

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Chris Ryan

ABSTRACT

Prior to the development of low-cost computing and the ease of completing statistical analysis, case studies played a significant role in the development of the social sciences. However, since the mid-1990s statistical modelling and empirically driven work has come to dominate academic literature; yet there remain epistemological similarities between some forms of case study work and statistical modelling. Nonetheless, issues of the qualitative versus quantitative divide and the purported role of value judgments made by the researchers have in part muddied the waters until quite recently, when the researchers using statistical methods started to adopt the use of the first person in their writing and began to recognise that the choice of a given statistical technique is just as surely a value judgment or exercise of experience and expertise as is any interpretation of text by a qualitative researcher. Similarly, qualitative researchers have become increasingly familiar with textual analysis using software programmes based on neural network theory, and a new generation of researchers have become comfortable with a mixed method mode of analysis.

Keywords: Case studies; research paradigms; research methods

STUDIES AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Yet there remains, as identified by Crasnow (2011, p. 28), a view that case studies are held in 'low regard'. She suggests two reasons for this: (a) To draw a conclusion from one or few small case studies appears to be bad inductive reasoning and (b) 'The second concern has to do with the *relevance* of the cases, as opposed to how *many* cases are examined' (Crasnow, 2011, p. 28). Certainly, a significant part of the debate about case studies was initiated by the publication of the first edition of *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* in 1994 by King, Keohane, and Verba. Given their influence, it might be said that the empiricism that may lay behind the case study has re-emerged. Statistical modelling and case studies can share the needs to derive consistent models or theories, seek to generalise from such models and test inferences against new data (King et al., 1994). Both case studies and statistical work require the identification of variables thought to be important and assess means by which a researcher may operationalise those variables in creating understanding. However, not all case study researchers would recognise this picture, and thus typologies of case studies have come to fruition that represent differing degrees of emphasis as to the purpose and use of case studies. In part, these differences reflect the debates between '... rational choice theorists, structuralists, historical institutionalists, social constructionists, cognitive theorists, post-modernists, and others, who at times may see themselves as having a stake in debates over case study or other methods' (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 9). Notwithstanding this observation, there remain significant differences in seeking to understanding causal relationships, and much of this surrounds the embracing of complexity in causality. As noted below, positivistic model building by definition represents a simplification of reality, while the research based upon 'thick rich description' specifically looks for the tipping points, reiterations, feedback mechanisms, issues of status, power plays and emotion that are involved in social circumstances.

One might also make a distinction between the collective case studies that are used, either by authors or by readers as noted below, for model building, and those that are used as historical explanations of specific times and places. The latter are very much concerned with process building, and the failure of a stage or a step that theory may have predicted becomes very much a point for analysis, although the specificities of the historical situation may limit its usefulness for concept development in a more general sense.

Consequently, Yin (1994) suggests that case studies are an appropriate form of research when 'a how or why question is being asked about a

contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control' (p. 9). As is evidenced in the other chapters in this book, a series of reasons can be given as to why this may be the case, but perhaps notable among these reasons is the point made by Eisenhardt (1989, pp. 548–549) who writes that a case study is 'particularly well suited to new research areas or research areas for which existing theory seems inadequate. This type of work is highly complementary to incremental theory building from normal science research. The former is useful in early stages of research on a topic or when a fresh perspective is needed, while the latter is useful in later stages of knowledge'. Such a sequence between the initial qualitative stages of a research project that are based upon observation, conversation and possibly unstructured approaches, and the later more empirically based study is often viewed as an appropriate research mechanism, but to adopt this approach arguably places the case study in the subordinate role and emphasises the logicity and rationality of the latter. In such instances, two observations may be made. First, as just noted above, empirical model building is based upon reductions of the complexities found in reality – models, by nature, are required to be parsimonious permitting prediction from identifying a few key variables and the relationships between those variables. Such models are, by definition, abstractions from reality, and hence by their nature may have residuals between the observed and the predicted of a greater or smaller size, while also being vulnerable to exogenous shocks not considered by the model. Second, and of specific application to tourism, it assumes that rational behaviour is the norm. It might be observed that tourists often behave in ways 'of the moment' that may be outside of their normal patterns of behaviour. The paradox emerges whereby the irrational and excessive behaviour is favoured by the tourist over more moderate and sustainable behaviours and environments. Hence, the industry builds attractions based upon fantasy and tourists act in irresponsible manners.

Rowley (2002) responds to this discourse by arguing that one of the strengths of the case study is its strong contextualisation with 'real life'. She is also of the view that good case studies can effectively meet the requirements of positivistic research and its demands of construct, internal and external verification and reliability through the multiple uses of differing sources of information. She points to the use of establishing chains of evidence, the selection of informed informants, the discerning of patterns and creation of databases in the development of explanation building. Such patterns can also record the surfaces of tensions, differences and dynamics of complex situations, and thereby include the seemingly irrational, or the

different rationalities of competing viewpoints more easily than the uniformities of statistical relationships inherent in much empirical work.

There may therefore be two approaches within case study development that might be over-simplified as the post-positivistic and the constructionist, which raises issues for cross-case study analysis. Lowi (1964), in a review of cases studies of American politics, and more specifically the work of Bauer, Sola Pool, and Dexter (1963) raises the 'so what?' question when the detail of the case study is read. Consequently, Lowi (1964, pp. 687–688) observes 'In general, American political science seems to be subject to a continuing fission of theory and research, in which the empiricist is not sufficiently mindful of his role as a system builder and the system builder is not sufficiently mindful (if at all) of the role that theory is supposed to play. What is needed is a basis for cumulating, comparing, and contrasting diverse findings'. It is suggested here that similar comments may be made about tourism studies, especially given the relative deficiency of longitudinal studies and specific comparative studies in our literature. Pearce (1993, p. 20) commented that 'The comparative approach has yet to emerge as a distinctive, readily recognizable methodology in tourism research despite its application to a wide variety of problems during the last two decades'. That situation may still be the case.

Evidence as to why this may still be the case can be derived from different sources. First, as noted by different reviews of research outputs (e.g. Ballantyne, Packer, & Axelsen, 2009; Xiao & Smith, 2006), empirical, statistically driven research seems to dominate the academic tourism research journals, and there appears to be little response to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (1998) observation that there is a dearth of understanding of the *hereness* and *madeness* of place which is so fundamental to the nature of tourism. While social sciences generally have had a debate over the methodological pluralism of social scientific method, much of this debate has seemingly passed by the tourism academia with notable exceptions such as Jamal and Hollinshead (2001) and notable book such as that by Phillimore and Goodson (2004). Indeed, it is more in the publication of books than in journal articles that one finds, within tourism research, the debate about methodological pluralism, notwithstanding the contribution made by the journal *Tourist Studies*. Interestingly enough the impression provided from that journal is that many of its contributors are actually social scientists not generally working within the mainstream of tourism, but rather social scientists who have 'discovered' tourism, but not its academic literature. That this is the case may be due to many reasons, but it is suggested that ethnographic work and 'deep' case studies are significantly

prejudiced by the workings of research assessment exercises and tenure mechanisms in both the English speaking and Asian university world. These exercises favour the ability to statistically analyse secondary or survey data sets to produce the number of papers required by university administrations and career enhancement, thereby giving little credence to research methods that may take several months or even years.

Nonetheless, there are areas within the tourism literature where a rich stream of findings have emerged, notably in the impacts of tourism upon economies, regions and communities. In this respect, Ryan, Zhang, and Deng (2011) suggest that in the arena of tourism impacts upon rural communities, a meta-narrative has not been proven, and although a number of determining variables have been identified in different studies, they are not always operating in similar ways. They conclude, therefore, that perhaps one way of continuing research in this subject is by means of case studies, because each situation is specific to its time and place, and therefore it is not surprising that generalisations are difficult to achieve. In short, surface tensions may impinge upon underlying trends. It might be observed that this problem may arise in other areas of tourism research, especially in a period of rapid social and technological change, and where whole new outward-bound tourism markets in China and India are likely to significantly change the flows of tourism in the next few decades. However, while the argument has a *prima facie* rationale, it leaves many difficulties unstated. One is that if the debate is to continue by additional case studies, how is one to compare findings from such case studies, especially if what is being compared is not based on uniformities of types of places or tourists?

Stake (2000) summarises previous literature by noting that the term 'case study' is far from unambiguous for 'A case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry' (p. 436). A case study is indeed, as Ryan et al. imply, specific and bounded, and thereby forms a 'bounded system' (Fals Borda, 1998) that possesses its own coherence, but if it is too specific, to what extent does either the process or the subject of the process illuminate knowledge more generally? Stake suggests a three-fold classification of 'case studies' to answer this quandary. First, there is the *intrinsic case study* that is defined as a desire for better understanding of a specific, given phenomenon. The interest lies in the workings of specific thing or process, and not in its ability to illustrate a generic series of problems.

The second classification proposed by Stake (2000) is the *instrumental case study* where the emphasis is on the examination of a specific case 'to provide

insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization' (p. 436). Here, the interest in the subject of the case study lies not in the specifics of a given situation, but in the ability of the situation to illuminate principles or issues that can inform analysis of other situations. To make it possible, the minimum requirement is that (a) the case is thought to be typical and thus (b) a series of criteria exist common to all cases across which it becomes possible to make a comparison. This raises some interesting questions for a subject such as tourism because, if it assumed that at the heart of tourism lie tourist interactions with the attributes of place and the people found at that place, then it must be argued that comparabilities of place exist. However, while a list of place attributes may be found common to many places (e.g. they are all either historic towns or beach-side resorts), other factors such as topography, spatial patterns and people may be the cause of substantial differences. Additionally, the tourist himself or herself is also a variable in the generation of place and activity evaluations – and repeat visitations to a place by no means give rise to repetitions of evaluations – as each visit may change expectations as a place becomes increasingly familiar. Novelty may, for example, be replaced by nostalgia over a history of repeated visits to the same place.

Hence, it is possible that the third classification suggested by Stake is more pertinent, and this is the *collective case study*. This is the instrumental study extended to a number of different cases where it 'may or may not be known in advance (if they) ... manifest some common characteristic' (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Commonality of place features is thus not a requisite if studying another variable such as the nature of tourism experiences, the role of destination marketing or the impacts of tourism on local economies or environments.

This classification of case study is not unique and other categorisations exist. For example, White (1992) suggests case studies are for identity, explanation or control, or be used for either the illustration of specific themes or provide the material for the practice of given analytical techniques or applications of concepts as commonly done in the realm of business management education.

In spite of these potential differences, case studies do tend to possess certain common features. First, they generally include a description that is detailed as to the location of the case and the actors. A background history of developments and policies is generally provided. The case study may therefore be based upon a number of differing research methodologies and paradigms, but in as much as it adheres to any of the approaches described by Guba (1990) it often tends to the constructionist as the researcher seeks

to “make sense” of that which is observed. Hence generally the work therefore builds upon description to elicit principles of causation – that is, what are the main factors that are at work, and do these factors interact with each other.

The case study may be said to differ from the pragmatic mixed methods research espoused by Creswell and Piano Clark (2007) in that they tend to argue that ‘We would recommend that this individual first develop an understanding of mixed methods research to see if the project fits the type of problems and research questions related to mixed methods’ (p. 3). The implication is that a research problem is known from the outset, and yet the case study based upon observation may be initiated by little more than a curiosity about the subject matter. The interest may be intrinsic to the researcher, and at the outset the researcher may know relatively little about a situation, knowing only that there are some characteristics that have triggered a wish to know more. From this stage, the researcher begins by delving into a situation, describing the unfolding of accumulated layers of knowledge which may be initially unordered and diffuse in their patterns. Given this, research objectives may be described in quite broad terms. For example, Ishak, Aziz, and Ahmad (2011, p. 3) state their research objective in a study of a Malaysian night market as follows: ‘The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of the factors leading to the dynamism and performance of night markets, the characteristics of the night market, the traders, the customers and the visitors; and to determine the density and diversity of the night market’. It can be observed that there is no formal statement of hypotheses – indeed how there be when the factors that generate ‘dynamism and performance’ are initially unknown.

Given this, the authors begin under the sub-title of ‘Findings’ with a description of the night market. They write ‘The night market being investigated was the night market at Jalan Dato Sagor in the town of Kuala Kangsar, in the state of Perak, Malaysia. The night market was held once a week every Saturday. According to the local authority, the market had been in operation for almost 20 years. It was located about 2 kilometers to the north of Kuala Kangsar town, in front of the Tsung Wah Secondary School. It was fringed by a row of 12 2-storey shop houses, a few terrace houses, the Jalan Dato Sagor main road, and a side road which linked to Jalan Taiping’ (Ishak et al., 2011, p. 5). In short, the description of the market is conceived as being part of the finding, and not simply a context for more structured research.

However, if the specifics of the case become so important, where does this leave the concept of the collective case study? As a minimum it implies

that certain commonalities are thought to exist across the selected case studies, but the question begins to arise as to whether these commonalities are based upon a researcher's agenda, and thereby a search for data and meaning motivated by the variables thought to possess meaning by the researcher rather than the more ethnographic or anthropological implicit in the case study approach. In this latter case, the problem emerges from the observation. Yet in both instances, the researcher is exercising a series of value judgments. In the one case the search is directed by what is thought to be important, in the other case the writing of the case is based upon those variables judged to be important. That is, the researcher is a tool of the research, and the expertise, perspicacity, empathy and experience of the researcher are just as important as any technical skill in textual or statistical analysis.

If the defence that is being made for the use of case studies as a research tool is that it provides 'thick description', how does that claim lie with the concept of developing research for purposes of comparison and informing the analysis of other situations? It is possibly in this observation that leads Ryan et al. (2011) to their conclusion that many studies do not permit a meta-narrative, for no matter how empirically based may be the individual studies of tourism impacts upon residents, there remain the uncertainties as to how the variables discerned by the different studies may apply to other places and other times, or indeed to the same place at other times and different stages of tourism evolution.

The case study may therefore be oriented in two ways – the first being a search for that intrinsic to a given situation and the second being an orientation to the comparative. In both instances the researcher makes a series of decisions as to what is thought appropriate – but there is a significant difference as noted above. In the former there may be no prior definition of the research problem, but in the latter a research problem has been defined for the purpose of making decisions. This is demonstrated in different chapters within this book. For example Grybovych writes 'This study ... rested on a set of philosophical and paradigmatic assumptions that had to be clearly identified prior to formulating research questions ...' and so subsequently not only defines a series of research questions but does so by reference to prior research and a model defined by Rowe, Marsh, and Frewer (2001). Accordingly, a research guide was constructed based on this prior research.

The approach adopted by Amoamo (2012, p. 419) in her case study of Pitcairn Island is very different. Thus she writes 'I am therefore concerned more with *how* the ethnographer seeks the methodology which is appropriate

to the discovery of the “real community” ...’ and again ‘I could contend that doing fieldwork is not only an outwardly oriented social activity, but also a psychological space in which memories and imaginations shape interactions with informants, their lives, their histories, and their futures (Svasek, 2010, p. 90)’ (Amoamo, 2012, p. 419). In Amoamo’s case study, a place becomes increasingly more concrete and complex as the researcher becomes drawn into the process of better understanding the case – but the research problem is very broadly described in terms of such questions as ‘What is going on?’, ‘What do islanders think?’ and ‘What are the power structures?’ As she notes, it was only after a year of study that classifications began to emerge, and thus the ‘historically located and contingent processes’ (Amoamo, 2012, p. 419) emerge. In her intrinsic case study, comparisons are made within the observations and notes of the researcher in a continual reiterative pattern of sense making through observations and records, each being a layer within the development of an understanding of the issues encountered. The case study becomes a form of detective work wherein what at one stage might be thought important becomes discarded, only perhaps to be later fitted into a jigsaw of meaning. In this sense, the case study creates its own sense through the compilation and comparison of ‘clues’.

There remains yet another factor in the analysis of the comparative uses of the case study. Ryan and Gu (2010) specifically place themselves in their analysis of the 2007 Wutaishan Buddhist and Cultural Festival in Shanxi, China, to pose not only their own differing perspectives but also those of other players in an attempt to construct meanings of the festival and to show how those meanings may vary within power structures between the interests of the State and religious groupings. Of interest though are their observations about the role of writing. Thus they note:

Yet to make sense of an event traditionally represents a distancing from the emotion of participation as part of an audience, and a tension exists between the recall of a lack of understanding at the time of the event, and the partial acquisition of subsequent understanding through a ‘making sense process’ incurred in writing. Equally, the writing represents a movement from the ‘private self’ to the ‘public self’ as author and researcher – but the latter is premised upon the former. Angrosino and de Pérez (2000) also raise the issue that validation arises in the way in which cues are created in settings that have meanings for others. An extension of this is that one validation of an interpretation lies in its recognition by the reader, so thus another dialectic arises – that between authors moving from private to public selves to address the private understandings of the reader through their access to the public media.... Between such action and environment new constructions emerge. (Mead, 1934)

It thus becomes evident that the writing itself is part of the mode of enquiry. The writing aids the recall of the experience, translates the visual record of the more than 400

photographs into a text to be shared with readers, represents the positioning and re-positioning of the authors, and orders the text and that which is reported into a sequence. Any sequence implies a serial prioritisation, and the need to commence with an explanation of the process itself represents a key decision by the authors as a statement of difference that is contrary to the past dominance of quantitative methodologies espoused by many manuscripts. (Ryan & Gu, 2010, p. 169)

To this process can be added a second actor, because it is not the researcher who necessarily makes the comparisons from a given case study that describes a specific place, but rather the reader who uses a case study for a specific purpose of their own. Therefore, the circumstances researched become metaphors located in the words written by a researcher and read by a second researcher – who may absorb the meanings within the parameters of a second problem of which the writer may have been unaware, but to which the reader now attributes meanings aided by their understanding of the original writer's own understandings. A commonality aided by shared understandings of language and common research interests informs the evolution of a comparative case study approach and subsequent generalisation.

The comparative case study may therefore be of two types. First, there is the commonly understood meaning of what Stake (2000) terms the collective case study. Such an example is provided in the book by Slocum, Backman, and Baldwin (2012) who describe a project that required them to study three separate Tanzanian villages. They note that 'These instrumental case studies strived to develop theory, facilitated understanding of pervasive problems and did not require typical study populations' – in short comparison is vital to permit the development of theory, and thus the authors go beyond the descriptive analysis of 'rich detail' to permit the development of an evolutionary process of tourism development within which non-governmental bodies may play a changing role.

The second example of a comparative case study is where the intrinsic and instrumental case study becomes absorbed into a comparative situation because of its use by a second set of researchers. Here, however, one may be faced with the situation described by Ryan et al. (2011) in that no theory is actually developed. Instead, there may be the development of a partially formed or pseudo-theory in that, as they describe with reference to the impacts of tourism upon residents of a tourist area, the case studies identify those variables that are important in defining the impacts of tourism, but the role of and relationship between those variables remain unclear and may only yet become clear through the development of further study, if at all. The situation may be best described by Fig. 1.

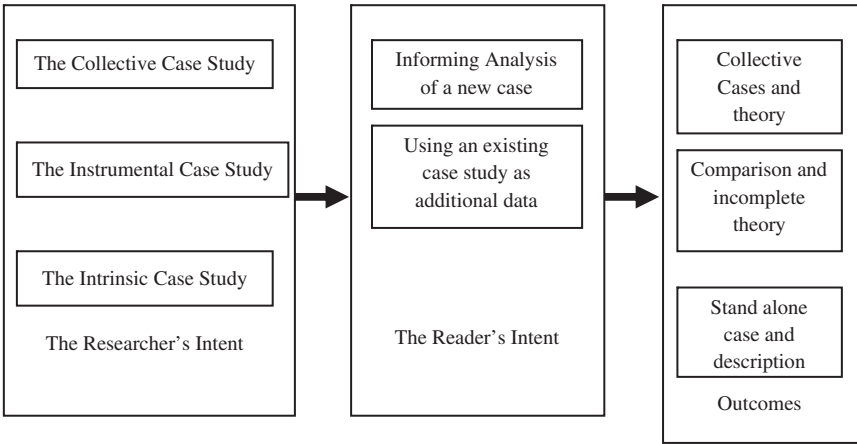


Fig. 1. Creation and Uses of Case Studies.

The researcher may have different motives in undertaking case study research as indicated in the left-hand side box – that is, the researcher may be specifically seeking (a) a generalisation as in the collective case study, (b) a potential generalisation or simply an identification of common variables in given types of situations, the pseudo-theory or model of the instrumental case study and then finally (c) the specific intrinsic case study. On the other hand, the reader uses the case study as a source of item or variable identification to help understand a situation, or as additional data to add to their own data sets. In that case, all three types of case studies identified on the left-hand side may become part of the reader's series or collective case study that permits generalisation, or they become part of an evolving theoretical conceptualisation, or finally simply one of a series of stand-alone cases, each read for its own value.

Yet this observation still remains unanswered the question as to what mode of cross-case analysis to select. Yet, as the above discussion shows, the question itself is based upon a premise – that, from the perspective of King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, p. 7) the goal of scientific research is 'inference', while being public, leading to uncertain conclusions (thereby permitting the entry of new evidence) and 'a set of rules on which its validity depends' (p. 9). This is a very Popperian view of what constitutes 'scientific' research – indeed arguably the word 'scientific' is here used as a value term that implies other modes of inquiry are by definition 'unscientific'. Consequently, any answer to the question 'how does one create cross-comparison analysis

between case studies?' implies that debate on the reasons and purposes of such a comparison has taken place. Given this, what follows is by definition incomplete, and can only serve as a starting point.

Any comparison requires classifications against which checks can be made. Certainly, comparisons between case studies are made. An early example is the [OECD \(1981\)](#) report on the impacts of tourism that identified and sought to address three questions:

- (a) Under what conditions does the development of tourism lead to environmental degradation?
- (b) To what extent are visitor numbers sensitive to environmental degradation?
- (c) Is it possible to design a tourist policy that has no negative environmental impacts, and if so, what would be the cost of such policies?

The outcome of the report was the identification of a number of variables thought to have importance, but with varying degrees of certainty as to (a) their importance and (b) the ways in which they were related to each other. In short, a reiterative (some might say tautological) process occurred within which the categorisations that permitted comparisons emerged from the cases and then used to make further comparison. In that sense, a process akin to thematic analysis is being undertaken by the researcher, and this involves the use of key words/images, initially as a count, but subsequently in the creation of a taxonomy, and within the labelling the further creation of hierarchical systems or alternatively, for creating mental maps (e.g. [Ryan & Bernard, 2004](#)).

A second related approach is the prior identification of variables that are thought to be important, and then identification of the degree to which such variables are absent or present in a series of cases. In both approaches, a key factor is the existence of equivalences. A series of questions can be asked, including

- (a) Are the locations selected sufficiently similar in terms of size, populations, stage of tourism development and other characteristics?
- (b) Are the paradigms of research similar across the different cases?
- (c) Are the modes of data collection equivalent across the different cases?
- (d) Are the questions set to respondents across the different cases equivalent?
- (e) Are the modes of measurement the same across the different cases?
- (f) Are the levels of expertise of the researchers equivalent across the different cases?

- (g) Are there equivalences in research budgets and time taken to complete the research?
- (h) Is there an equivalence in meaning – for example the Taiwanese usage of the terms ‘bed and breakfast accommodation’ of ‘farm tourism’ describe products generally different from those so described in the United Kingdom?
- (i) To what extent are there similarities and differences between respondents and populations?
- (j) Is there an equivalence of relevance?

While there is a validity in these questions, they all point to an empiricist pattern of thought, namely that knowledge is a matter of accurate representation – and that what is being represented is independent of the researcher’s gaze. But as discussed above, that viewpoint is contentious, and that many using the intrinsic case study would reject that perspective, even if reading other case studies to help them better understand the subject matter of their own research.

However, the role of the reader has an additional importance, for not only are there processes of review existing within the academic body, but an additional test of research is not only the credibility it has for the researcher and the researched, but also for subsequent users of the research, whether drawn from academia, government, industry or other stakeholders. However, in adopting this perspective there is an implicit move from the issues of ‘accurate representation’ of the phenomenon being studied to one of interpretative validity as work is assessed by readers who may not have direct knowledge of the initial place studies other than having a wider context within which to make an evaluation of the reported results. In short, comparisons produce an ‘accumulative knowledge’ – but as the knowledge becomes ‘accumulated’ it becomes distanced from the subject matter of the study. Hazelrigg (1989, p. 78) noted that ‘the notion of approximation requires an existent referent to which one can achieve proximity, yet how can we know that existent? According to Popper we cannot; but if we cannot, then how are we to possibly judge the question of proximity?’

CONCLUSIONS

The problems of empiricism are well known, and thus it is contended they also bedevil approaches associated with collective case studies. Yet many researchers use case studies because they reject the claims of positivistic and

post-positivistic patterns and understanding of what constitutes knowledge. The alternative perspective of relativism may, however, to the empiricist, be self-defeating – for how does one select from the competing alternative ‘truths’? Smith and Deemer (2004) respond by arguing ‘Relativism ... is not a theory of knowledge and advances no pretense that we can escape our finite condition of being in the world. As such, the issue of self-refuting, even though it is a logically correct position given a standard form of logic, is unimportant ... Relativism is not something to be transcended, it is merely something with which we, as finite beings, must live to learn’ (p. 885). Judgments are made within realms of uncertainty – such is the human condition.

There is possibly an additional argument that can be made with reference to the condition of tourism research. It has been suggested above that tourism abounds with examples of irrational and non-rational behavior. That observation was made with reference to tourist’s individual behaviours, but irrationality can be found in many zones. Cities bid for the Olympic Games knowing that for many such cities the economic costs will far outweigh the economic gains, and thus a rationale may be one of statement making, image building or seeking an ‘iconic moment’ (Beijing, 2008 possibly?). Theme parks are built without reference to the culture of a surrounding country (Paris Disneyland?), and commercial success results from the apparent wish to take dangerous risks – or the apparent risks are not generally present (adventure tourism?). Some tourists specifically seek the dangerous places of the world (Pelton & Aral, 1995). If irrationality on the part of the tourists, the industry and governments plays such a large role within the working of tourism, and if the industry is about wishes to escape, to fantasise and at times to be irresponsible, is there any one way in which to approach case studies as research modes? There can be no one way in which the case study may be written and read, other than being transparent as to the methods used, the perspectives taken and by being tolerant of those who adopt other methods. Relativism requires comparison, and is accepting of pluralities – but equally, as evidenced by Ryan and Hall (2001) and their work on sex tourism wherein value judgments are made with reference to ‘evil actions’ – we may conclude that research, including the use of comparative case studies, is not solely based on the epistemological, but is a moral affair.

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