Tourism and Crime: key themes

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Tourism, Image and Fear of Crime

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11 Tourism, Image and Fear of Crime

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In this chapter we:

♦ Consider the interrelationships between tourist destinations, place image, crime and the fear of crime

♦ Conduct a review and extend the orthodox view that there is a negative relationship between crime and tourism

♦ Introduce Schutz's 'stock of knowledge' as a way of understanding the relationship between tourist destination image and tourist behaviour

♦ Provide examples that demonstrate the battleground of tourism destination image

♦ Suggest a radical reconceptualisation of the crime/tourism nexus through a consideration of the 'fear of crime' concept.

Introduction

This chapter considers the interrelationships between tourist destinations, place image, and fear of crime. We do this in two sections. First, it has long been acknowledged that place or destination image plays a significant role in consumer decision-making. An increasing number of researchers have also recognised the significance of images of safety and security in travel decision-making. Conversely, negative images of crime in localities are assumed to deter the attraction of not only visitors, but also inward investment and inhabitants. Several place image studies also suggest a link between images of crime and mass media representations. What is not clear, however, is how specific incidents of criminal behaviour are factored into tourist decision-making. In the chapter we draw upon cultural and humanistic studies in order to offer a conceptual framework for analysing how specific forms of mass media representations, and specific 'textual communities', are associated with both positive and negative images relating to crime, danger, safety, and security. It is agued that Schutz's 'stock of knowledge' (e.g. Schutz, 1972) concept provides a means of understanding the relationship between representations of

crime and tourist decision-making. Furthermore, that the 'stock of knowledge' not only influences the choices of destinations, but also influences the behaviour of tourists during a visit to a particular tourist destination.

A second strand of analysis in this chapter offers an integration of the destination image literature with the fear of crime literature found in criminology. Whilst many place image studies point to interrelationships between images of crime and travel decision-making, less is known about the relationship between perceptions of crime and tourist behaviour within a destination. This takes on a particular significance in considering the relationship between destination image and crime when we incorporate our arguments about the sources of destination imagery. In our conceptual schema, destination image is not only formed through 'impressions' but is shaped by actual experience of a destination or, vicariously, the reporting of tourist experiences by others. The flow of information surrounding destination imagery is, importantly and despite the best efforts of the agencies of tourism promotion, not uni-directional. Of at least equal significance are the parallel flows of information from tourist to tourist that derive from actual experience. These 'private' narratives have reinforced habitual and inter-generational tourist behaviours in perpetuity but recent advances in information technology have converted private narratives into public ones. Expanded flows of information through travel blogs, consumer rating devices, reality TV holiday programmes and 'youtube-type' websites have made a conceptual connection between image and behaviour an imperative.

In order to better understand these phenomena in the context of criminology, we also visit the 'fear of crime' concept. The difficulties associated with defining 'fear of crime' are noted. A brief history of the fear of crime debate is then documented. Attention is drawn to the various stages and developments in policy and academic debate. This allows an understanding of how the concept has emerged as an object of study and as a priority for policy-making. Our intention here is to begin to sketch out how the fear of crime concept might inform a reinterpretation of the tourism destination/crime nexus. We discuss a range of factors that appear to be associated with variations in fear of crime, such as gender, age, ethnicity; and assessments of the seriousness of consequences and personal risk. Attention once again turns to representations and discourses relating to crime in tourist destinations. Representations and discourses appear to be salient to images of crime prior to visiting tourist destinations, the fear of crime whilst visiting, and also responses to crime in tourist destinations. Significantly, however, despite the complex relationships between the concepts, Schutz's 'stock of knowledge' acts as an important conduit or hub.

Chapter extract

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