

# THE DIFFICULT BUT INTERESTING PROBLEMS OF CLEARLY CONCEPTUALIZING TOURISM AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY, AND DIFFERENTIATING THE TWO

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## **Abstrak**

Beragamnya definisi mengenai *tourism* dan *tourism industry* yang dikemukakan oleh banyak penulis pariwisata, bagaimanapun telah memberikan makna dari istilah *tourism*. Namun, beragamnya definisi yang muncul juga bermakna pada ketiadaan *full agreement* dari arti istilah *tourism* dan *tourism industry* itu sendiri, atau dengan kata lain, masih belum ada kata sepakat dari apa yang dimaksud dengan *tourism* dan *tourism industry*. Artikel ini bermaksud mendiskusikan masalah perbedaan arti konsep *tourism* dan *tourism industry*. Pengembangan makna yang jelas mengenai istilah *tourism* sangat penting untuk mengurangi kebingungan pengkonsepansi arti *tourism*.

*Kata-kata kunci: tourism, tourism industry*

**T**he word tourism has been really familiar since tourism has been recognized as one of the fastest growing sectors of the economies of many countries. In fact, every year, millions of people leave home temporarily to travel within their own country to foreign countries (Leiper, 1995). However, beside its popularity, the definition of tourism itself is still problematic. Some have used the word “tourism” as an activity and others refer it as an industry. Thus, what is tourism? and what is tourism industry? This essay attempts to discuss the problems of conceptualizing tourism and tourism industry, and differentiating the two, based on the theories of different authors.

## **Discussion**

### *The Confusion About Tourism Concept*

As in the tourism studies literature, there is a very large amount of terminological and conceptual confusion, with little agreement as to what the term tourism and tourism industry means (Stear, 2003). The conceptual confusion about tourism concept is also impacted on the difficulty in defining such related tourism concept, for example, cultural tourism, special interest tourism, ecotourism, and sustainable tourism. One even read the term “business tourism”, which is actually it is “business travel” (Stear, 2003). Responding to this conceptual confusion, many writers often simply ignore it and do not worry about defining their concepts. They simply think that their readers’ understanding of various terms, concepts, and ideas is the same as their own. Sometimes, actually the readers have different perceptions and understandings with the authors. Ironically, the writers often do not realize about this situation. For some authors, this is

not the case. They frequently uncritically borrow or adopt existing or previously published definitions. This situation, then, extends the confusion.

### *Various Definitions of Tourism and Tourism Industry*

There are many perceptions of what tourism and tourism industry means, and they are reflected in various definitions. According to Stear (2003, p. 20), it is acknowledged that “most of these definitions appear to be highly pedantic, and more than a bit obsessive about detail and precision”. However, establishing clear meanings for terms and phrases relating to phenomena associated with tourism is significantly important for reducing the confusion. One of the tourism definitions is that of Weaver and Oppermann (2000), who define tourism as follows:

“Tourism is the sum of the phenomena and relationship arising from the interaction among tourists, business suppliers, host governments, host communities, origin governments, universities, community colleges and non-governmental organisations, in the process of attracting, transporting, hosting and managing these tourists and other visitors.” (p.3)

This definition is interesting since it emphasizes on the interaction between many “stakeholders parties”, including host communities to manage tourism. In addition, tourism will give impact on economic, environment, and social effect to destination area (Pearce, 1994). Thus, the interaction among those involved in tourism with communities in destination is necessary (Leiper, 1995). This interaction aims for getting the host communities’ support and enthusiasm to promote and develop tourism in their area. Further, without community’s involvement and management process as a whole, negative impact will result and have major implications for tourism development in a region (Pearce, 1994).

Moreover, from the definition above, it is critical to note that there is no explanation about reason “why” people travel, how long their stay, and how far their trip is. As a result, it is difficult to differentiate between tourists and visitors. In fact, Weaver and Oppermann’s view concerns more on the relationship amongst stakeholders and the managing processes to serve tourists and other visitors. Their definition, indeed, does not distinguish who is tourist and who is visitor. Interestingly, Weaver and Oppermann clearly conceptualise tourism and tourism industry. According to Weaver and Oppermann (2000), tourism industry is “the sum of the industrial and commercial activities...produces goods and services...for tourist consumption” (p.47). This idea considers industrial activities as comprising of origin regions, transit regions, destination regions and their share for industry. Then, it is noted that destination regions having the most share of the tourism industry, while origin regions present only by travel agencies, transportation and merchandisers (Weaver and Oppermann, 2000). Yet, there is a problem in transportation and accommodation sector, since their utilization by travelers and local residents who do not fall under the category of “tourist”.

More applied definition about tourism is discussed by Lloyd Stear. Stear defines tourism as “travel and temporary stay, involving at least one night away from the region ...with the major expectation of satisfying leisure, pleasure, or recreational needs...better able to be satisfied outside the home region”(2003, p.21). In his definition, he considers the length of stay, distance, and reasons for travel, which is either for leisure, pleasure and recreational needs. Additionally, giving a technical definition such as duration of stay (overnight stay) can make the concept of “home region” and “destination region” more precise. Thus, tourists will not have different conceptions of them. Another interesting idea is that Stear also distinguishes tourism to social and economic activities, such as traveling for working, migrating, food gathering, and day tripping. Therefore, within his view, the differentiation of who is tourist and who is not is very clear. Further, those who defined tourism as a system might disagree with Stear’s definition.

Under the system view, tourism should consist of “a set of elements” which always comes up when people go on touristic trips. Those five elements (tourist, generating region, transit route, destination region, and tourist industry), then, interact with broader environment (Leiper, 1981, cited in Hall, 1995). In contrast, Stear does not focus tourism as “a set of five elements” above but he considers it as “a set of specific human activities”, including “travel away from the ‘home region” and “overnight stay” (2003, p. 9). However, later, considering tourism as a system, seems “flawed” and had unnecessarily confused tourism. Indeed, defining tourism as a system is “unnecessary and confusing” (Leiper, 1995, p. 19).

Besides that, Stear’s definition of tourism contradicts with definition of tourism from an economic view because while Stear’s concept limits tourism to “touristic” activities, not concerned with “the sum total of all expenditures of tourists” itself. Therefore, Stear’s definition just serves a specific learning purpose. Moreover, Stear also presents a bright idea of tourism industry. He defines a tourism industry as “... a TDR-originating and specific TTGR-directed...relationships that exists among firms and organisations...satisfying ...touristic and tourismic needs” (2003, p.21). The ideas of creating term “touristic” to describe an attribute relates tourists and “tourismic” as an attribute relates to “an aspect of tourism or “one of its related phenomena” are significantly useful to understand about tourism industry itself. It is important to note that in Stear’s definition, there is collaboration and a good cooperation from one or more “industrialized tourism system” in Tourist Destination Region (TDRs) and they associate with firms and organizations in (Touristic Trip Generating Region (TTGRs) to attract and serve services and supply goods to tourists from those TTGRs (Stear, 2003). On the one hand, if the scope of TDR’s assets is small, industrial effort directs at close domestic markets (TTGRs). On the other hand, if there are huge TDR’s touristic assets, its efforts and collaboration involved a range of “highly industrialized, international travel and tourism system” (Stear, 2003). Indeed, Stear’s idea is very comprehensive since it considers tourism industry as a network rather than a collection of industries. Additionally, Stear (2003) also differentiates inbound, outbound and domestic tourism industries clearly.

Confusingly, Davidson does not state definition of tourism and tourism industry clearly, since he considers that tourism actually is “not an industry at all” (1994, p.22). So that he does not even have any definition about the tourism industry. He quotes that focus of industry from an economic perspective stating that an industry is “individual business establishment group together, the revenue received by these economic units, producing and selling a common product” (p.24). He emphasizes that tourism is “a sector” which gives impacts to other industries. The expenditure for tourists, for instance, is not a substitute, but is complementary. For instance, while tourists stay in hotel A, they also need to buy food or merchandise. Thus, food is not competitive with hotel, but they will complement each other.

Moreover, Davidson views tourism as:

- “A social phenomenon,...
- the sum of the expenditures of all travelers or visitors for all purposes,...
- an experience or process, not a product – an extremely varied experience at that” (Davidson, 1994, p.26)

As he proposed the idea that tourism is not an industry, then he defines a tourist as “someone who comes to an area, spends money and leaves” (p.25). Similar to Weaver and Oppermann’s view of tourism, this idea does not consider about the reason of traveling, length of stay, and length of trip. Accordingly, there is no differentiation between tourists and visitors. Hence, there is a confusion to differentiate whether people attend a meeting or business will be categorized as tourists or visitors. Indeed, according to the United Nation (UN) and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), differentiating between tourist, visitor, and excursionist is significantly important in order to improve statistical collection and understanding of tourism

(Page, Brunt, Busby, Connell, 2001). Furthermore, the definition of Davidson seems too broad. A precise definition, nevertheless, is required especially for statistical purposes (Leiper, 1995).

Similar to Davidson, Smith does not discuss the conceptualisation of tourism and tourism industry as well. Yet, the definition of tourism from Smith contradicts with Davidson's idea. The supply side definition of tourism by Smith (1988) states simply that tourism is an industry. The full definition is "the aggregate of all business...provide goods or service to facilitate business, pleasure, and leisure activities away from the home environment" (Smith, 1988, p.183). There are three features about this definition:

1. "The tourism industry is...a service industry"
2. the inclusion of business, pleasure, and leisure activities
3. the notion of home environment"(Smith, 1988, p.183)

Further, there is a critique of the idea of "home environment" in Smith definition. It is stated that there is a lack precision in ample, tourists come to Canberra might buy a medicine and a newspaper. Yet, tourists will not come to Canberra only to make such purchases. Therefore, Stear, Buckley, and Stankey (1988) argue that the Smith's approach will lead to "lack clarity and precise meaning" (p.231). Yet, the supply side definition allows a conceptualization and measurement of tourism that is consistent with other industries (Smith, 1988, p.190). Moreover, the definition is "simple", "objective", and consists of several features that other definitions proposed in the tourism literature lack.

Another idea of tourism and tourism industry is that of Peter Mason's idea. He is the author of *Tourism Impacts, Planning and Management's* book. Since he claims that his book is an introductory text to tourism planning and management at undergraduate level, he discusses a simple definition about tourism and tourism industry mean. Similar with Stear, he admits that there is not full agreement on the meaning of the term tourism (Mason, 2003). However, he clearly discuss the term in relation to the planning and management of tourism. According to Matthieson and Wall (1982, cited in Mason, 2003,p. 5), tourism comprised: "The temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during the stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater their needs." Moreover, Jafari (1981) stated tourism is a study of man (sic) away from his usual habitat, of the industry which responds to his needs and the impacts that both he and the industry have for the host socio-cultural, economic and physical environments. The definition of Jafari concerns on tourism impact.

## Conclusion

To sum up, the definitions from Weaver and Oppermann (2000) and Stear (2003), help to solve the problems of conceptualising tourism and tourism industry. Thus, the differentiation between the two can be seen obviously. However, the definitions of tourism of Davidson (1994) and Smith (1988) are confusing since they do not differentiate what is tourism and what is tourism industry clearly. Finally, it is to be envisaged that "healthy debate" on the nature of tourism as an activity or an industry and the discussion about the tourism industry itself will be maintained for the future.

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