

## On Binaries in Tourism Scholarship

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## **“On Binaries in Tourism Scholarship”**

### **The Prevalence of Binaries**

Western philosophy has conditioned human beings to see situations in opposing pairs. As a comparative paradigm, binaries define opposites such as black and white, left and right, work and play, good and evil. These dualisms create a hierarchical structure in which the initial term is expressed in a positive manner in relation to the subordinate ‘other’, which is usually stated negatively, as if these are the only two options available. Binary oppositions have dominated the theoretical landscape for centuries, structuring our language, thought, actions, research, and expression.

A recent Humanities Education and Research Association (HERA) conference focused on the prevalence of binaries within the social sciences. Organizers posed a question which is equally relevant to tourism scholarship: Is this [use of binaries / dualisms] an inescapable framework for structuring reality or is an alternative possible?” (HERA, 2015). We pose similar queries. How prevalent are binaries in tourism research? How are they presented?

These questions are framed within a larger context regarding the overall relevance and impact of tourism and tourism research (for example, Tribe, 2010; Fennell, 2013). As a relatively young field in the academy, tourism is still establishing its position, but in comparison to many more mature subjects of study, appears to struggle to do so, irrespective of which metric is considered (Airey, Tribe, Benckendorff, & Xiao, 2015). Airey (2015) paints a particularly devastating picture, referring to “...the production of inferior research, ... the relatively low success rates in attracting research funding and the weaknesses in the impact of the work of the academy on the tourism community more generally” (11). As such, we position this paper in the context of improving the contribution tourism scholarship can make to general theory, but also to aid tourism practitioners identify a broader range of alternatives.

During its course of nearly four decades, tourism studies have covered much disciplinary, thematic and methodological ground. Whilst the field has forged significant practical and conceptual benchmarks, international tourism is said to be entering something of a ‘new era’, and so scholarship in tourism now stands at a philosophical and ethical crossroads. The “International Tourism” Research Committee (RC50) of the International Sociological Association (ISA) (2015) consequently proposes an opportunity for 2016 to reengage with these salient issues in tourism studies and in so doing develop possible pathways for its future. By identifying the often incongruent and paradoxical dyads in tourism studies (e.g. Anglo-Western centrism / decentering tourism studies; assimilation/diversity; production/consumption), the conference aims to consider what is

needed, conceptually and methodologically, in order to equip tourism studies to interpret this new era. Moving beyond tourism paradoxes is challenging.

A literature review highlights the prevalence of binaries in tourism scholarship and shows the literature itself to be a binary. The ‘top’ three journals in the field – *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Tourism Management* – are the most prominent and highly cited tourism journals (Ballantyne, Packer & Axelsen, 2009; Fennell, 2013; Koc & Bos, 2014), thereby the most influential (Chang & McAleer, 2012). They have received the highest ranking possible across different rating systems, which indicates that they represent “...the best or leading journal[s] in [their] field” (Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013, p. 128). Consequently, these journals are juxtaposed against all the other tourism journals, which may specialize in a specific area – for example, the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* or the *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. It is not our intent to comment further on the tiered superior/inferior rating system, but rather to note its prevalence in our discussion on binary opposition, where one is considered better than the other.

The pressure to publish in an “A” ranked journal is further reflected on by Tribe (2010) who introduces the internal binary within universities. The issue is academic freedom. On the one hand, some tourism researchers felt free to research topics that were of interest to them (see also Fennell, 2013), in total contrast to other scholars who complained that promotion hinged on satisfying the publication requests of superiors. The latter perspective is tied to the audit and metrics culture of neoliberalism, while the other is not. Fennell (2013) argues that the system seems to promote actions that are more the realm of extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation. The former is that less-than-pure type of motivation that stimulates participation on the basis of external influences: power, popularity, trophies, money, and so on. By contrast, intrinsic motivation is characterized by participation for its own sake. Competition is a form of extrinsic motivation because it directs us to measure ourselves against someone or something else.

A classic binary within tourism is the distinction between a business and non-business focus (Tribe, 1997; Higgins-Desbioille, 2006). The first is concerned with the entrepreneurial potential of tourism relative to economic development, while the second focuses on the social and environmental impact of tourism. The former is often viewed positively, the latter negatively.

McKercher and Prideaux (2014) note how early published tourism scholarship leaned towards “tourism is bad” in an attempt to counter the pro-tourism development perspectives of the tourism industry and various government stakeholders who viewed it as a fast-track economic development opportunity. This theme of good vs. evil is a common binary in tourism scholarship (see Singh, 2012). Crick (1988), for example,

refers to these poles as myths, implying that tourism is neither a godsend nor an evil.

Still other binaries can be found. MacCannell (1976) employs terms such as ‘pro-tourist’ and ‘anti-tourist’ to describe differing positions. The pro-tourist position values tourism’s contribution to economic development, a position not shared by the anti-perspective. Similarly, Poon (1988, 1994) noted the emergence of ‘new’ tourism, replacing ‘old’ tourism’. ‘New’ tourism is characterized by flexibility, segmentation and more authentic tourism experiences (1994: 91). Tourists are shifting their interests away from ‘tinsel and junk’ to more natural and authentic experiences. There is also a shift away from mass, impersonalized services to ‘high tech, high touch’, and greater concern for the natural environment. Twenty years later, McKercher and Prideaux (2014) debunk this dichotomy as an unsubstantiated myth.

Urry (1990) viewed tourism as a basic binary providing an opportunity for an extraordinary experience to offset the ordinary. Gibson (2012) addresses the classic binary in tourism of the host (the oppressed) vs. the guest (the oppressor) perspective. Hall (2013) focuses on the physical vs. human or tourism geography binary, noting the differences stem from physical geography’s reliance on quantitative scientific methods in contrast to qualitative, humanistic methods of human geography.

Tourism scholars debate the most appropriate research methods – quantitative versus qualitative (Riley and Love, 2000). These dualisms are further noted within the TTRA itself, as it seeks to balance scholarly theory and practitioner experiences.

Burns (2004) notes the dualisms found in the titles of tourism research such as Young’s (1973) critical discussion *Tourism-Blessing or Blight?*, and in Tuting and Dixit’s (1990) *Bikas-Binas: Development-Destruction*.

The key problem with this approach, or “hardening-of-the-boundaries” (Reynolds, 2000: 559), is the lack of recognition and understanding of a mid-position, an option that widens potential viewpoints. We need to rethink some of the basic categories we use to organize our research. Binary models confine thinking to pre-determined structures (Horowitz, 2015). Limiting analysis to polar extremes, rather than considering liminal scenarios (Green, 2015), grey zones between the black and white (Faraclas, LeCompte Zambrana, & Gonzalez, 2015), and hybrid options (Horowitz, 2015) contributes to gaps, silences, and misconstructions in tourism scholarship (Tribe, 2006).

A triadic approach (Pack, 2015) enables a third option to be considered, an approach Brooker and Joppe (2014) successfully used in their study of tourism innovation in order to identify a more appropriate mid-position between the traditional polarities of

incremental improvements and radical innovation. Taleb (2012) noted “just about anything that matters can be mapped or classified into three categories” (p. 20). Turner (1974) questioned binary opposites’ value, noting: “various models dealing with oppositional logical relations ... seem to be applicable mainly to tribal or early agrarian societies where work and life tend to be governed by seasonal and ecological rhythms” (p. 61). He further notes:

*“The models apply in situations where the rules underlying the generation of cultural patterns tend to seek out the binary “Yin-Yang,” forms suggested by simple, natural oppositions such as hot/cold, wet/dry, cultivated/wild, male/female, summer/winter, plenty/scarcity, and the like. The main social and cultural structures tend to become modeled on these cosmological principles, which determines even the layout of cities and villages, the design of houses, and the shape and spatial placement of different types of cultivated land” (p.61).*

Addressing the concept of creativity, Catmull (2014), the President of Pixar Animation and Disney Animation, suggests that there is a ‘sweet spot’ between the known and the unknown where originality happens; the key is to be able to linger there without panicking (p. 224). A similar perspective is found at the end of Tartt’s (2013) novel, *The Goldfinch*:

*And as much as I’d like to believe there’s a truth beyond illusion, I’ve come to believe that there’s no truth beyond illusion. Because, between ‘reality’ on the one hand, and the point where the mind strikes reality, there’s a middle zone, a rainbow edge where beauty comes into being, where two very different surfaces mingle and blur to provide what life does not; and this is the space where all art exists, and all magic (770).*

## **Methodology**

A review of journal abstracts and their key words published within the *Annals of Tourism Research* (ATR), *Journal of Travel Research* (JTR), and *Tourism Management* (TM) – for a five year-period from 2007 to 2012 – was undertaken to explore the prevalence and focus of binaries that formed the boundaries of the research. Each abstract was reviewed to determine the aim of the paper and its explicit use of opposing perspectives to frame the goal of the paper. The key words were also reviewed to ensure the understanding was correct. In a few cases, the opposition was implicit, which resulted in a further review of the paper to confirm a duality was in fact in play.

## Findings

A total of 88 articles focused on binaries during the 2007-2012 period, of which 26 focused on business-oriented binaries (Table 1 a), 55 focused on social-oriented binaries (Table 1b), and 7 papers focused on geography oriented binaries (Table 1c).

**Table 1 – Binaries in Tourism Scholarship (ATR, JTR, & TM, 2007-2012)**

### a) Business Oriented Binaries

Topic	Author(s)	Source
<b>2007</b>		
Male/Female Agri-Tourism Entrepreneurship	McGehee, N.G., Kim, K. & Jennings, G.R.	TM 28 (1), 280-289
Independent/Chain Travel Agency	Köksal, C. D & Aksu, A.	TM 28 (3), 830-834
Price/Non-Price Decision Making	Davies, B. & Downward, P.	TM 28 (5), 1236-1261
Cost/Benefit	Chabra, D	JTR 46 (2), 173-182
<b>2008</b>		
Online/Paper Surveys	Dolnicar, S., Laesser, C. & Matus, K.	JTR 47 (3), 295-316
<b>2009</b>		
Specific/General Tourism Taxes	Gago, A., Labandeira, X., Picos, F., Rodríguez, M.	TM 30 (3), 381-392
Conservation/Development	Shetawy, A. A. & El Khateeb, S.M.	TM 30 (6), 819-827
General/Iconic Advertising	Litvin, S. W. & Mouri, N.	JTR 48 (2), 152-161
<b>2010</b>		
Customer/Entrepreneurial Orientation	Tajeddini, K.	TM 31 (2), 221-231
Supply/Demand	Albalade D., & Bel, G.	TM 31 (3), 425-433
Inbound/Outbound Tourism	Song, H. & Lin, S.	JTR 49 (1), 16-30
Strength/Weakness	Kneesel, E., Baloglu, S. & Milla, M.	JTR 49 (1), 68-78
Low/High Volume	Nyaupane, G.P. & Timothy, D.J.	ATR 37 (4), 969-988
<b>2011</b>		
Single/Dual Distribution Channel	Koo, B., Mantin, B. & O'Connor, P.	TM 32 (1), 69-74
First time/Repeat Visitors	Fuchs, G. & Reichel, A.	TM 32 (2), 266-272
Backpacker/Mainstream Tourist	Larsen, S., Øgaard, T. & Brun, W.	ATR 38 (2), 690-707
Monetary/Non-Monetary	Thurnell-Rea, T.	ATR 38 (3), 801-819
<b>2012</b>		
Leisure/Business Travel	Salanti, A., Malighetti, P. & Redondi, R.	TM 33 (2), 249-256
Commission/Non-Commission	Wong, C.U. & McKercher, B.	TM 33 (6), 1360-1372
Online/Offline Search Behaviour	Ho, C.I., Lin, M.H. & Chen, H. M.	TM 33 (6), 1468-1482
Art/Souvenirs	Thompson, F., Hannam, K. & Petri, K.	ATR 39 (1), 336-360
Benefits/Cost	Nunkoo, R. & Ramkissoon, H.	ATR 39 (2), 997-1023
Pruning/Slicing Cheese	Fred Bronner, F. & de Hoog, R.	ATR 39 (2), 1048-1069
Flashpackers/Non-Flashpackers	Paris, C.M.	ATR 39 (2), 1094-1115
Peak/Off-Peak	Boffa, F. & Succurro, M.	ATR 39 (2), 1176-1198
Short-term/Long-term Stay	Viallon, P.	ATR 39 (4), 2073-2091

### b) Social Oriented Binaries

Topic	Author	Source
<b>2007</b>		
Male/Female Online Travel Search	Kim, D.Y., Lehto, X.Y. & Morrison, A.M.	TM 28 (2), 423-433
Male/Female CEO Pay	Skalpe, O.	TM 28 (3), 845-853

Host/Guest	Peel, V. & Steen, A.	TM 28 (4), 1057-1067
Authenticity/Replication	Hall, C.M.	TM 28 (4), 1139-1140
Media/Non-Media	Seabra, C., Abrantes, J.L. & Lages, L.F.	TM 28 (6), 1541-1554
Residents/Tourists	Huh, C. & Vogt, C.A.	JTR 46 (4), 446-455
Home/Being Away	White, N.R. & White, P. B.	ATR 34 (1), 88-104
Academic/Practitioner	Xiao, H. & Smith, S. L. J.	ATR 34 (2), 310-331
<b>2008</b>		
First Time/Repeat Visitors	Li, X., Cheng, C.K., Kim, H. & Petrick, J.F.	TM 29 (2), 278-293
Quality/Quantity	Fleischer, A. & Rivlin (Byk), J.	JTR 47 (3), 285-294
Residents/Tourists	Gil, S.M. & Ritchie, J.R.B.	JTR 47 (4), 480-493
Guest/Host	Uriely, N., Maoz, D. & Reichel, A.	JTR 47 (4), 508-522
<b>2009</b>		
Male/Female	Muñoz-Bullón, F., Okazaki, S., & Hirose, M. Okazaki, S. & Hirose, M.	TM 30 (5), 638-649; TM 30 (6), 794-804
Objective/Perceived Quality	Hernández-Maestro, R.M., Muñoz-Gallego, P.A. & Libia Santos-Requejo, L.	JTR 48 (1), 58-77
Residents/Tourists	Woosnam, K.M., Norman, W., & Ying, T.	JTR 48 (2), 245-258
Force/Power	Ayikoru, M., Tribe, J. & Airey, D.	ATR 36 (2), 191-221
Encoding/Decoding	Buzinde, C.N. & Santos, C.A.	ATR 36 (3), 439 -450
Memory/Forgetting	Winter, C.	ATR 36 (4), 607-626
<b>2010</b>		
Academic / Practitioner	Xiao, H. & Smith, S.L.J.	TM 31 (3), 402-411
Divergence/Convergence	Reisinger, Y. & Crofts, J.C.	JTR 49 (2), 153-164
Residents/Tourists	Woosnam, K. M. & Norman, W.	JTR 49 (3), 365-380
Mass/Alternative Tourism	Gursoy, D., Chi, C.G. & Dye, P.	JTR 49 (3), 381-394
Tourist Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction	Alegre, A. & Garau, J.	ATR 37 (1), 52-73
Cleanliness/Dirt	Eriksson, S.	ATR 37 (1), 74-92
Pilgrim/Traveler	Maoz, D. & Bekerman, Z.	ATR 37 (2), 423-439
Cosmopolitans/Provincials	Enoch, Y. & Grossman, R.	ATR 37 (2), 520 - 536
Real/Virtual	Baldacchino, G.	ATR 37 (3), 763-778
<b>2011</b>		
Authentic/Created	Cohen, E.H.	ATR 38 (1), 193-209
In /Ex situ	Weaver, D.B.	ATR 38 (1), 249 -267
Tourism/Military Industry	Weaver, A.	ATR 38 (2), 672-689
Social Justice/Injustice	Alexander M., MacLaren, A., O’Gorman, K. & White, C.	TM 33 (1), 875-884
Safety/Vulnerability	Boakye, K.A.	TM 33 (2), 327-333
White women/Black males	Weichselbaumer, D.	TM 33 (5), 1220-1229
Push/Pull Motivation Factors	Pan, T.J.	TM 33 (6), 1493-1501
Practitioner/Academic	Williams, P.W., Stewart, K. & Larsen, D.	JTR 51 (1), 3-11
First Time/Repeat Visitors	Shani, A., Reichel, A. & Croes, R.	JTR 51 (2), 166-177
Low-involved/High-involved	Jun, S. H. & Holland, S.	JTR 51 (2), 205-218
Push/Pull Motivations	Grimm, K.E. & Needham, M.D.	JTR 51 (4), 488-501
<b>2012</b>		
Old/New Tourism	Cirer-Costa, J.C.	ATR 39 (4), 1779-1796
Producing/Reproducing	Stylianou-Lambert, T.	ATR 39 (4), 1817-1838
Self/Others	Bimonte, S. & Faralla, V.	ATR 39 (4), 1929-1950
Snob/Bandwagon	Correia, A. & Kozak, M.	ATR 39 (4), 1951-1967
Emic/Etic	Strannegård, L. & Strannegård, M.	ATR 39 (4), 1995-2012
Amateur/Professional Photography	Snow, R.	ATR 39 (4), 2013-2050
Essentialist/Existentialist Authority	Robinson, R.N.S. & Clifford, C.	ATR 39 (2), 571-600
Obese/Non-Obese	Small, J. & Harris, C.	ATR 39 (2), 686-707

Sacred/Secular	della Dora, V.	ATR 39 (2), 951-974
Tourists/Service Worker	Harris, L.C.	ATR 39 (2), 1070-1093
Academic/Practitioner	Pyo, S.	ATR 39 (2), 1156-1175
Hot/Cool Authentication	Cohen, E. & Cohen, S.A.	ATR 39 (3), 1295-1314
Life/Death	Stone, P.R.	ATR 39 (3), 1565-1587
Old/New Tourism	Cirer-Costa, J.C.	ATR 39 (4), 1779-1796
Tourist/Host	Griffiths, I. & Sharpley, R.	ATR 39 (4), 2051-2072
Tourism/Peace First	Scott, J.	ATR 39 (4), 2114-2132

### c) Geography Oriented Binaries

Topic	Author	Source
<b>2007</b>		
The West/The Rest	Caton, K. & Santos, S.A.	JTR, 48 (2), 191 -204
<b>2009</b>		
Physical/Virtual Environments	Breukel A. & Go, F.M.	TM 30 (2), 184-193
Local/Global	Erkuş-Öztürk, H.	TM 30 (4), 589-597
<b>2010</b>		
Mainstream/Periphery	Catlin, J. & Jones, R.	TM 31 (3), 386-394
<b>2011</b>		
First/Third World	Osagie, I. & Buzinde, C.N.	ATR 38 (1), 210-230
<b>2012</b>		
Place/Space	Thurnell-Read, T.	ATR 39 (2), 801-819
Core/Periphery	Lai, K. & Li, Y.	ATR 39 (3), 1359-1379

These findings suggest both consistent patterns but also outliers. Binaries were most prevalent within *Annals of Tourism Research*, and the least frequent within the *Journal of Travel Research*. An average of 11-15 papers were published annually within the three journals, with two notable exceptions. In 2008, only 5 papers with a binary focus appeared, in contrast to the 32 papers published in 2011 with the majority examining social sciences, all in the *Annals of Tourism Research*. It would appear that particularly in the social sciences, the study of tourism gives rise to binary analysis. Further research would be required to determine whether these binary patterns suggest that additional entrepreneurial, creativity, and business perspectives may be in order to balance the noted shifts, or perhaps business and geographic perspectives are more nuanced and lend themselves less to the “black and white” view of the world. The research also highlights the need for more ternary, or three-fold, examinations of relationships to introduce additional considerations beyond a binary.

This point was particularly noted by the lead author, while on a four-month guest lecture assignment at a distant university. The tourism department was so focused on the social aspects of tourism that the business lens was all but shunned, a perspective taken up instead by a well-published professor in the University’s Marketing Dept. The boundaries were further noted in the lack of interaction between the tourism department and the entrepreneurial studies group, who physically operated adjacent to each other within the School of Commerce.



## Conclusion

Binaries are frequent in Western philosophy, which has conditioned us to see situations in opposing pairs or dyads. This is equally the case in tourism studies, and particularly the social sciences which appear to analyze much of the world from this oppositional perspective, as was noted by the HERA conference in its latest call for papers, but also by conferences within the tourism disciplines, as highlighted by the upcoming ISA RC50 conference, which specifically called on scholars to address the paradoxes and dyads of tourism. Binaries are akin to a breakup: both sides have their version, and the truth is somewhere in the middle.

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