

POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT



Literature

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International Tourism Context

Master TDM

Events such as conflicts, ethnical fights and civil wars usually destroy the socio-economic system of a country, spoil the industrial structure and downsize the tertiary sector. In a post-conflict situation, tourism can be identified as an opportunity to support or drive the socio-economic recovery of the country. According to Alipour & Dizdarevic (2007, p.212), “the development and recovery of a nation after a war is at the forefront of the process of the rebuilding of that nation in which the tourism industry, through proper planning, can play a formidable role”. Fernando et al., (2013, p.700) highlight that “tourism can play a role in poverty alleviation via employment generation, in increasing foreign exchange earnings and in accelerating economic growth including in the war-affected areas”.

The main studies about the implication of tourism development in a post-war situation have been conducted following 3 main stream of studies. The first investigate the socio-political pre-conditions for tourism development, the second consider the use of war heritage as tourism attraction and the third examine the necessity of re-building the destination image after a conflict.

Different authors (Causevic & Lynch, 2013; Novelli et al., 2012; Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Fernando et al., 2013) pointed out that the normalization of the socio-political context is a basic condition for a successful tourism development in a post conflict period. The active role of the government and the political system is essential, firstly to foster such a normalization (Causevic & Lynch, 2013; Winter, 2008), secondly to implement an adequate tourism policy aimed to regulate and drive tourism development (Novelli et al., 2012; Winter, 2008), thirdly in order to rebuild the infrastructure system (Hall, 2003).

For instance, Fernando et al. (2013) highlighted how Sri Lanka missed many opportunities in the last 50 years, in terms of tourism development, due to improper economic policies and continuous political violence. They (Fernando et al., 2013, p.708) concluded that “the strengthening of institution and maintaining the law in order are pre-conditions for a country to develop a long-term sustainable tourism sector”. Other authors (Causevic & Lynch, 2013; Alipour & Dizdarevic, 2007) analysed tourism development in Bosnia & Herzegovina after the '90s war, which ended with the sign of Dayton Agreements. These agreements were effective to stop the physical violence between the parts, but failed to re-establish normal social relationships within the society. Meanwhile tourism itself has a strong social connotation and requires cooperation and coordination between different actors. Based on that, Causevic & Lynch (2013) concluded that is not possible to establish a successful tourism development process without an effective normalization of the socio-political context.

On the other side, Novelli et al., (2012, p.1465) observed that when the governments play an active role and contribute to create an adequate framework, tourism can generate positive effects, such as “increase cooperation, improve relations amongst former enemies and promote post-conflict reconciliation”.

In the last decades many countries, such as Cambodia (Winter, 2008), Croatia and Montenegro (Hall, 2003), Vietnam (Alneng, 2002), Sri Lanka (Fernando et al., 2013), have considered tourism as an important driver

to recover the country after a conflict period. For some of them, for instance Croatia, the process was more natural, as they already presented a typical tourism character before the conflict (Rivera, 2008). In other situations, such as Vietnam, the war represented the event that mainly contributed to create tourism interest on the country (Henderson, 2000). This is linked to the second stream of studies, related to the opportunity of using the war heritage as tourism attraction.

In particular, Vietnam focused its development on a type of “dark tourism”. The battlefields and the war heritage, as the famous Cu-chi tunnels, became the most visited tourism attraction (Alneng, 2002; Henderson, 2000). Furthermore Mansfeld & Korman (2015) and Gelbman & Timothy (2010) pointed out that borders which were locations of conflicts and political tensions, can become sites of particular tourism interest. They gave evidence of that, analysing different examples such as the ‘Island of Peace’ on the Israeli–Jordanian border, the ‘Golden Triangle’ in south-east Asia and the Berlin Wall in Germany.

Other authors (Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Causevic & Lynch, 2013; Poria & Ashworth, 2009) have a different view and underline that when the heritage is disputed between parts before in conflict, could be risky to rely tourism development on these resources. It will strength the feeling of belonging to diverse and competing group, increase and accentuate differences (Causevic & Lynch, 2013) and “continue to evoke painful memories for many communities” (Novelli, Morgan, & Nibigira, 2012, p.1449), with the result of generating and recreating new conflicts.

The third stream of studies focus on the destination image reconstruction, as tourist usually don’t want to go to places perceived as unsafe (Causevic & Lynch, 2013; Huang et al., 2008). Wars can contribute to create in people’s mind the idea of a place which remain unsafe, even after the end of the conflict. This perception can be reinforced by inaccurate information and stereotypes propagated by media (Vitic & Ringer, 2008; Alvarez & Campo, 2014). In order to face these issues, according to Vitic & Ringer (2008), destination branding has become a strategic marketing factor in promoting tourism destinations impacted by conflicts. The strategy used can be different, depending on the context. For instance, Croatia reacted not through a recognition of the past, but shifting the attention away from the war (Rivera, 2008; Wise, 2012), while Vietnam built a point of strength on it (Alneng, 2002).

Most of researches about tourism development after conflicts have been focused geographically on Europe, Asia and Middle-East. They considered situations where, after the wars, mainly democratic forms of government were established. Another perspective should consider post-conflict situations that led to different socio-political settings. For instance, Africa represent an area where conflicts and civil wars are often followed by the establishment of more authoritarian forms of government. Further studies should focus on this alternative framework, considering and investigating the implication for tourism development in different socio-political settings.

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