

Title: Rethinking Indigenous Knowledge in (African) Tourism Studies

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Abstract:

Several African scholars and Africanists (e.g., Fanon, 1963, 1967; Asante, 2003; Nyamnyoh, 2012; Dei, 2002, 2012) advocate a radical change in the conventional processes of knowledge production, which have historically deprived and marginalized African voices. The main thrust of their argument is that Indigenous knowledge (IK) offers the epistemic framework that African scholars and knowledge producers can employ to articulate, create, and produce knowledge that challenges and extends ‘western’ experiences on the continent.

However, although IK has noteworthy merits, it is far less easy to disentangle. This situation is further complicated by the fact that applying the principles of IK commits African scholars to the longstanding dichotomy between Indigenous and ‘western’ knowledge (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Geertz, 1983). This paper critically examines the possibilities for incorporating IK into tourism development, in general, and scholarship on African tourism, in particular, and its attendant implication for hopeful imaginaries and practices espoused by theorists of critical tourism studies.

The key explanations identified for why there is limited utility of IK in tourism studies are the inadequate number of interlocutors or pioneers in the field and limited published literature on IK. The conclusion can also be drawn that African-based scholars are ideally situated to thinking past ‘western’ tourism research traditions and producing different insights. However, the limited number of studies espousing IK implies that (African) tourism studies is not always radically different because such research has been filtered through ‘western’ epistemology and methodology. Following an in-depth multi-dimensional analysis of preliminary research results from Ghana, some recommendations for thinking about and doing (African) tourism will also be presented.

References:

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