

Cultural and social capital and regional tourism

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Abstract

Traditional perspectives of regional development have emphasized on economic factors and innovation in exploiting techniques and resources. Similarly, regional tourism development is usually couched in economic factors, such as jobs and increasing land values. In this approach usually was ignored the local and community aspects of tourism development; thus it is necessary that the community be factored into planning and development strategies to balance the traditional economic perspective. Tourism systems include interaction between visitors and elements of the host community. It is argued in this paper that fostering innovation in regional development is much more than a process of community consultation. This paper outlines the key concepts of social capital and cultural capital and how they can further our understanding of regional tourism development. Tourism development depends on a level of social, political and cultural capital in order to be a tool of successful regional development. It does so within the context of regional tourism development and the concepts of systems of innovation and sustainable development.

Keywords: Tourism development; Regional tourism, Cultural capital; Social capital; Sustainable development

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Introduction

Cultural and Social Capital (CSC) is the most factors which show how the social characteristics of communities contribute to successful innovation and sustainable development. The intervention of various levels of government in tourism marketing and management at a regional level and the preponderance of small businesses engaged in regional tourism activity has helped to create regional tourism systems. The broader communities are environments in which regional tourism systems operate. This may involve other industrial sectors or systems that provide services to visitors either in the role of tourism businesses or in their own industrial roles. Residents of communities, along with enterprises, form part of the regional tourism systems environment. This is generally truer of systems that primarily produce services as opposed to those that primarily produce goods. Economic conditions effects on regional tourism systems by generating transit and destination regions, availability of facilitating services and all the other environmental circumstances that act on economic systems generally (Leiper, 1995).

According to the literature, the massification of cultural tourism has led to the development of tourism experiences. The search for more engaging experiences has led cultural and social tourists to develop new relationships with everyday life in destinations (Richards, 2011). Tourists develop new skills, get closer to local communities and contribute to their overall experience in the destination with their knowledge and opinions. The rise of skilled consumption, the importance of identity formation and the acquisition of cultural capital in modern society point to an alternative to conventional cultural tourism (Richards & Wilson, 2006). This new type of tourism based on a broader use of culture, intangible cultural assets, and stronger relationships with locals and social knowledge transfer has led to the emergence of regional effective tourism as a field of study (Richards, 2011). UNESCO (2006) has also defined this tourism niche as travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place, which provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture (UNESCO, 2006).

Through an analysis of destinations, we can broadly identify several groups linked to tourism production and consumption: national tourism boards, tourism enterprises, supply managers and intermediaries, local communities and tourists. In regional creative tourism, destinations on both sides of supply and demand need to develop new skills (Richards & Wilson, 2006; 2007). This raises the question of who retains cultural capital and how it is applied for tourism purposes. In the process of tourism development, several types of capitals can be identified and attributed to different social agents or social groups. Building on the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, several authors have linked his notion of social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986) to tourism studies (Karlsson, 2005; Richards, 2011; Richards & Wilson, 2006; 2007). Other authors have mentioned creative capital in relation to regional creative tourism. This capital is held by the so-called creative class (Florida, 2002; 2007) and regional creative tourists (Richards, 2011).

In addition, Richards (2013) has highlighted relational capital as another type of capital present in regional creative tourism networks. Although it is clear that several types of capital are used in the study of cultural-social capital and regional creative tourism, the present research is mainly concerned with cultural-social capital and its role in the development of regional tourism experiences. The main goal of this research is to link cultural-social capital theory to regional creative tourism in an effort to describe who retains cultural capital, as well as how they use this for tourism purposes. Having this in mind, this study intends to answer the following question: What are the roles that cultural-social capital plays in the regional creative tourism literature? In this review, a systematic research technique is used.

From this overview of the different dimensions of cultural-social capital (CSC), it can be seen that regional tourism development has much to gain from a strong CSC foundation in local communities. In fact, CSC and tourism have a symbiotic relationship. They rely on each other and contribute to each other and, potentially then, tourism can contribute to regional development much more broadly than simple economic contributions. In fact, some tourism events may result in considerable economic leakage while still contributing to CSC

(Putnam, 2000:289). In this respect, we need to distinguish between the benefits that CSC can bring to tourism development, and the benefits that tourism development can bring to CSC. Among the benefits that CSC can bring to tourism development is the way that an increase in CSC can improve a community's sense of well-being. In turn, this sense of well-being increases the receptiveness to tourism and, thus, the returns to a community. In more specific terms, CSC can facilitate the flow of information through a community. Passing information and processing it, help to assessing risks and opportunities and situations, individuals and agencies, which are all necessary for effective tourism development. From the economic perspective social and cultural capital is the set of relationships that minimizes the transaction costs of operating in the market.

Information flows through reciprocal relationships and thus facilitates the transactions that are the basis of a market economy. Social networks can increase productivity by reducing the costs of doing business. CSC can facilitate the generation of cultural activities that attract tourists. In taking pride in local traditions and heritage, communities foster a sense of 'character' or 'ambience' in their region that appeals to tourists and facilitates return visits. In rural regions, CSC can add to what some theorists refer to as 'countryside capital' – that is, the unique environmental, economic, cultural and social characteristics of regional communities that make them attractive as 'countryside' destinations (Slee, 2003).

Human and natural capital should also not be forgotten from the equation, for they are not only important resources in themselves, but contribute to CSC. Activities should be undertaken which target the development of essential human capital, including educational and communication skills. No region will function effectively with a high proportion of disadvantaged persons, whether it is through illness, nutrition, low educational participation rates or gender and ethnic marginalization. With respect to natural capital, tourism development can contribute to useful public spaces, including parks, waterways, beaches and other environmental features. There should be an attempt to mobilize local services and suppliers while going 'green' with organic and other recycling, solar design, waste water use, etc., including encouraging relevant supportive infrastructure.

3. Methodology

Systematic research was chosen as the research technique, using Scopus database (www.scopus.com). A systematic review, like other review studies, is a way to do research using literature as a data source on a specific topic. It enables, a summary of all studies dealing with a particular theme, allowing the incorporation of a wider range of relevant results rather than limiting conclusions to only a few articles. Regional tourism development and social-cultural capital were used as keywords in the present research. The simple cross-relationship between regional tourism development and social -cultural capital was the only relationship that showed measurability, which resulted in 12 items. Articles that dealt with co-creation(Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003; 2004; Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009) as an act of developing or acquiring social- cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) were also seen as relevant to the study, as co-creation is mentioned in the regional tourism development literature (Richards, 2011). As mentioned earlier, this research had the goal of answering the following question: What are the roles that social-cultural capital plays in regional tourism development literature?

Findings

In light of current research into CSC, this classical model needs to be revised. As Putnam (2000) argues in his book-length treatment of social capital in late 20th century America, social capital is a crucial ingredient found in innovative and productive relationships. The emphasis in a social capital approach is on the use of networks for cooperation, not merely communication. Furthermore, in order for the model to be useful for an understanding of regional tourism development, it needs to include an understanding of the role of the wider community and its complex of resources, the role of volunteers and their organizations in many local tourism activities and the recognized relationships between tourism consumers and residents of the producing regions. CSC, as we will see, has relevance to each of these dimensions. In this respect, we agree with Tamaschke (2003) that social– cultural capital is not a substitute for other regional development resources, but complement them.

It is useful to remember that the reality for most regional areas is that economic and social development is problematic. Moreover, regional

areas tend towards small pockets of population where even minor incremental changes can lead to significant improvements in the state of social and economic capital. The converse is also true for social-cultural capital; that is, small improvements in social capital can have important incremental impacts on development potential. In this respect, we agree with McGovern (1993, 2002) that the process of developing is as important as the development itself.

But all this begs further questions for regional communities. In planning for tourism development, the people of communities have to be aware of what 'tourists want' and whether the regional community even wants to provide that sort of travel experience. Because regions are diverse entities, made up of a diverse group of 'communities' could be more than one political unit or area, we have to be aware that the various perspectives on tourism will be important in any future tourism development. Collectively, the citizens and organizations of a region could hold any or all of a variety of positions in relation to current tourism development or further growth, ranging from full support to antagonism. Recognizing this is an important aspect of a healthy democracy, but it is also important to account for in planning and development.

Of course, embedded in these positions are values and what people hold to be valuable in their community. This can lead to different agendas within the same geopolitical area; there will be different 'communities' within the community. This will range from different levels of government to differential access to power: the empowered and the disempowered. It is important because these differences need to be accounted for, need to be embraced by the planning and development process. There is also an underlying assumption in this paper that sustainable tourism development is more likely if, on the one hand, an inclusive planning procedure is used and, on the other, there is sufficient cultural and social capital upon which to build further tourism development. Communities that have a strong sense of identity and value their own 'culture', heritage and lifestyle are in a good position to design a tourism 'product' that will fit their own sense of community value and be attractive to potential tourists (Macbeth, 1997b). These issues are also noted by Sustainable Tourism Services (2002) when they discuss community values and the

characteristics shared by rural and remote towns. This leads us to consider the specific ways in which CSC can contribute to regional tourism development and, at the same time, benefit from such development.

Conclusions

The study of relationship of social-cultural capital and regional tourism development has so far supported different strategies for many destinations as they try to differentiate themselves from regular cultural and social destinations. This research allows tourists to engage in different ways and experience local culture from up close. Co-creation constitutes only one way of using cultural and social capital in the design of cultural-social and important experiences for tourists, as they use this capital to influence market choices. This paper tries to contribute positively to the study of tourism. It does not attempt to answer all the questions about tourism, acknowledging that the results have some limitations.

Using a simple cross researching for cultural-capital and regional tourism development as a framework means neglecting other implications of a more economic nature. Tourism itself can be examined in many different ways, which were not referred to here. The systematic review technique allowed us to measure only a small set of papers on this topic, as mentioned above. However, this work's contributions are clearly of value. By analyzing how cultural and social capital is being used or referred to in this kind of special interest tourism, this study may help other researchers develop new ways of thinking about destination strategies and the activation of tangible and intangible cultural and creative assets within tourism studies.

Analyzing content of papers on how cultural and social capital effects regional tourism development showed a regional development has become an increasingly important imperative in both developed and underdeveloped countries. Tourism has been touted as the 'savior' of many regional and rural areas and in some cases it will be the key to begin rebuilding the area. However, for most regional areas tourism is simply one of many development strategies that must be evaluated both for potential success and also for their potential to contribute to social, cultural and political capital. The aim of this paper has been to

outline how the key concepts of SCC can be used to understand the readiness for development and the potential for tourism to contribute to building stronger, sustainable regional communities.

It has been argued that both the community and the government have an important role to play in the creation and management of SCC in the tourism system. It seeks to avoid the naive view current among some social capital theorists that regional communities can and should be left to their own devices to manage their regional affairs. SCC is concerned with the vitality of local communities, and the advantage of understanding SCC in the context of regional tourism is that it may help planners contribute to the well-being of communities, and, at the same time, ensure the needs of regional tourism are met simultaneously.

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