It is asserted that the application of the theory should be on bottom-up basis as this approach opens out the analysis by identifying the complexities of systems where stability and dynamic forces influencing them are juxtaposed. This approach is especially relevant to human interaction, through society's institutions and structures and its economic and political systems. It is the system nature of tourism that can be analysed within a chaos theoretical framework. The interest in chaos theory in relation to crisis management was firmly established in the 1980s, but it was not until the 1990s that it was extensively considered in the context of tourism. Ritchie (2004) shows that there is widespread consensus that tourism is sensitive to exogenous disaster events over which those involved in it have no

control. Russel and Faulkner (1997) were in the forefront of the academic interest in chaos theory considering tourism to be essentially about human behaviour, consisting of many diverse elements and subject to much uncertainty and the analysis of it does not fit easily into the linear, deterministic and reductionist positive paradigm.

In reality, they consider that chaos theory offers a feasible explanation that all tourism activity takes place in economic, political and social systems that are inherently complex, disordered, dynamic and subject to continuous disequilibrium, being only periodically stable. So also, the interrelationship between tourism demand and supply often precipitate economic, environmental, political and socio-cultural effects. Tourism demand is influenced by such factors as cultural and social structures, institutions, occupations, work patterns, wealth, income, gender, age and class. Tourism demand issue is about satisfying the tourists' urge for activity, services and phenomenon while the supply issue is about providing goods and services to meet the demands of tourists. Chaos theory also touches upon characteristics of tourists and tourism supply which Wilson (1998) claims to be the basis of the various tourism definitions. Like every other human systems, tourists are characterized by openness, complexity, non-linearity (disorderly or chaotic) while tourist operations are non-deterministic, dynamic and unpredictable and are subject to random and entirely unconnected exogenous event.

Both Leiper's conceptual system model and Cooper's industry model as well as Faulkner and Russel complexity and chaos theory apply to events.

The Emerging Event Tourism

Event Tourism is a systematic planning, development and marketing of festivals and special events as tourist attractions, image makers, catalysts for infrastructural development and economic growth as well as animators of built attractions. Tourism management deals with tourism development based on the analysis of the behaviour and motivation of all kinds of tourists. On the other hand, event management deals with event marketing, design and staging of an event. The mutualistic merger of the two activities results to event tourism. According to Getz (1997), event tourism aims at full exploitation of the capabilities of events in order to achieve tourism development of host communities.

Over the years, event tourism has been characterized as being inclusive of all planned events in an integrated approach to tourism development and marketing. Event tourism has also been seen as having some similarities with other special forms of tourism. Some basic traveling motives have been identified as being physical, cultural, interpersonal or prestigious and these motives are satisfied by different types of events.

The paradigmatic Framework of Event Tourism

Event tourism is characterized by predetermined purposes and destination. It therefore, falls within the motivation category in tourism typology. An indepth analysis of event tourism requires, perhaps a close examination of the subsisting conceptual models and theories of tourism as documented in extant literatures.

First, Leiper's (1999), (1995) system model describes tourism as comprising tourist origin, travel route and destination. The origin situates the event tourist i.e. a prospecting tourist seeking motivation, purpose or reason for traveling. The origin is the demand side of the system. Indications are that the tourists will be provided with services, facilities and amenities that they might need for the trip by the event managers or planners who are the promoters and the sponsors of the tourist event. This is the supply end of the event tourism system.

Cooper's (1998) model aligns with the supply of tourism goods and services while Lorenz's (1963) chaos theory as adopted by Faulkner and Russel (1997) describes both the characteristics of the event tourist and the tourist event at the destination. The event tourism model is presented in figure 1.

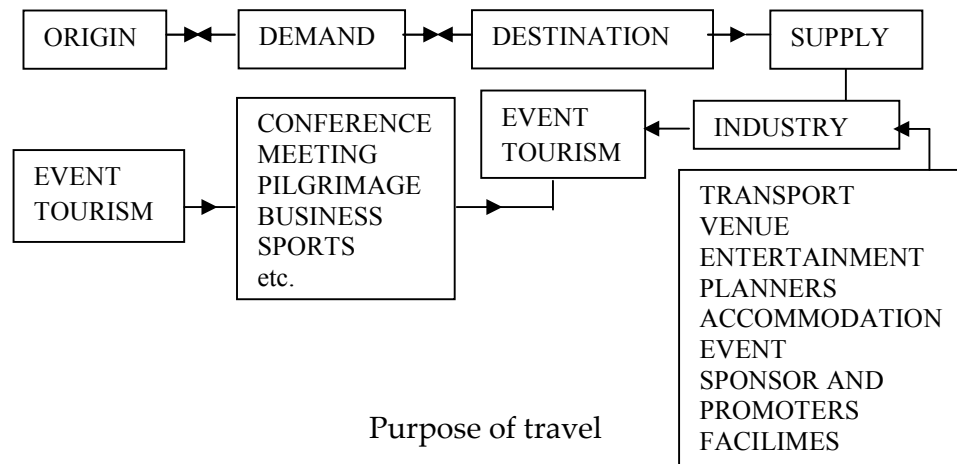


Fig 1: The Event Tourism Model adapted from Leiper (1979) and Cooper et al (1998)

Source: Okoli (2014).

The demand at the tourism origin involves the event tourists who need to travel for the sole purpose of honouring certain invitations from friends and relatives, conferences, religious pilgrimage, business meetings, trade fairs, political and economic summits etc.

II. The Tourist Events: These are themed public functions that are capable of motivating individuals and groups of individuals to travel. They include types and sizes of events as classified by Okoli (2007, 2012); Getz (1997) Goldblath (2002).

Types: Cultural festivals such as Osun Oshogbo, Argungu fishing festival; Durbar, "Iriji" and "Oru-Owere" etc,
Sports – World Cup, Olympic Games etc
- Social – Weeding, Dedication ceremonies etc
- Economic – product launch; trade fairs

Size: Major events National day Anniversary;
G-8 summit, World Economic summit
Mega events: Olympic games; world cup
Hallmark Events: Installation of the Pope,
Inauguration of Heads of state and governments etc.

Special Event: Coronations, Installations, Inauguration etc.

Tourist events are often and generally high profile events, sponsored and powered by influential individuals and organizations. They are professionally planned and organized by the event industry and are subjected to the marketing strategies of product differentiation and segmentation as well as intense promotion and publicity.

It is instructive to note that event tourists are motivated by invitation to event at their places of domicile. However, they could also be motivated by tourist events which have come to their knowledge from whatever source of information. The supply side of the tourism system not only provides goods and services to the event tourist but also gives him the purpose and motivation. Thus, both the event tourist and the tourist event are entangled in a conceptual conundrum. Operational rather than classical definition of the two terms need to be applied in order to resolve the issue.

Conclusion

Due to its composite and multifaceted nature, tourism is difficult to define, describe and delineate. It also defies generic characterization. Event, being a subset of tourism inherits the definitional caveats and classification problems associated with its composite nature. The conceptual and theoretical frameworks developed for tourism also apply to event. Tourist events and event tourists represent the supply and the demand ends of the event system while event tourism is the market or industry. High profile special events, though tourism events at the supply end of the event continuum, could spark off tourist traffic at the demand side and create some conceptual conundrum. Nevertheless, event tourism is unveiled as an emerging motivation based tourism typology.

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