Time for Tourism

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Abstract:

Sometimes a fundamental element in any activity is so embedded that academic enquiry misses it. Here, it is argued that time is that element in the tourism literature. This paper will present an overview of time in tourism. Time will be discussed in the following forms: linear, cyclical, perceptual, social, and cultural.

The simplest definition of time is 'clock' time, or linear time. However, even clock time is governed, in a social context, by legal structures regulating public holidays, leave entitlement, and so on, all of which have impacts on tourism and the use of discretionary time for holidays. When linear time is incorporated with space, technology plays a role in 'shrinking' the world, enabling a greater choice of destination (Hall, 2009).

Time is also cyclical, however. Diurnal and seasonal cycles affect tourism. Longer cycles are evident in the rise and fall of the popularity of destinations, economic cycles, and fashion, which all play a part in how tourism is experienced.

On a personal level are perceptions of time (Urry, 2000). On the first day of a holiday, the days of future rest and relaxation stretch ahead. If the holiday experience has been good, then the last days pass very quickly. If the experience is poor, then the last days take much longer. The concept of perceived time will be tested during the presentation of this paper with the help of two volunteers.

Finally, cultures organise time differently. Meals are a good example of this. The Spanish language guidebooks to Switzerland, for example, stress that the Swiss eat early and that most restaurants will be closed for orders by nine in the evening (Bender, Gidlow & Fisher 2013). Similarly, in the early years of Eurodisney, the management were unprepared for the different eating habits of their visitors compared to those in the United States (Richards & Richards, 1998). Cultures also have different attitudes towards annual leave—compare Germany with the United States—which has an impact on the age of visitors to destinations.

This presentation will show that time requires a much more systematic analysis than it has hitherto been given.

References:

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