

REJOINDERS AND COMMENTARY

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Clarifying Heritage Tourism

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In their paper “Managing Heritage Tourism” (*Annals* 27:682–708), Garrod and Fyall provide a useful and expansive investigation about constraints and imperatives relating to the long term management of heritage attractions. There they employ Yale’s definition for clarifying heritage tourism as that “centered on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings, to art works, to beautiful scenery” (1991:21). Adopting such an approach presents problems, however, as it can lead to some confusion when dealing with heritage and historic tourism in general and their management in particular. Yet, Garrod and Fyall are not alone in assuming a position which regards heritage tourism as a subgroup of tourism based on the historic attributes of a site or attraction; indeed their view is quite common in the literature (Langlois, Theodore and Ineson 1997; Palmer 1998; Peleggi 1996; Percival 1987; Prideaux and Kininmont 1999; Seale 1996).

This commentary argues that heritage tourism is a phenomenon based on tourists’ motivations and perceptions *rather than* on specific site attributes. The alternative definition it provides is based on individual motivation for a given visit which, it is maintained, is more useful for understanding heritage tourism and the management of heritage and historic places. It should thus help clarify the nature of heritage tourism as a phenomenon which, at its core, has not the heritage attributes of a specific site, but rather the motivation to visit it, both in relation to that site’s attributes and the tourists’ perception of their own heritage.

This second standpoint, it is believed, is more viable for understanding heritage tourism and for the management of such places. Going beyond the position of Garrod and Fyall can provide a deeper appreciation of the issues involved in the management of heritage attributes. Whereas a general defi-

nition considers heritage tourism as tourists visiting such places, it does not take into account their attitudes and motivations. The less common but more specific definition views heritage tourism as that form motivated by the heritage characteristics of a site (Palmer 1998; Swarbrooke 1994).

The definition provided for heritage tourism in this commentary is based on two concepts: first, motivations of tourists (are they motivated or not to visit a site due to its heritage attributes), and second, the tourists' perception of a site (do they perceive it as part of their own heritage). Since the sites themselves are not directly at the core of the phenomenon, the definition distinguishes three types currently thought to be heritage tourists: those visiting what they consider a heritage site though it is unconnected with their own; those visiting a place they deem to be part of their heritage, even though it may not be categorized as a heritage site; and those visiting a site specifically classified as a heritage place although unaware of this designation.

Therefore, the following definition of *heritage* tourism may be suggested. A subgroup of tourism, in which the main *motivation* for visiting a site is based on the place's heritage characteristics according to the tourists' perception of their own heritage. As such, *historic* tourism may be defined as a subgroup of tourism, in which the motivation for visiting a place is based on its historic attributes. These less ambiguous definitions proposed for heritage and historic tourism emphasize that subgroups should be defined by the tourists' motivation as well as their perceptions of a site rather than by site-attribute alone; that historic and heritage tourism can occur in the same space as each other as well as with other types; and that, while a heritage tourist is a historic one, the reverse is not always the case.

The foregoing definition of heritage tourism can lead to further research to help differentiate it from other kinds of tourism presently included in this term. Understanding tourists' behavior in this context, as well as their motivations and perceptions, is helpful for the management of sites with respect to such factors as pricing policy, the mission of heritage attractions and understanding tourist profiles, as well as public funding and sustainable management of such sites. It would also remove the imprecision present in many papers such as that by Garrod and Fyall, which perpetuates the ambiguity between heritage and historic tourism. Given that visitation to heritage, historic, and other cultural sites is growing rapidly, increased clarity in definitions is particularly important. ■

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Heritage Tourism: A Question of Definition

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The crux of the argument put forward in the comment by Poria, Butler and Airey is that our paper “Managing Heritage Tourism” (*Annals* 27:682–708, 2000) uses an ambiguous and imprecise definition of heritage tourism. This lack of clarity, they claim, has adverse consequences for the validity of our findings. They go on to propose alternative definitions of heritage and historic tourism, which they consider to be more useful in researching issues related to the management of heritage attractions. In this reply we argue that their criticism of our paper is unfounded, even if their criticism of the definitions of heritage tourism currently favored in the literature is not. Examination of their alternative definitions of heritage and historic tourism also demonstrates that these offerings are by no means watertight. Finally, we make a suggestion of our own on the uses and abuses of definitions in tourism research.

Turning first to the assertion that an overly narrow definition of heritage tourism is adopted by our paper, closer inspection of the text reveals that no particular definition was employed. Nor were several other important but necessarily controversial terms such as “sustainability” or “conservation”. This position was taken in order to ensure that the panelists were able to use their expertise to the fullest extent. Indeed, and as it was clearly stated, “[g]iven that the purpose of the study was to allow the panel to explore different perceptions of the sustainability concept and its application in the context of heritage tourism, it was considered that the imposition of a set of definitions of the key concepts would have frustrated this purpose” (p. 690). Moreover, the decision to permit the panelists themselves to define the key terms