

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF PHOTOGRAPHIC TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Photography today has become the part & parcel of our day-to-day life. The credit goes to the ongoing technological revolution that has made photography accessible to everyone and made it such user-friendly that anyone can take a beautiful photograph without knowing any of the technicalities. Every year people spend huge amount of money on buying equipments and travelling to near and far-off places only to take that particular photograph(s) that makes them happy. This can be treated as a separate discipline where tourists primarily involve themselves in travelling to places with the primary objective of taking photographs.

Although photography has emerged as a popular form of special interest tourism, but still there is scant research that develops a concept of photographic tourism, its participants and understand its potentialities as a separate tourism dimension. This paper contributes to a theoretical understanding of photographic tourism by evaluating previous works on tourism, special interest tourism, photography, photography subjects and photographers. It uses this to develop a conceptual framework to examine photographic tourism, identify its drivers of growth and investigate into its practices.

KEYWORDS: Tourism, Special Interest Tourism, Photographic Tourism, Photographic Tourist

INTRODUCTION

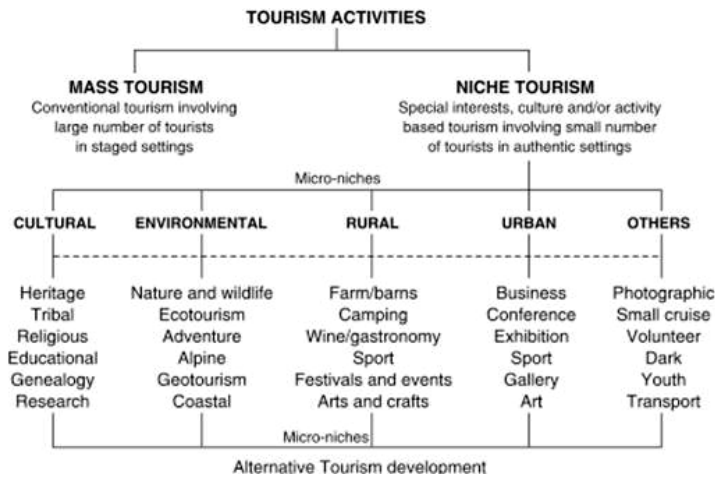
This paper introduces a conceptual framework of photographic tourism, identifies its drivers of growth and investigates into its practices. In presenting this framework the intention is to contribute towards the development of the concept of photographic tourism and the photographic tourists in the settings of special interest tourism.

The concept of 'special interest tourism' has emerged in recent years in counter-point to what is commonly referred to as 'mass tourism'. Special interest tourism could be viewed as a form of tourism, which involves tourists/consumers whose holiday is inspired by specific motivations, interests and needs and whose level of satisfaction is determined by the experience they pursue¹.

Tourism has grown and matured over the years and so has the tourists. Today, experienced tourists expect more than just a leisure travel. They look for more meaningful experiences that contribute towards their existing level of knowledge. Douglas et al. (2001: 3) describe special interest tourism as an alternative to mass tourism. They suggest that it is 'the provision of customised leisure and recreational experiences driven by the specific expressed interests of individuals and groups. A special interest tourist chooses to engage with a product or service that satisfies particular interests and needs, so SIT is tourism undertaken for a distinct and specific reason'.

¹ UNESCO-Nigeria project for revitalization of TVE in Nigeria; copyright @2010 UNESCO-Nigeria TVE Project; <http://unesconigeriave.org/teaching%20materials/ltn/leisure%20&%20tourism%20management/semester2/LTM125%20Special%20Interest%20Leisure%20&%20Tourism/week1.html> retrieved on May 05, 2014.

Today, Special interest tourism is one of the fastest growing areas within the tourism industry. It comprises of different tourism activities that are different from other traditional tourism products, suggesting that tourists are beginning to demand more varied and stimulating holiday experiences. Tourism suppliers are also constantly innovating ways to differentiate themselves from their competitors and stand out in the market. As a result of this, newer concepts like space tourism, sport tourism, wine tourism, alpine tourism, etc. are emerging and are becoming quite popular among tourists who expect something more than a regular leisure travel. The various forms of tourism can be shown with the help of following diagram:



Source: 2010 UNESCO-Nigeria TVE Project

TOURISM AND PHOTOGRAPHY

‘To be a tourist, it would seem, involves taking photographs’². Mirzoeff (1998) has rightly identified photography as a constituent element of the tourism industry as it works and plays with the signs and images of visual culture that is everyday life in order to project parts of the world onto other parts of the world. The first work that tried to draw a relationship between tourism activities and photography was by *Susan Sontag* on her book entitled *On Photography* (1977). She made the case that photography dramatically transformed the perception of the world by turning it into a “society of spectacles” where circulating images overpower reality: ‘reality’ becomes touristic, an item for visual consumption³.

Photography has been an inseparable part of tourism since its commercial introduction in the year 1839, a date generally accepted as the birth year of practical photography⁴. During the early stages of development, photography was a costly affair and the use was confined to the richer section of the society only. But, technological revolution over the years made photography affordable by almost everyone. This technological revolution created a separate group of tourists who are ready to spend any amount and travel to any places to take and experience the thrill of photographing a subject that is unique to them. This has given rise to the concept of ‘Photographic Tourism’.

This concept is quite new and there is a dearth of research that develops a conceptual framework of photographic

² Mike Robinson & David Picard (2009); the framed world: Tourism, tourists and photography; Ashgate publishing limited.

³ Jonas Larsen; Geographies of Tourist Photography: Choreographies and Performances

⁴ Robert Hirsch (2000); Seizing the light: A history of Photography; McGraw Hill, 2000

tourism. Due to scant research on this dimension of tourism, its potentialities to contribute towards socio-economic and environmental aspects has never been highlighted nor effective plans and policies were formulated to develop an area as a potential 'photographic tourism destination'.

The relationship between Tourism and Photography can be viewed under three broad heads:

- Photography as a medium of capturing and preserving memories.
- Photography as a tool for promoting tourism products.
- 'Photographic Tourism' as a new dimension to the existing tourism industry.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As discussed earlier, very scant research has been initiated to develop a concept of photographic tourism. The conceptual framework present herein tries to coin the definition of 'photographic tourism' and a 'photographic tourist' in the settings of special interest tourism.

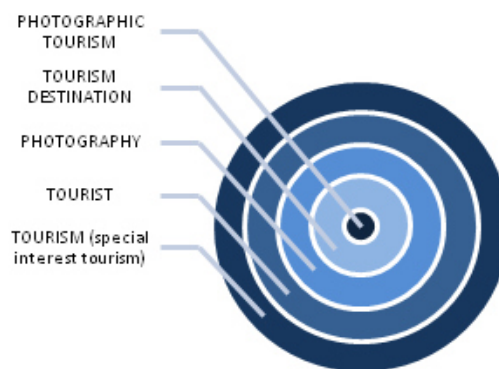


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Photographic Tourism

“Photographic tourism is that form of special interest tourism in which tourist visits a particular place with the primary aim of photographing subjects that are unique to him. The scope of photography may range from landscapes, portraits, architectures, culture, food and wildlife to even macro subjects.”

The above definition underline two important features of photographic tourism viz., ‘objective behind visiting a particular place’ and ‘uniqueness of subjects’. To make the statement more clear, it can be assumed that a tourist will not visit a place only to photograph subjects which is already available in his normal places of work and residence. The subjects must have some uniqueness in the landscapes, wildlife, people and their culture, or food habits and dress codes of the travel destination that would stimulate his desire to explore the land with the primary objective of taking photographs. These two features are also the distinctive characteristics of a ‘photographic tourist’ that separates them from a normal one.

‘A photographic tourist is a person who travels with the prime objective of photographing something unique.’ Here, ‘photography’ and the ‘uniqueness of the subject’ is the motivating force that urges the tourist to undertake a tour.

It is not always necessary that only professional photographers make tours with the primary objective of photography. A photography enthusiast, hobbyist and even a common man can sometimes undertake a tour with only intention to take photographs. In that instance they will be termed as photographic tourists.

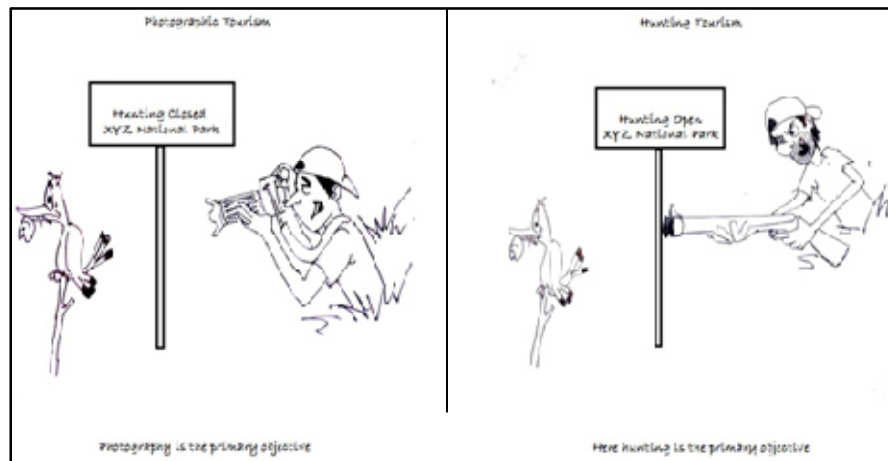


Figure 2: Pictorial Presentation of Photographic Tourism vs Other Forms (Hunting) of Tourism

PHOTOGRAPHIC TOURISM: BEFORE TOUR, DURING TOUR AND AFTER TOUR

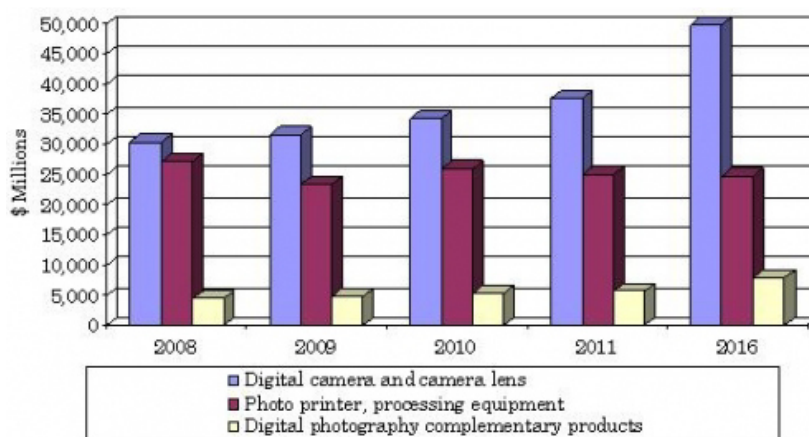
'Photographic tourism' as a new dimension to the existing tourism industry is slowly gaining momentum. The success of 'Photographic tourism' is directly linked with the popularity of photography among masses. With technological development in the field of camera and optics it is observed that photography has become an integral part of our day to day life. The role of Camera manufacturers in popularizing this trend is worth mentioning. Today, camera giants like Canon, Nikon, Panasonic, Sony, Olympus, etc. are developing and selling superior qualities of camera models with more and more features that can produce even better quality images that too at reasonable prices for all types of photography enthusiasts, hobbyist as well as professionals. This has become possible only because of their constant effort towards creating products with more features; better build quality, higher performance, more user friendly features, etc.

Development of social networking sites is also contributing towards popularizing the concept of 'Photographic Tourism' among the general masses. One can easily determine the popularity of photography among general masses by studying the present trend in the social networking sites like facebook, twitter, flickr, whatsapp, etc. As per report, whatsapp users share 347222 photos per minute, Instagram Users post 216000 new photos every minute and Pinterest users pin 3472 images per minute.

Keeping in view, the present trend in the tourism industry, one can find a number of organizations/ institutions that provide custom tours especially designed for photography enthusiasts to places that have tremendous scope in different types of photography. Organizations like Toehold, Traveling lens, National geographic expeditions, etc. as well as many renowned photographers organize low to very high budgeted package tours each year to different places around the globe with limited number of tourists to accommodate maximum attention to each individuals. Services includes arranging transportations, accommodations, food, documentation before the start of the tour; photo workshop, expert advice, equipments rental, demonstrations, etc. during the tour; and arranging for photo prints, post processing, expert advice, etc. after the end of the tour.

THE PHOTOGRAPHY INDUSTRY

As per report published by BCC Research on 'Digital Photography: Global Markets'⁵ the global market for digital photography was valued at \$65.6 billion in 2010 and \$68.4 billion in 2011. It is expected that the market for digital photography would reach \$82.5 billion with a 3.8% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) between 2011 and 2016. Cameras and lenses account for the bulk of the photography market, representing 55% of the global sales. This market segment was valued at \$37.6 billion in 2011, and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 5.8%, reaching \$49.8 billion in 2016. According to the report, the value of photo printing industry was \$25 billion in 2011 but due to various reasons there is a possibility that the industry can go down to \$24.7 billion in 2016.



Source: BCC Research on Digital Photography: Global Markets

Figure 3: Global Digital Photography Market by Product Type, 2008-2016 (\$ Millions)

CONCLUSIONS

This paper is an attempt to draw a conceptual framework of photographic tourism. The ongoing technological revolution has created a separate segment of tourists who are willing to spend any amount and cross any political boundary to take that photograph(s) which will make him/her happy. This segment can be separated from other categories of tourists on the basis of their motives behind visiting a particular place.

This paper highlights that there is a lack of research on photographic tourism. This conceptual model proposes to through light on the meaning of photographic tourism, photographic tourists, as well as their involvement in tourism activities. Further study on this particular area would focus on the prevailing trends in the photographic tourism industry as well as its role in the economy.

This emerging dimension to the existing tourism industry is slowly gaining popularity worldwide and therefore it is necessary to study and develop the concept of 'photographic tourism' so that tourism providers as well as those associated with the photography and allied industry can avail its benefits and thus contribute towards the ever growing tourism industry. For this, the tourism providers must identify spots/subjects that have the potentialities to attract photographic tourists (both inbound and outbound) and promote the same through various mediums.

⁵ <http://www.bccresearch.com/market-research/information-technology/digital-photography-global-markets-ift030c.html> retrieved on 07/07/2014.

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