

CAN BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES BE REGARDED AS DESTINATIONS FOR THE “NEW TOURIST”?

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ABSTRACT

The starting point for this research is an exploration of who and what the “New Tourist” is. Traditional “Old Tourism” is usually associated with massed packaged holidays, typically described with the four S’s – Sun, Sea, Sand and Sex. The concept of the “New Tourist” was first advanced by Aurelia Poon in her book *Tourism, technology and competitive strategies* (1993). Poon is a leading commentator on future trends in tourism and she advocated that in future tourism would be flexible, segmented, environmentally sound and diagonally integrated rather than mass, rigid, standardised and packaged. In addition, a number of authors and researchers have noted the apparent interest among tourists for educational holidays. Examples include special interest holidays, eco-tourism and cultural heritage tourism. Paradoxically, the decline in traditional churchgoing in Europe in recent years has been paralleled by, in many cases, a growing interest in religion and religious travel, as people are searching for meaning in their increasingly uncertain lives. Many people have not been able to find this through traditional forms of worship, so they are now taking to different methods in order to experience it. This includes the rediscovery of pilgrimage or journeys to so-called sacred places. Therefore the research question is whether biblical archaeological sites can be regarded as destinations for the “New Tourist”, and in future it will be expanded into how we bring these two fields of study together in order to use the opportunity for biblical archaeological tourism that has been identified but not yet been explored.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The objective of this paper is to explore the concept of the “New Tourist” and “New Tourism” and to show how the opportunities that are emerging in this field show scope for the development of biblical archaeological tourism. The methodology of the research is a literature review on the concept of the “New Tourist” and the demarcation of this study is limited only to this field. Various other studies and criteria need to be investigated as well, in order to establish the links between tourism and biblical archaeology. These investigations, which include educational tourism, religious and spiritual tourism, cultural tourism,

heritage tourism, niche tourism and virtual tourism, will be presented in subsequent papers.

THE “NEW TOURIST”

It has been stated that the golden age of tourism is over and that the tourism industry will never be the same again. This has been brought about by the rapidly changing nature of the tourism industry itself. New technology, more experienced consumers, global economic restructuring and environmental limits to growth are some of the challenges facing the industry. The crisis of the tourism industry is a crisis of mass tourism. Mass tourism was the logical outcome of key social, economic, political and technological influences after the second world war. It took off with the launch of the jet aircraft in 1958 and was fuelled by post-war peace and prosperity, paid holidays for the working class, charter flights and cheap oil prices.

The starting point for this research is an exploration of “who” and “what” the “New Tourist” is. Traditional “Old Tourism” is usually associated with massed packaged holidays, and is typically associated with the four S’s – Sun, Sea, Sand and Sex. The concept of the “New Tourist” was first advanced by Auliana Poon (Poon 1993). Poon is a leading commentator on future trends in tourism and she advocated that future tourists would be flexible, segmented, environmentally sound and diagonally integrated, rather than mass, rigid, standardised and packaged. The “New Tourist” is more educated, discerning, socially aware, environmentally conscious and demanding. She/he is no longer prepared to accept mass tourism production and standardisation, and is looking for deeper meaning as well as learning opportunities, when travelling. “New Tourism” has led to the emergence of new forms of tourist experiences, including educational tourism and religious or spiritual tourism. The new tourist wants to experience history, learn, and seek a sense of inner fulfilment and peace, while on his or her travels.

By the mid 1970s, mass tourism was the order of the day, mimicking mass production in the manufacturing industry and along the same lines as the retail concept of “Pile them high and sell them cheap”. Holidays were also standardised and inflexible and economy of scale was the driving force of this

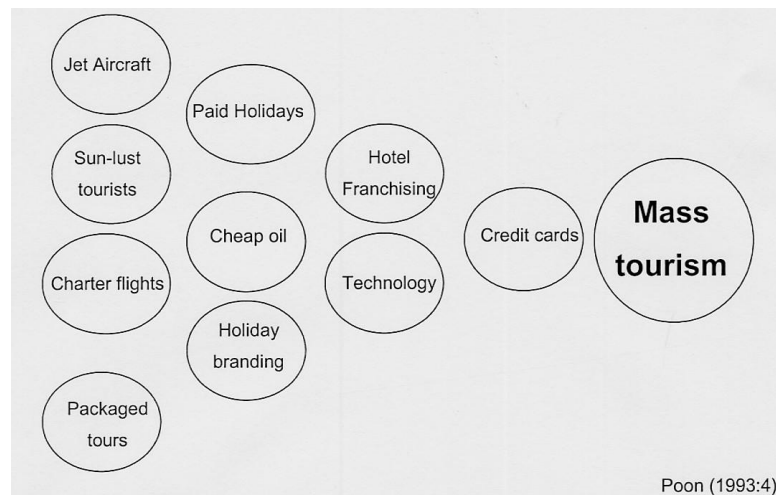
production. From its humble beginnings in the late 1950s and within two decades, the tourism industry developed into a mass packaged and standardised phenomenon. According to Poon (1993:5), so pervasive was the tendency towards mass production, standardization and rigid packaging that not even sex tourism could escape its overwhelming impact. Of the Japanese all-male tour party in the Philippines, for example, it is documented that “there are a number of private houses which cater to Japanese tourists. In this case, the tourist bus travels around the sites of the city and at some stage calls in at the private house through a back door. The group troops into the building and are told that they have an hour. Behind closed doors and windows they choose a girl. An hour later the bell rings; they march out to the bus and continue their tour of the city” (O’Grady 1981).

Historically there were several key forces that were responsible for the rapid spread of mass tourism in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The frame conditions of post-war peace and prosperity were paid holidays, regulation of air transportation and the incentives offered to hotel chains to establish operations in many of the so called “sun” destinations in the world. Sun and sex lust consumers, low production costs, cheap oil, hotel over-building and the emergence of the packaged tour all contributed to this spread.

MASSED TOURISM FORCES

Poon states that just as post-war peace, the jet engine and cheap oil prices ignited the growth of mass tourism, so are equally compelling forces driving its change today. The most important internal forces of change are the consumers themselves and new technologies. External forces are also contributing – environmental limits to growth and the emergence of a new global best practice of flexible production (1993:9). She states that a new tourism is already emerging – it is flexible, sustainable, and individual orientated. In many cases the driving force behind these changes are the consumers themselves. “New Tourist”s” are fundamentally different from “Old Tourists”. They are more experienced, environmentally aware, flexible, independent and quality conscious. Their motivation for travel is also different – travel is no longer a novelty. The old tourists believed that the journey was important – it did not

matter where you went – all they wanted was to get to a warm destination and then to be able to show everyone back home where they went – the classic “Been there and got the t-shirt”. A holiday was an escape from work and home and the quality of the service was relatively unimportant. These tourists travelled in homogenous groups, and thrived on predictability and pre-arrangements of all experiences. They were characterised by the concepts of safety in numbers, eating food that was the same as home cooking and being unadventurous. They were cautious, followed the masses and took vacations where everything was pre-paid, pre-arranged and predictable.



In sharp contrast, the new tourist believes that to go on vacation is to experience something different, they want and need to be different from the crowd, to affirm their individuality, are often spontaneous and unpredictable.

A paradigm refers to the prevailing best-practice that is applicable to any industry at a specific time. During the post-war period, the best practice paradigm was mass production. It was the prevailing commonsense for best productivity and profit for many industries, from the automobile industry to manufacturing, fast moving consumer goods and chemical companies. Today, mass production is no longer seen as the prevailing paradigm for common sense. It has given way to flexible production in almost all industries. With flexible production, companies compete on quality, listen to consumers, provide for niche markets, are adaptable, innovative and consumer driven.

The tourism industry was simply following the manufacturing sector when it adopted the principles of mass production. However, tourists are not mass, standardized and rigidly packaged by nature. According to Poon (1993:16), they were simply forced to do so by the economies of massed production because it was so cheap. Poon also predicted that while tourism has followed mass production over the past few decades, in the decades to come it could well lead the manufacturing industry along the path of flexible production.

The five key forces according to Poon that created mass tourism in the first place are changing as can be seen from the following diagram:

	Old Tourism	New Tourism
Consumers	Get sunburnt	Keep clothes on
	Inexperienced	Mature
	Securities in numbers	Want to be different
Technology	Unfriendly	Talk to each other
	Users limited	All players are users
	Stand alone	Many integrated technologies
Production	Competition through price	Competition through innovation
	Economies of scale	Scale and scope
	Vertical/horizontal integration	Diagonal integration
Management	Labour is cost of production	Labour is key to quality
	Maximise capacity	Manage yield
	Sell what is produced	Listen to consumers
Frame conditions	Regulation	Deregulation
	Economic growth	Restructuring
	Uncontrolled growth	Limits to growth

Poon (1993:17)

Ten years since Poon made her predictions, many of the signs of New Tourism are already apparent. Some of the signals are still weak and only just starting to take hold, e.g., the decline of the package tour. Other signs are more apparent

and already well implemented, e.g., the technological advances, and others are growing into fruition such as the power of the new “green” consumers. Poon states that New Tourism exists when the following six conditions hold (Poon 1993:18):

- The holiday is flexible and competitively priced
- Tailor-made services are provided within economies of scale
- Production is consumer driven
- Holiday is marketed to individuals – mass marketing is no longer the dominant paradigm
- Tourists are more experienced travellers, more educated, more destination orientated, more flexible and more green
- Consumers look at the environment and culture of the destination they visit as a key part of the holiday experience

In 1994, the World Tourism Authority (WTA) in their *Global tourism forecasts to the year 2000 and beyond* presented strategic signals and guides to countries in planning and developing their tourism. One of these guidelines was as follows: “Create new and diversified travel products and services based on unique natural and cultural features, attributes and resources of the individual countries”. And another guideline was to “Eliminate amateurism at all levels, through well designed education and training programs and the implementation of a sound system of professional standards”. Poon does not envisage that mass tourism will disappear altogether, but it will fade into relative unimportance. Among other academics and writers, she also put forward a new tourist typology, showing the different behaviours, values and expectations between old and new tourists. This typology is shown in the following diagram:

Old Tourists	New Tourists
Search for sun	Experience something new
Follow the masses	Want to be in charge
Here today, gone tomorrow	See and enjoy but do not destroy
Show that you have been	Just for the fun of it
Having	Being
Superiority	Understanding
Like attractions	Like sport and nature

Precautious	Adventurous
Eat in local hotel dining room	Try the local fare
Homogenous	Hybrid

(Poon 1993)

The new tourist typology displays a movement of attitudes of an increasing number of tourists towards acceptance, tolerance, understanding and a wish to be educated.

According to Burns and Holden (1995:223), participation in this alternative form of tourism often relies upon the exploration of new virgin areas for tourism, rather than visiting those areas already developed as tourist destinations.

Gmelch (2010:8) states that tourist sites could become attractive based on their associations created by literature and film. She cites as examples the attraction of the Anne Frank house in Amsterdam and a “Seek the Truth” tour programme to follow the footsteps of *The Da Vinci code* by Dan Brown. In the same light, biblical stories are well read and well known, and the sites associated with them are equally attractive destinations to visit.

A decade or so later Poon’s initial predictions have proved to be accurate – there is a definite trend towards educational, heritage, cultural, religious, niche and eco-tourism. The new tourist wants to experience history, learn and seek a sense of inner fulfilment and peace, while on his travels.

After studying the concept of “New Tourism”, it can be seen that an untapped experience for this new tourist is the field of biblical archaeology. This field embraces all the criteria demanded by the new tourist – history, spiritual growth and unexploited tourist areas.

From the research presented on the various other forms of tourism trends, a common thread can be seen to be represented in each of these new genres. The most important features that can be identified are as follows:

1. Mass tourism practice and principles seem to have reached their peak in the early part of the twenty-first century where standardisation and nonflexible holiday packages were the most important criteria when arranging a holiday.
2. The main emphasis of the holiday has moved away from the four S’s and the notion of a frivolous, relaxing break to get away from the rigours and

stressed of everyday life.

3. People are seeking more depth and meaning in their lives and this search is extending to their choices of holiday experiences as well.
4. In line with this inner journey that is being taken by many travellers, new forms of meaningful tourism are emerging. This could be in the form of travelling for educational and learning purposes, seeking a sense of meaning though exploring your own as well as other cultures, breaking away from the mundane and engaging in various forms of adventure travel or embarking on journeys to historical and spiritual sites in order to establish a "connection" to the past.
5. In order to meet the needs of these new tourists it will take innovation and understanding of the "New Tourist". The World Tourism Authority (WTA) in 1994 presented strategic signals and guides to countries in planning and developing their tourism. One of these guidelines was to create new and diversified travel products and services based on unique natural and cultural features, attributes and resources of the individual countries.
6. The only requisite is that the sites need to be developed and presented in ways that take into account the needs and interest of the "New Tourist". In similar vein, the teaching of biblical archaeology should be geared to prepare students to be aware of these needs, and to equip them to be able to meet and satisfy them in a sustainable way.
7. This so-called "lack of confidence in the future" has created much speculation over the increase in nostalgia for the past. The past is seen through a series of images and stereotypes, safe and sterile. The future is so full of "incalculable risk" that looking back and believing that the past was the "golden age" is preferable (Urry 1995:219).
8. However, caution needs to be exercised in the future development and marketing of biblical archaeological tourism as the market sector is reasonably small and contained, and limitations to future growth could be imposed. This does, however, open the door to a whole new form of tourism, that of virtual tourism. This exciting new tourism genre will be the focus of further research.

WHAT DIGGERS WANT

Traditionally biblical archaeology has been seen as an auxiliary endeavour aimed to shed light on the understanding of the Bible, or even to prove the Bible right (Steadman 2009:18). Believers visited sites in the Holy Land (and while in the vicinity some sites in several un-holy lands on the side), often with ministers as tour leaders, and with a devotional goal in mind. Many guides were written to help people link the various sites with biblical passages, such as that by Murphy-O'Connor (1992). On the other hand, biblical archaeology being a field of study in its own right, some students accompanied lecturers to actual digs, in order to give them hands-on experience in actual archaeological field work. Textbooks from this quarter are technical and scientific in nature, such as Currid (1999) and Stern (2001). In between these two groups there seems to exist a huge unexplored void of possibilities. The question asked in this paper is whether the "New Tourist" might want to include biblical archaeological sites in their itinerary, or whether they will leave these areas to the religiously devout and the archaeologically informed.

Biblical archaeological sites are usually places embedded in histories of habitation and activities spanning hundreds or even thousands of years and with it many civilisations, cultures and peoples. In that sense it is rich and varied, with something for everyone irrespective of taste or interest. Uncovering the site lays bare all aspects of life, from the mundane to the sacred and from the ordinary to the exceptional. Artefacts that have been unearthed range from rejected earthenware to the most precious of possessions one can dream of, and from signs of life to evidence of death. Moreover, more often than not the stones are and remain silent, but biblical archaeological sites usually refers to some biblical passage, which has been intended to convey some sense of meaning.

From this it is clear – biblical archaeological sites can be just boring heaps of rubble, overturned stones, haphazardly dug trenches and uninhabitable ruins. However, with the "New Tourist" in mind, these stones may begin to speak, and may once again be pulsating with life.

As seen from Poon, the "New Tourist" is educated and looking for learning opportunities. In this sense a biblical archaeological site may be an intellectual challenge to this visitor. An interest in history, be it a longitudinal interest or a

cross-section in time, may be satisfied when discovering the history of the site.

The socially aware tourist might be tempted by the social history to be uncovered. Whether these tourists are interested in kings and battles, or in the ordinary, everyday life of whichever layer of the society, they will find evidence to keep them spell-bound.

The culturally aware “New Tourist” can immerse him or herself in any or all aspects of the cultures of the people who inhabited the site.

The “New Tourist” is flexible and wants an experience that is tailor made for their individual needs. A biblical archaeological site can be visited and explored in depth once, or it can become a frequently visited destination, even with the tourists becoming part of a team that participates in the excavation and interpretation of the site. The tourist is free to choose the level of involvement and depth of interest that suits his individual needs and desires.

The “New Tourist” is spiritually aware, and may be, but is not necessarily, religiously active. Biblical archaeological sites have some connection to Biblical passages, and often reflect the religious life of the inhabitants too. In that sense, the thirst for deeper meaning inherent in many “New Tourists” may be addressed and even be instilled.

From all of the above it is clear the “New Tourist” will find a home somewhere on the continuum between the devout traveller and the expert excavator.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this paper the question was asked: Can biblical archaeological sites be regarded as destinations for the “New Tourist”?

After studying the concept of “New Tourism”, it can be seen that an untapped experience for this new tourist is the field of biblical archaeology. This field embraces all the criteria demanded by the new tourist – history, spiritual growth and unexploited tourist areas. The only requisite is that the sites need to be developed and presented in ways that take into account the needs and interest of the “New Tourist”. In similar vein, the teaching of biblical archaeology needs to be geared to prepare students to be aware of these needs, and to equip them to be able to meet and satisfy them in a sustainable way.

However, caution needs to be exercised in the future development and marketing of biblical archaeological tourism as the market sector is reasonably small and contained, and limitations to future growth could be imposed. This does however, open the door to a whole new form of tourism, that of virtual tourism. A study on this exciting new tourism genre will be the focus in further papers on the subject of Biblical Archaeological Tourism.

In time, this study will present a new approach to the course content and teaching of biblical archaeology at UNISA. Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of our country's economy and it is claimed that tourism is the largest industry in the world, as well as the world's largest employer and creator of jobs (Burns & Holden 1995:2). By its very nature, tourism is an interdisciplinary field of study, embracing subjects such as economics, sociology, environmental science, geography, history and anthropology. Further investigations into the various emerging trends in tourism will endeavour to link tourism with biblical archaeology, and by doing so, enhance vocational opportunities available to biblical archaeology students. According to current UNISA guidelines, it is important for academic studies now to focus on both interdisciplinary approaches and relevance to the creation of career opportunities. This study is therefore significant in that it fulfils both of these criteria and as far as the author can ascertain, is the first study of its kind to provide vocational opportunities created by linking the new tourist to the field of Biblical Archaeology.

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