

Sense of place in tourism

Literature



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Sense of place is a psychological term used to encompass “ the meaning and attachments that places hold for people” (Semken and Butler Freeman 2008). It is a broad term associated with social interpretations and representations of how people feel about a place they come in contact with whether in everyday life, while on vacation, or moving from one location to another. Sense of place is also a concept that “ challenges researchers” with “ inconsistent application of terms, questions regarding origin, and a lack of awareness of research findings” (Farnum, Hall, and Kruger 2005).

It is a vague term with multiple uses and meanings. Therefore, the purpose of this report is to research the origins, definitions, and theories behind sense of place and its relation to tourism. It is hoped that at the end of this report, it will be concluded whether or not the research available regarding sense of place in tourism is effective and accurate enough to be used as a tool to aid the success of the tourism industry. Sense of Place: Origins

According to the findings in the article “ Sense of Place in Natural Recreation and Tourism: An Evaluation and Assessment of Research Findings,” sense of place originated “ through one’s interaction with the environment and the interconnectedness of four systems”: place attachment, place identity, place dependence, and place satisfaction (Farnum, Hall, and Kruger 2005). Place attachment is an individual’s identification with an environmental setting.

Place identity is how an individual views his/her self in relation to the environment around them. Place dependence is defined as the way in which an individual connects or identifies with the specific activities taking place in the surrounding environment. Finally, place satisfaction is defined as the

most exclusive to sense of place in tourism and describes an individual's view of the general quality of the settings within the environment (Farnum, Hall, and Kruger 2005). Sense of Place: Theories and Definitions

The origins of sense of place are agreed upon by environmental and psychological researches alike. However, it is their different points of view and applications of each term within sense of place that creates a broader and vaguer definition as a whole. For instance, " Studying Place Attachment," author James Ponzetti describes his theory of place attachment as an " emotional connection formed by an individual to a physical location due to the meaning given to the site as a function of its role as a setting for experience" (Ponzetti 2004).

Jeanette Joy Fisher, in her article " Creating Place Identity: It's Part of Human Nature" describes place identity as a " concept [that] deals with the interaction between the question of who we are and where we are, and how our local environment, including geographical location, ethnic traditions, family heritage, and educational background influence our lives" (Fisher 2006). Place dependence, as expressed by authors Dave D. White, Randy J.

Viriden and Carena J. van Riper, is when individuals look at the qualities and composition of the environmental surroundings to determine whether the place of recreation/tourism is one to hang on to or move on from; meaning these determine whether the individual has a positive or negative experience (White, Viriden, and van Riper 2008). Finally, is place satisfaction as discussed by Yan Xu in the article " Sense of Place and Identity".

Within this research, Yan Xu suggests that sense of place is in fact “ one of many characteristics which displayed by people congruent with local identity; a sense of the beauty and the wealth of phenomena that comprise a particular place” (Yan Xu 1995). Yan Xu’s theory is that it is the sense of place that in fact makes an environment comfortable increasing the individual’s desire to remain within the environment for a longer period of time.

In relation to sense of place in tourism, it is thought that an individual’s sense of place and overall comfort within a location will increase the travel to such a location as well as prolong the overall stay. In other words, sense of satisfaction basically states that the more satisfied and comfortable an individual feels, the higher the success and return rate for the tourist attraction. Factors that contribute to making an environment comfortable and appeal to a positive sense of place include “ legibility, the perception of and preference for the visual environment, and the compatibility of the setting with human purposes” (Yan Xu 1995).

In short, it is Yan Xu’s theory that sense of place is an individualistic concept that is determined by the individual only. Sense of Place: Tourism Another area of sense of place involves the theory that it varies between locals and tourists. For example, locals perceive the environment differently than those tourists who are just visiting or passing by. It therefore becomes the duty of the tourist industry to find ways to make tourists feel at home as if they were locals in order to develop a sense of belonging and longing for the particular environment and location.

In the article “ Locals’ and Tourists’ Sense of Place: A Case Study of a Swiss Alpine Village,” authors Susanne Kianicka, Matthias Buchecker, Marcel Hunziker, and Ulrike Muller-Boker discover that “ the place characteristics relevant to sense of place are approximately the same for both groups. ” However, further research shows that meanings behind those characteristics are different among the two groups. Their study concludes that the “ preservation of the cultural characteristics and authenticity sought by tourists must be found (i. .) when pursuing sustainable landscape development” which contributes to the overall feel of belonging which is key to promote booming tourism for a desired location (Buchecker, Hunziker, and Muller-Boker 2006).

Sense of place is vitally important to the tourism industry. It’s all about keeping the traveler happy and encouraging them to extend their stay and to return again and again something that Regina Binder agrees with her article entitled “ Sense of Place in Sustainable Tourism Development. In this article, Binder sets out to first define sense of place and then discover ways to implement its theories within the tourism industry. She first defines sense of place as a “ human response to natural and built surroundings, geography, history and population,” which she believes is the initial growth of the sense of place. “ Sense of place is essential to sustainability of host communities, cultural sites, and tourist destinations” (Binder 2008).

At times, Binder discovered that sense of place in tourism and community interests are competing against each other creating a “ vulnerability and intangibility” among the concept of sense of place. Binder’s research presents a methodology that recognizes the role of sense of place, the <https://assignbuster.com/sense-of-place-in-tourism/>

friction between tourism and community, and outlines a “ vital set of assets for consideration in sustainable tourism development policy and planning” (Binder 2008).

Farnum, Hall, and Krugar agree in the importance of sense of place within the tourism industry, particularly among decisions made by management. This point is further heightened in the article “ Place Assessment: How People Define Ecosystems,” in which authors Steven Galliano and Gary Loeffler discuss the importance of sense of place in ecosystem management. The article researches the need for “ land managers to more actively inventory and understand the meanings that people attach to the lands and resources” under their care (Galliano and Loeffler 1999).

The article concludes that the importance of land managers as well as development managers understanding sense of place and place attachment is key in creating environments that draw in increasing crowds of first time as well as repeat visitors. Summarized Response to Literature Through the conducted research it is evident that the environmentalists and sociologists concur with the origins of sense of place and are similar in their line of thinking when it comes to the four individual key concepts.

The fact that sense of place happens among individuals in relation to their environments is also a common theme among these researches. However, as Farnum, Hall, and Krugar notes, this presents a problem with the majority of research in that most studies are based on a single person and his/her encounter with environmental situations relating to tourism. The “ primary emphasis has been on the individual as the unity of analysis and little work

has been done on how meanings come to be shared within a group” (Farnum, Hall, and Krugar 2005).

As pointed out by P. A. Stokowski in his own research, “ Much of what a person knows about places, or feels about places, or does in places, is initially mediated by others” (Stokowski 2002). People collect in groups and compare notes when visiting various tourist destinations. They aide one another in making informed decisions, which in turn plays a large impact and influence on one’s sense of place. Group research is critical for tourist destinations to accurately and completely understand how sense of place can play a role in promoting the industry.

In addition, although most agree upon the basic origins and definitions of sense of place, once the term is broken down, a more concrete origin, definition and theories are lacking bringing about an overall vague concept of what sense of place is and how it works among individuals and groups within any one set area. For instance, tourism was honed in on for this particular report, however, research is very limited to this niche as much work is also done to in researching sense of place within the environment, culture, and community.

The article by Farnum, Hall, and Krugar was the most accurate and complete in providing sense of place information; however, there was an excessive amount and much time spent in trying to cover every concept related to sense of place whether it was in the field of tourism, environment, psychological, social, or even biological. In trying to cover all the bases, not enough was presented in any one area of interest including the effects of

sense of place on tourism. While their work went above and beyond, other articles presented only portions of information pertaining to terms and theories pulled from the idea of sense of place.

As a whole, sense of place was not thoroughly covered as only a concept within was discussed, furthering the conclusion that there is much to be covered and not enough researchers to cover it. There is still much more to learn and explore when it comes to sense of place especially as it relates to tourism. This said; there was enough information available for this particular report to conclude that sense of place does in fact play a somewhat effective and perhaps even necessary role as a tool for furthering the success of the tourism industry.