Resorting to the Coast

Seaside cultures and cultural change

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Overview
Publications
Teaching
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Affiliations & Background

Biography

Tim joined Bournemouth University in June 2015 as Senior Lecturer in Tourism Management, having moved from the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) where he was the academic lead for the University’s tourism and events degree programmes. He completed a PhD at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC), successfully defending his thesis on the decline and restructuring of British seaside resorts in 2002. His research interests have since expanded to include new tourism spaces, places and experiences (such as urban beaches, virtual worlds and immersive events and performances), and tourism education/ pedagogy. These interests are underpinned by ideas associated with the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ and critical realism as a philosophy of the social sciences. He has written a number of refereed journal articles, book chapters and other works, from positioning papers and literature reviews to multi-method empirical studies incorporating questionnaire surveys and interviews, document analyses and visual methods, and has co-edited three books to date...
The British seaside resort

- A **long holiday** (4+ nights) destination, whose appeal rested with ...
  - extraordinary qualities of the **natural environment** at the coast (beach, sea, clean air, surrounding topography, indigenous flora and fauna, etc)
  - high-capacity, formulaic and cutting edge **man-made amenities** (piers, promenades, theatres, funfairs, open-air swimming pools, winter gardens, ballrooms, etc)

- ... and which was a paradox between
  - a setting conducive to **rational recreation** (the health motive)
  - a **liminal space**, in which the usual codes of conduct were relaxed and visitors could ‘let their hair down’ (the pleasure imperative)

- More exclusive resorts located further away from main population centres

- An ‘innovation’ exported to NW Europe and beyond
Seaside resorts in NW Europe
Late 20th Century decline

• Visitor nights at British seaside resorts declined by 39 million (or 27 percent) from 1979-88 (Wales Tourist Board, 1992)
  - Competition from cheap foreign package holiday destinations and inland locations within UK
  - Depreciation/ disenchantment with aging and poor maintained infrastructures and amenities
  - Closure of attractions and hotels/ B&Bs, and shortening of the season
  - Negative place image
Logic of the lifecycle

(Butler, 1980)
Causes & consequences of decline

SYMPTOMS OF RESORT DECLINE
(e.g. a reduction in visitation and receipts from tourism, poorly maintained amenities/infrastructures, a high turnover of tourism businesses, a negative place image)

EXTERNAL THREATS
(e.g. competition from alternative destinations and activities at home and abroad)

INTERNAL PROBLEMS
(e.g. the unchecked depletion of the tourism resource base, in space and over time)

STRUCTURAL CHANGES / UNIVERSAL PROCESSES
(i.e. economic restructuring and cultural change)

Domain of ‘empirical’
(experiences, perceptions)

limit of hermeneutic approaches

Domain of ‘actual’
(events, actions)

limit of positivistic approaches

Domain of ‘real’
(structures, mechanisms, powers, relations)

(Gale, 2007: 32)
Rhyl, North Wales

• Proximity to Lancashire, Merseyside, West Midlands explains reputation as a popular **sun, sea and sand** resort

• By the 1960s, earlier rounds of capital investment left resort with varied, but aging, collection of municipally-owned visitor attractions, dependent upon **sunshine and appetite for live entertainment**

• Several attractions removed in 1970s/80s- deemed unsafe or obsolete

• Replaced with **new generation of wet-weather facilities and themed environments**, part-financed by European Union RDF- limited success
Rhyl promenade, circa 1960
New attractions in the 1980s and 1990s

Sun Centre

Library, Museum and Arts Complex

Children’s Village
Loss of tourism function

(URBAN BLIGHT IN) SUNNY RHYL!

Having an awful time. Wish you weren't here!
The ‘four ages’ of Rhyl

• 1951-60, “An Indian Summer”
• 1960-74, “What a Carry-On”
• 1974-88, “Bringing the Seaside Inside”
• 1988-96, “Costa del Dole”
• (1996-, ????)
A bright(er) future for the seaside?

- Coastal tourism once again a growing industry
- £8bn domestic overnight and day trip spend, supporting 210,000 jobs valued at £3.6bn and many SMEs (NCTA, 2017)
- Investing in new attractions and facilities, upgrading accommodation and conserving the best of the historic built environment while enhancing the remainder; also efficiencies to make businesses lean and more productive
- BUT, rate of growth does not match that of the visitor economy nationally
- Perception issues (run down and tacky, closed in the winter, etc)
- Pace of change is glacial
- Seaside resorts among the most deprived areas in the UK
- What of Rhyl? (Ocean Beach Funfair and Sun Centre closed, facade gaps, plans for new hotel/ restaurants/ leisure facilities)
Dismaland

- Pop-up art event, curated by **Banksy**, in Summer 2015
- Situated in the Tropicana, a former Lido/open air pool in Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset
- Project developed in complete secrecy, almost right up to the launch
- **15,000 visitors** from UK and beyond, over 5 weeks
- Estimated **£20 million boost** to the local economy
- Council have since invested **£0.5m** in Tropicana to turn it into arts and culture hub (once slated for demolition)
- Antagonistic art practice may disrupt status quo and act as **catalyst for arts-led coastal urban regeneration**
Urban Beaches (Bristol, 2007)
Virtual beaches (Second Life)
Bibliography


