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A review of research into social tourism: Launching the Annals of Tourism Research Curated Collection on Social Tourism.

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the literature on social tourism for the first time. Social tourism has been in existence since the development of modern tourism but remains a niche research area. Partially, this is because social tourism constitutes part of public welfare policy and directed towards supporting participation in tourism activities by people whose financial or other circumstances prevent them from doing so. This literature review takes a conceptual approach to examine the theoretical underpinnings of social tourism. It combines a bibliometric analysis with an analytic review approach that assesses the key themes and evolution of published research articles in the field and develops a tourism as welfare model that identifies directions for the future development of research in this field.

Introduction

In recent years, the research in the English language on social tourism has grown substantially, yet it remains a relatively obscure and sometimes misunderstood area of tourism research, despite not being a new concept at all. Walter Hunzicker coined the term social tourism in a book on the subject in 1951, which defined it as 'the relationships and phenomena in the field of tourism resulting from participation in travel by economically weak or otherwise disadvantaged elements in society' (Hunzicker, 1951: 2). Putative social tourism activity had emerged across Europe from the nineteenth Century, alongside the development of transport (particularly rail) infrastructure, economic advances and social reforms, specifically in connection with the development of the labor movement (Hall & Brown, 2006), and was complemented through related activities by worker's collectives, non-profit associations, cooperatives and trades unions (Troisgros, 1980; Billen 2020). These tourism initiatives were considered 'improving' alternatives to other, more hedonistic forms of leisure activities available to lower social classes at the time (Walton 2013). The 'rational recreation' movement (Clarke & Critcher, 1985), posited that productive and upright leisure and recreation would benefit society and crucially, create a more productive workforce.

Social tourism developed in the twentieth century to embrace ideas of social inclusion and welfare rights alongside the surge in expansion in welfare provision via international institutions and social reform enacted to tackle the aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the economic restructuring that followed the Second World War (Walton 2013). This period heralded massive scale, rapid economic development and a repurposing of industrial production systems to suit peacetime social and economic goals (Allcock, 1986), as well as widespread health and social welfare reforms. The UN Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, enshrined the notions of

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a right to rest and leisure (article 24) and freedom of movement (article 13) (see McCabe & Diekmann, 2015), which were subsequently embedded into the UNWTO Global Code of Tourism Ethics (1999). Whilst there are different definitions of social tourism (Minnaert et al., 2006), the predominant use of the term is in relation to welfare based on principles of citizenship rights and social entitlements, highlighted in recent definitions: "all activities, relationships and phenomena in the field of tourism resulting from the inclusion of otherwise disadvantaged and excluded groups in participation in tourism. The inclusion of these groups in tourism is made possible through financial or other interventions of a well-defined and social nature." (Minnaert et al., 2012: 29).

A range of contributions in Annals has analyzed social tourism over the decades. Teuscher (1983) identified three models of social tourism that emerged in different regions within Europe. The first is associated particularly with the Central and Eastern European countries during the era of state socialism, whereby domestic tourism and recreation was used as a mechanism to improve health and welfare, whilst also instilling patriotic pride (Hall, 1991). Pearlman (1990) outlines this process in the context of Bulgaria, following the socialist revolution in 1944, where commercial, international tourism subsidized the establishment of widescale social tourism, which improved health and wellbeing of the labor force and (see also Hall & Brown, 2006). Another model was that in Northern Europe, where the institutions of social tourism were established on commercial principles based on the concept of universal access for all in society, regardless of social or economic situation, to cheap, practical and basic holiday opportunities (1983). Hjalager pointed out how this model has endured despite the scaling back of the welfare state from the 1980s onwards, and in the face of continued pressures on the Danish Welfare system (2012). The third model consisted of those Mediterranean countries whose social tourism systems grew out of trades unions, cooperatives and employees' clubs, which effectively invested in accommodation structures and travel businesses to provide non-profit holiday opportunities for members.

However, this early analysis belies a much more complex set of systems and practices across Europe (Diekmann & McCabe, 2011; Billen 2020) and beyond (e.g. Latin America, cf. De Almeida, 2011). Additionally, some of the early emphasis on the welfare and social inclusion orientation has shifted to encompass a broader remit for social tourism models to include an emphasis on the economic benefits it provides to destinations (Diekmann & McCabe, 2011). This 'stimulus' model of social tourism (Minnaert et al., 2011) seeks to contribute to greater economic sustainability of the visitor economy alongside welfare and social inclusion goals (Cisneros-Martínez et al., 2018). Therefore, social tourism now includes diversity of systems, approaches and scales of activity making it difficult to develop a comprehensive and universally accepted conceptualization.

Whilst it remains a relatively small body of work within the expanding field of knowledge on tourism, social tourism represents an important topic for several reasons. Firstly, it is connected with the foundational ideals and ethics that underpinned the growth and development of the modern mass tourism system that positions tourism as a positive consumption activity in modern societies. Secondly, analysts of social tourism have emphasized various structural inequalities of access to opportunities to travel that were traditionally overlooked by tourism research, bringing into focus the notion of citizenship 'rights' to tourism and highlighting its role in tackling social exclusion. Thirdly, the majority of research has examined the positive outcomes of tourism as a leisure practice for individuals and families, which can be generalized to all tourists, such as links between tourism and subjective wellbeing. Therefore, the issues investigated in research in social tourism have informed important debates about tourism policies and practices that extend well beyond the 'developed' nations of the world and go right to the very center of questions about tourism's role in societies, their economic and social development and international relations.

The debates on tourism's role in society have become more prominent not only in the academic world, but also in the media since 2017. Firstly, issues of excessive tourism demand in 'hotspots' has caused negative reaction from local people in some important destinations. The media debates concerning the desirability of tourism as an economic activity, associated with the term 'overtourism', prompted widespread condemnation of the tourism industry and often of tourists themselves, in over-crowded resorts, cities and destinations (Milano et al., 2019). In 2020, the global health emergency caused by the Coronavirus pandemic has led to an almost total shutdown of the global travel and tourism system. As of September 2020, the pandemic was continuing to wreak havoc on many countries and particular regions have entered different phases, including exponential growth in infection rates (e.g. South and North America, India), or resurgence of infections, or second 'waves' (such as Europe, Middle East and South East Asia). The effects of the pandemic on the global tourism industry are likely to be lasting and deep to the extent that policymakers will have to stimulate tourism consumption to aid recovery (Sharma & Nicolau, 2020; Yang et al., 2020). Not only will the economic consequences of the pandemic affect the tourism sector, it will lead to global recession and severe strain on the public finances. Some commentators have argued that this necessitates a reevaluation of the previous growth model of tourism development, particularly considering the challenges posed by the climate emergency and hence, a more sustainable tourism model (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Gössling et al., 2020). This makes it especially germane to review social tourism research, since proponents have long argued for its role in stimulating social and economic development in tourism that is fair and equitable, ecologically more sustainable and provides important health and wellbeing outcomes to tourists (Cisneros-Martínez et al., 2018; Kakoudakis & McCabe, 2018).

Hence, the purpose of this article is to provide a detailed review of the current literature on social tourism. This review couples bibliometric analysis of published research articles and narrative depiction of wider literature sources, undertaken with the aim to; assess the body of knowledge in social tourism, its theoretical underpinnings, and connections with other disciplines, in order to analyze the contribution of social tourism to the wider field of tourism research. The article identifies avenues for future research in social tourism as well as providing a model of tourism as welfare that could inform the post-Covid restructuring of the global tourism industry. Finally, this piece launches the curated collection of research in social tourism in Annals of Tourism Research. The article is structured as follows. Firstly, the paper outlines the methodological approach undertaken. Secondly, it proceeds to the bibliometric and narrative analysis of the major themes in social tourism research articles and discusses how these have evolved over time. We then turn to trace the theoretical antecedents of social tourism. Finally, the paper makes recommendations for future research, building a tourism as welfare model to guide future analysis.

Methodology

This review article applies a conceptual approach to analyze the field of social tourism research. Our goal is to locate social tourism as a phenomenon within tourism and leisure studies in order to clarify and extend our understanding of its conceptual basis. The aim is to inform future research, a key criterion of conceptual research (Xin et al., 2013). Whilst there are different approaches to conceptual research, such as the more interpretivist dialectic, which advocates shifting between theory and analysis of concepts, illustrated by a recent study of transformational experiences of tourism (Pung et al., 2020), we opted for an integrated approach utilizing a structured bibliometric literature review to provide an overview and synthesis of published research. This was combined with a broader, more general analysis of related literature across tourism and leisure to identify concepts and approaches to inform future research in social tourism and beyond by developing a conceptual model of tourism as welfare.

Bibliometrics is a tool used to analyze how fields of research evolve and are structured in terms of conceptual or author network relationships (Koseoglu et al., 2016; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Bibliometrics is not new (Kessler, 1963), and yet it is only recently that online databases and specialist software have enabled more detailed and thorough analysis. Subsequently, the use of bibliometric methods to construct structural images of fields of research has become a commonly used approach across the social sciences (Zupic & Čater, 2015). There are a range of questions that can be answered through the use of bibliometric approaches, including the social, network structure of a discipline as well as the ways it is evolving in terms of the themes investigated, the methods employed, and questions answered. Studies can be basic or complex and can be classified into three main types: review studies, evaluative studies or relational studies (Koseoglu et al., 2016; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Koseoglu et al. analyzed all the bibliometric studies published in major tourism and hospitality journals and found no examples of previous review articles on social tourism, so the current study represents a first attempt which justifies the use of this approach. Since the field of social tourism is relatively small, we use a standard review approach.

We undertook three types of bibliometric analysis. Firstly, we performed a co-word analysis to examine cognitive structure of the research and how major themes are related to each other. Co-word analysis shows the frequency, density and the connections amongst the keywords, which helps to understand the main research topics, the relationships amongst different studies and how major topics are related to each other, producing a network of themes and relationships. Secondly, we clustered the research articles thematically by analyzing titles, keywords and abstracts of all the articles. We present this as a narrative analysis of the major themes. Thirdly, we focused this segmentation analysis to scrutinize the evolutionary structure of the research over the last ten-year period, which has witnessed a large growth in research in the field.

Data and analysis

In terms of data collection, firstly, we undertook a search for the term "social tourism" in Web of Science, which provides more comprehensive information than non-core journal databases. We searched the 'all journals' database and included 'all languages', including translation into French. A further search was then conducted on Google Scholar to identify additional items. Since we also wanted to understand how social tourism might be connected to related concepts in tourism, we also searched for additional keywords including social inclusion, social exclusion, individual benefits, personal development, wellbeing, and social equality. This process produced more than 1000 articles, but a manual cleaning and checking process of titles and abstracts to search for any relationships with social tourism, helped produce a total of 149 articles published between 1953 and 2020, which was checked again for irrelevant items resulting in a total of 125, which included articles published in 8 languages. The full bibliographic reference list to these articles is provided as Appendix 1.

Co word analysis

Co-word analysis is a form of content analysis method, that is useful to identify relationships and to construct a conceptual structure of the topic. Python was used to extract keywords from the articles, which were analyzed using UCINET software and Netdraw to generate a visual data collinear network matrix of the top 40 keywords (Fig. 1). Through an analysis of the frequency of key terms appearing together, it is assumed that they represent concepts that have a close relationship, which in turn allows for an interpretation of the core conceptual structure in a field and the direction of those relationships (Cambrosio et al., 1993).

Thematic structure and keywords timeline

Co-word analysis can be combined with cluster analysis to identify the major themes in a discipline or topic, and to track the evolution of research themes over time (Cottrill et al., 1989). Firstly, this process was used to identify the most prevalent themes in the research articles. Articles were grouped according to theme, which were then manually checked and labeled. Social tourism research has witnessed a large expansion over the most recent ten-year period (2009–2019). In order to identify trends and to understand how it has evolved, we used Citespace software to analyze keywords in the dataset of published articles and how these have changed over the period. The keywords timeline shows the development of topics in terms of changes of keywords used to describe the research (Chen, 2006). Co-words analysis is done prior to analyzing the changes in keywords over different periods (Jiang et al., 2017). Keywords are then set up as nodes. The data is then cleaned by deleting keywords that have no relevance, which was then limited to include the top 50 keywords. The output (Fig. 2) shows those keywords with the highest frequency of citation occurrence, organized into clusters that are closely connected. Citespace clusters keywords that are correlated, and then assigns a value to each one (centrality value) (Chen

et al., 2014). The keyword which has the largest value is labeled as the cluster title. The clusters are assigned in rank order of importance (frequency) starting at #0. Modularity Q (Q Value) and Silhouette (S Value) analysis is performed to test the reliability and validity of clusters of keywords in the timeline. Generally, a Q value of >0.3, generally indicates that the cluster analysis is significant, and an S value of >0.5, demonstrates reliability of the clustering (Chen et al., 2014). In this case, the Modularity Q score achieved 0.7903, and the Silhouette analysis was 0.5962.

Limitations

Bibliometric approaches offer some key strengths to review studies For example, as a type of meta-analysis, they enable a more transparent, and evidence-based process based on a predefined protocol, designated and wide search resources, clear selection criteria, and reproducible analysis without subjective bias (Pae, 2015). Yet, this process highlighted some critical issues in delineating social tourism research. Some studies were clearly grounded in social tourism thought, principles and/or cases, and yet did not specifically mention social tourism. Other pieces demonstrated connections with social tourism or its research themes but were applied in mainstream tourism contexts. Examples include studies that have reviewed or investigated physical health and/or subjective wellbeing amongst mainstream tourists (e.g. Gu et al., 2016; Smith & Diekmann, 2017) or issues around social inclusion in tourism development (such as Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018; Biddulph, 2018). Some of the connections are extremely strong, for example in the case of accessible tourism (Nyanjom et al., 2018), or that deal directly with constraints (Chen & Petrick, 2016) but which do not actually associate with social tourism policies or examine user experiences.

Yet others presented more difficulties, such as the German use of *Sozialtourismus*, a pejorative term used in relation to 'welfare migration', specifically the fear of poorer people flooding into the country from within the E.U. to claim social welfare benefits (Heindlmaier & Blauberger, 2017). Some of the more influential articles that relate social tourism to alternative or more morally acceptable forms within the ambit of social tourism, such as Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) were not included in the results because they do not deal with social tourism essentially or ostensibly. However, the most significant limitation of the bibliometric approach taken is the lack of representation in the data of articles published in the French language. Social tourism has important origins in the French-speaking world including in Canada and Belgium (Jolin & Proulx, 2005; Minnaert, Diekmann & McCabe 2012). Yet, the results did not reveal research undertaken in French, despite the translation function applied in the Web of Science search. This may be due to the way French social tourism is linked to other terms such as 'associatif', 'solidaire' and 'accessible', which may indicate a lack of diversity in search terms used for the analysis. It is without doubt that there is an anglophone bias to the results generated and that further analysis that integrates a wider range of databases and terms associated with social tourism in different languages.

The evolution and structure of social tourism research

In this section, we focus on published studies on social tourism to assess the conceptual structure, major themes and evolutionary trends in the analysis of the bibliometric search data. In determining a start point for reports on studies of social tourism, there are a

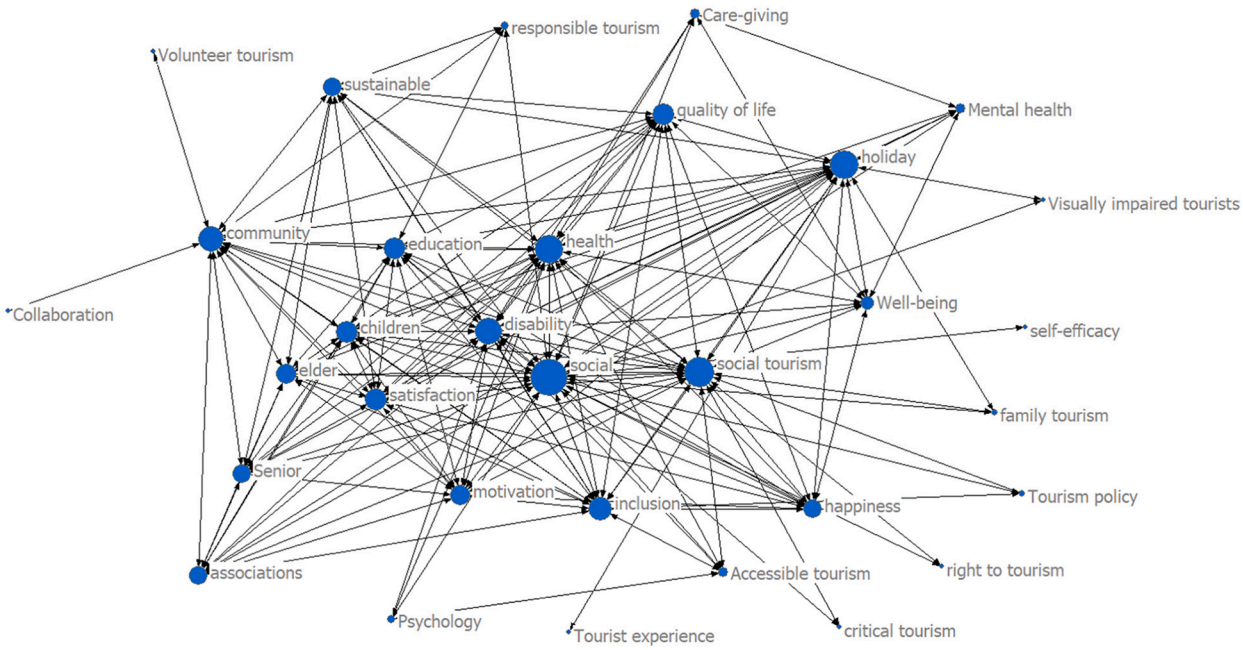

Fig. 1. Co-word network relations.

few clues in the literature. We know for example, that social tourism was the theme of the 27th AIEST conference held in Warsaw in 1977 (McIntosh, 1977). This was obviously prior to the end of the cold war and in some countries, particularly beyond the Iron Curtain, social tourism was identified as practiced by "the majority of citizens through the use of government owned facilities and services" (McIntosh, 1977: 91). In those early days, specific social groups were targeted for financial and other support, and examples were discussed at the conference including the elderly and people with disabilities. Social tourism policies were widespread however in many European countries and in the Americas (with the exception of the United States), focusing generally on programs for particular target groups or in the allocation of public funds for the purpose of public provision of tourism facilities with a remit to provide equality of access for disadvantaged groups (see Jolin & Proulx, 2005). Therefore, the initial research on social tourism was based on practical measures to overcome constraints to access, rather than on developing theorizations or the wider body of tourism research.

This part of the paper presents the output of the co-word analysis as a knowledge map (Fig. 1), which shows: 1) the largest nodes closer to the center represent their core position in the network structure and are the most important in the web of relationships. The greater number of connecting node lines represents the higher frequency of keywords and closer the relationship. As shown in Fig. 1 social and social tourism are at the core of the knowledge network with the most connections and the biggest code size. The following core keywords are disability, health, holiday, education, children, motivation, inclusion, senior etc. Their connections with the core keyword are relatively dense, and they are quite closely connected with social tourism. The keywords which are closer to the outer edge represent relatively smaller or new emerging research areas, including visually impaired tourists, volunteer tourism and tourism policy.

Fig. 1 highlights the close connections between social tourism research and key target groups of policies and provision. The network map demonstrates the centrality of research on the individual and demand side perspectives in social tourism research. The extremely close relationships between social tourism and disability indicate a particularly large body of research in this area. There are generally four target groups for social tourism provisions apparent in different systems or models of provision. These groups include people with disabilities, children, older people and low-income families and all are represented apart from low-income families in the co-word analysis. One possible explanation could be that low-incomes or constraints are associated strongly with social tourism contexts and thus may not be necessary to relate in the abstracts, titles of keywords of articles. Research on social tourism has found that certain types of family structures, such as single parent families, are more likely to be on low-incomes and children from poor areas (both urban and rural) are more likely to be in low-income families (Hughes, 1991; Such & Kay, 2012; Minnaert et al., 2006; Cole & Morgan, 2010). A relatively close, but smaller body of work is on older people, indicated by 'seniors' and 'elder'. There are obvious connections between these categories however, as older people are more likely to also have impairments or disabilities. A second series of strong relationships exists between social tourism and outcomes, including happiness, satisfaction, education, and a larger emphasis on health. An understanding of the motivations of social tourists is fairly strongly connected to different user group experiences, satisfaction, and inclusion.

Fig. 1 also indicates less emphasis on the supply side of social tourism research, represented by the node of 'associations'. This has previously been highlighted as a gap in knowledge, since provisions of services often combine travel, tourism and hospitality sector providers with social, health and education organizations (Diekmann & McCabe, 2011). This is contrasted with relatively stronger linkages between the term 'community', not in terms of relationships between social tourists and host communities, but the everyday life contexts of social tourists, which can be linked to quality of life issues, both as a motivating factor for social tourism as well as a beneficial outcome. Around the outer edges of the network, where there are less numerous connections, a range of either specialist topic areas or emerging research areas are represented, such as family tourism.

Another example is on tourism policy related issues, which has been the subject of a recent journal special issue (Diekmann et al., 2018). Whilst many studies in social tourism have dwelt on the difficult personal and situational characteristics of beneficiaries, and positive outcomes linked to social and health policy issues, the connections between tourism policy and social tourism have been lacking. There is a lamentable lack of impact that social tourism research has had to date on shaping or developing mainstream tourism policy. One can only assume the reasons for this, but there may be weak support in some countries or regions in the tourism and travel industry for social tourism initiatives. Some destinations may be concerned with a potential negative image associated with social tourism clients, an undue emphasis on low-spending visitors, travel companies are perhaps fearful of the impact of low value customers on their brands. In other countries where social welfare standards are already high, and social tourism embedded very widely in the tourism economy, this is less likely to be an issue.

Major themes in social tourism research

Citespace software was used to analyze the content of the 125 articles. This output was then manually checked against the article titles, keywords and abstracts, to identify the major themes in published research (Note: the citations in this section relate to the reference list of articles in Appendix 1 and are not repeated in the reference list to the paper). The following outlines the four major thematic areas of research published on social tourism rather than an analysis of every piece, due to the small numbers of papers in some themes, difficulty in classifying some papers and a range of case studies.

Experiences and outcomes of social tourism

The most prevalent area of research comprises those that are concerned with the motivations, outcomes and experiences of social tourism for beneficiaries. These can be classified according to the type of outcome measure, such as wellbeing, satisfaction and emotions, the range of benefits derived from social holidays for different user groups, or in relation to the types of experiences that contribute to positive outcomes, particularly where programmed activities form an essential part of the social holiday (Komppula, Ilves

& Airey 2016). It is apparent that in the early studies (mirroring somewhat the development of tourism research generally), the focus was on describing the motivations and benefits and that in recent years, there has been a more concerted approach to link outcomes to satisfaction with life and subjective wellbeing.

There is much research on the experiences and outcomes of social tourism for the elderly. Dann (2002) was the first to explore from a sociological perspective the relationships between later life, tourism experiences and quality of life that specifically included social tourists. That work was the precursor to a range of studies that emerged in the following two decades on wellbeing and quality of life outcomes linked to social tourism. Sedgely, Haven-Tang and Espeso-Molinero (2018) examined wellbeing outcomes using a qualitative methodology in the senior social tourism program delivered by the IMSERSO initiative in Spain and identified social connectivity as a major source of wellbeing amongst this group. Morgan, Pritchard & Sedgley (2015), explored wellbeing outcomes for older U.K. residents. In some studies, social tourism is not a main focus of the study, but one of an identified motivational segment type amongst elderly people (e.g. in Spain, Alén, Losada & de Carlos 2017). Ferrer, Sanz, Ferrandis, McCabe, & García (2016) examined physical health and capabilities to perform daily activities amongst older people in Spain, by comparing those who are regular travelers with those that are not, and found that in general, older tourists are more healthy and active than non-participants, providing policy implications for health and social care. Further work has segmented the senior social tourism market by benefit type (Eusebio, Carneiro, Kastenholz, & Alvelos 2017) or has examined activities contributing to positive outcomes amongst older people in social tourism programs (González, Sánchez, & Vila 2017).

The other main group represented in studies on motivations, outcomes and experiences are people with disabilities. This includes research on accessibility issues/factors, the issue of preferred companionship for disabled travelers whilst traveling (Chung & Lee 2019) in addition to studies assessing the ways that travel contributes to quality of life (Pagan 2015a,b). Some articles have focused on the experiences of people with specific types of impairment such as comparing experiences between hearing-impaired and people with physical disabilities (Jeon 2012), or on the lived holiday experiences of mothers of children with autism (Sedgley et al., 2017). In their study, Sedgley et al. unpacked the range of emotional strategies employed by families to be able to maximise the positive outcomes and negotiate challenges for the whole family in holiday contexts. Whilst not specifically on social tourism, the study shows how these families invariably suffer from social exclusion and demonstrates that disability cannot be treated in a homogenous sense by tourism research. The study also supports findings that link accessible tourism to positive outcomes in terms of coping with stress (Moura, Kastenholz & Pereira 2018).

Another target group of social tourism research has been children and young people. The benefits for children in terms of learning and relationships between children, parents and schools were found as an outcome of research in England (Bos, McCabe &Johnson 2015). Other studies have used social tourism as an intervention to assess wellbeing outcomes of disadvantaged children 'left-behind' in rural homelands by their parents who have become economic migrants, and who lack access to opportunities for conventional family leisure (Qiao, Chen, Thompson, & Xiao 2019). Foster and McCabe (2015) investigated the role of residential activity camps in breaking down barriers amongst young people and encouraging community cohesion. In others, the focus is on the type of tourism activity, such as Visiting Friends and Relatives, which is proposed as a cost-effective and beneficial model for the development of social tourism (Backer & King 2017).

A further group of studies deal with the outcomes associated with specific users, such as the links between participation in social tourism and an increased self-reliance amongst immigrant women suffering from domestic (or other) violence (Noh 2019), the experiences of people living in poverty and low-income (Sedgley, Pritchard & Morgan 2012; Minnaert, Maitland & Miller 2009; McCabe 2009). Kakoudakis, McCabe & Story (2017) sought to understand how social tourism might be effective in improving long-term unemployed people's social cognitive functions, their self-efficacy beliefs, to help them feel more confident and optimistic about their job prospects. In this way, long term unemployed people may feel more able to seek for and obtain employment. The results showed that self-efficacy beliefs and job-search behavior did improve, but that respondents were often not able to search for work due to their current life situation.

In other studies, benefits from social tourism, are explored from the perspectives of a specific regional context such as; the elderly in Brazil (Werle & Vas 2019), youth tourism in Argentina (Tapia 2018), youth camps in Brazil (Bruno 2015), first nation communities in Canada (Pyke, Pyke, & Watuwa 2019), and North Korean defectors to the South (Song 2006a,b,c). Nearly all of these studies focusing on the benefits of social tourism report positive outcomes for users. However, Park, Park and Kang (2018) using a natural field experiment found that cross-sectional research design in quantitative studies on quality of life and subjective wellbeing outcomes of social tourism suffer from some inflationary effects and are short lived. Park et al. found no long-lasting positive outcomes associated with travel in the context of the travel voucher scheme in South Korea, in line with other studies in the mainstream literature on quality of life outcomes. However, they do explain that this could be attributable to the nature of the travel scheme, a short two to three day trip. This study demonstrates the difficulties faced by researchers in demonstrating unequivocally the links between holiday participation and long-term psychological outcomes. Other studies have suggested that the contribution of vacations to a person's quality of life varies throughout the life-course, depending on life events and family circumstances and the implications for social tourism (Randle, Zhang & Dolnicar 2019).

Policy studies

Research in this aspect has considered development issues and social tourism's role in destination or national tourism policy development. Examples here include an analysis of social tourism as a policy instrument in south Africa (Adinolfi & Ivanovic 2015), or the scope for social tourism to contribute towards localized rural development in Mexico (Moreno & Villareal 2017). Some specifically link social tourism to social and welfare policy, such as those based in the U.K. where social tourism is not publicly funded, but dependent on many small charities (Hazel 2005; Minnaert, Maitland & Miller 2009; Hunter-Jones 2011). Other research has examined

the policy context for social tourism or has compared systems of social tourism implementation. Diekmann and McCabe (2011) compared diverse systems of social tourism within Europe to highlight how challenging it would be to develop a more integrated approach in line with E.U. policy at the time. The authors also pointed out how the policy discourse on social tourism within the E.U. had shifted from a social orientation to one dominated by commercial and economic considerations under the guise of a sustainability agenda. Choi (2014) compares social tourism policy development in Korea with the E.U.

Griffin and Stacey (2011) assess the policy considerations for tourism for all in Ireland and how it may enhance sustainability in the tourism sector. Very few studies have examined the supply side perspective on social tourism and especially, the range of products provided and how these need to reflect the circumstances of beneficiaries, for example travel inexperience and lack of confidence and skills in navigating tourism experience (Minnaert 2014). Minnaert's study shows the importance of matching products to the circumstances of tourists, providing policy considerations. Other policy related research has drawn links between social tourism as a stimulus tool to strengthen sustainability in the tourism economy, especially in countries that are highly dependent on the sector, such as Spain (Cisneros-Martínez et al., 2018). Kakoudakis & McCabe (2018) assess the potential that social tourism could contribute to a more sustainable tourism sector in Greece, particularly in the context of the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, which severely affected Greece's economy. Sonuç & Oral (2017) assess the potential for social tourism to contribute to Turkey's sustainable tourism agenda. Some policy studies are directed at specific types of user. Schenkel (2018) assesses the transition of Argentina's social tourism policy from welfare orientation towards the economic imperative (noted previously in Europe) through a policy analysis. Notable is the work on access and tourism policy for people with disabilities in England (Shaw, Veitch & Coles 2005). Others have examined the contribution of social tourism towards social inclusion for people with disabilities (Kastenholz, Eusébio & Figueiredo 2015), or have detailed the programs of state provision as case studies, such as the Czech Republic (Kouřilová & Kratochvílová 2014).

Conceptual studies

A relatively smaller subset of papers could be classified as conceptual approaches as they aim to assess theoretical aspects of social tourism. Minnaert, Maitland and Miller (2006, 2011) trace the ethical and moral philosophy context for social tourism development in the Western liberal democracies, situating different approaches to social tourism in ethical approaches to social welfare. Treatises on the role of social tourism in the context of the global tourism system are not common, but there are a few. Firstly, Ryan (2002) discussed social tourism amongst a range of 'new', sustainable tourism alternatives to mass tourism that were proposed in debates on the future of tourism at the turn of the Millennium. Ryan's main thesis was that proposed restrictions to ensure greater sustainability, in addition to policies designed to encourage greater access, such as social tourism, would require too much market intervention, and thus, would limit the prospects for a competitive global industry. Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) identifies social tourism as one amongst a range of policy mechanisms that could be deployed to engender a more balanced tourism sector in the wake of the covid-19 pandemic and the effects on the sector globally as a consequence of restrictions to travel.

Historical analyses

A further group of studies provide historical analyses of social tourism. Some articles have charted the early development of social tourism as rooted in the industrialization processes in countries such as the U.K. and linked to socio-political processes (Walton 2015). Papadogiannis (2016) charts the changing nature of the Youth Hostels Association in Germany through the period of unification towards a commercialized orientation. Belanger and Jolin (2011) provided an analysis of the progress made by the International Organisation for Social Tourism in its lobbying and policy development activities towards equitable tourism for all. Other studies mapped the evolution of early forms of social tourism for health and education amongst disadvantaged children in Latin America (Bruno 2015). There are a number of papers which deal with social tourism practices in former Eastern Bloc countries such as (the then) Czechoslovakia (Tchoukarine 2016), Russia (Burns 1998), and its transition to a democracy (Latyshev 2018). Others have assessed how social tourism was one of the most conspicuous mechanisms of social control of leisure time and activities by the state in fascist dictatorships in Spain and Portugal (Lanero Táboas 2019). Social tourism was used as a means to gain popularity of the regimes and whilst access to previously excluded leisure forms was provided to enable mass consumption, that laid the foundations for the development of the tourism industry in the Iberian peninsula that we recognize today, that also served the purposes of the state propaganda machine.

Evolutionary trends in the last ten years

To chart the evolution of social tourism research over the most recent 10 year period, we used the keywords timeline to present a visualisation of how the prominent themes have evolved over time (Chen et al., 2014). We chose not to use this analysis over the entire 50 year period due to the low numbers of papers published in previous decades. Shown in Fig. 2, the analysis revealed eight clusters, with experiencing social exclusion, wellbeing research, social inclusion, social tourism funding (descriptions of arrangements etc.), social capital, unplanned learning, senior tourist, life satisfaction, and social policy in order of frequency. Each cluster label represents the keyword which has higher centrality than the others on the same line. Fig. 2 shows firstly, that the numbers of articles and keywords has expanded rapidly over this period. The solid lines represent the continuity of clusters of keywords during the period shown. Hence social inclusion and exclusion, which of course are related, have been continuous themes of social tourism research over the entire duration of the timeline. Noticeable is the importance of wellbeing as an outcome of social tourism initiatives. The cluster here connects life satisfaction and subjective wellbeing in the earlier part of the timeline and more nuanced aspects of physical and mental health, developmental aspects of wellbeing, such as eudemonia and autonomy later on. Dotted lines show the periods of time where no keywords appear in that cluster in papers on social tourism. For example, there were no keywords used in the senior tourism

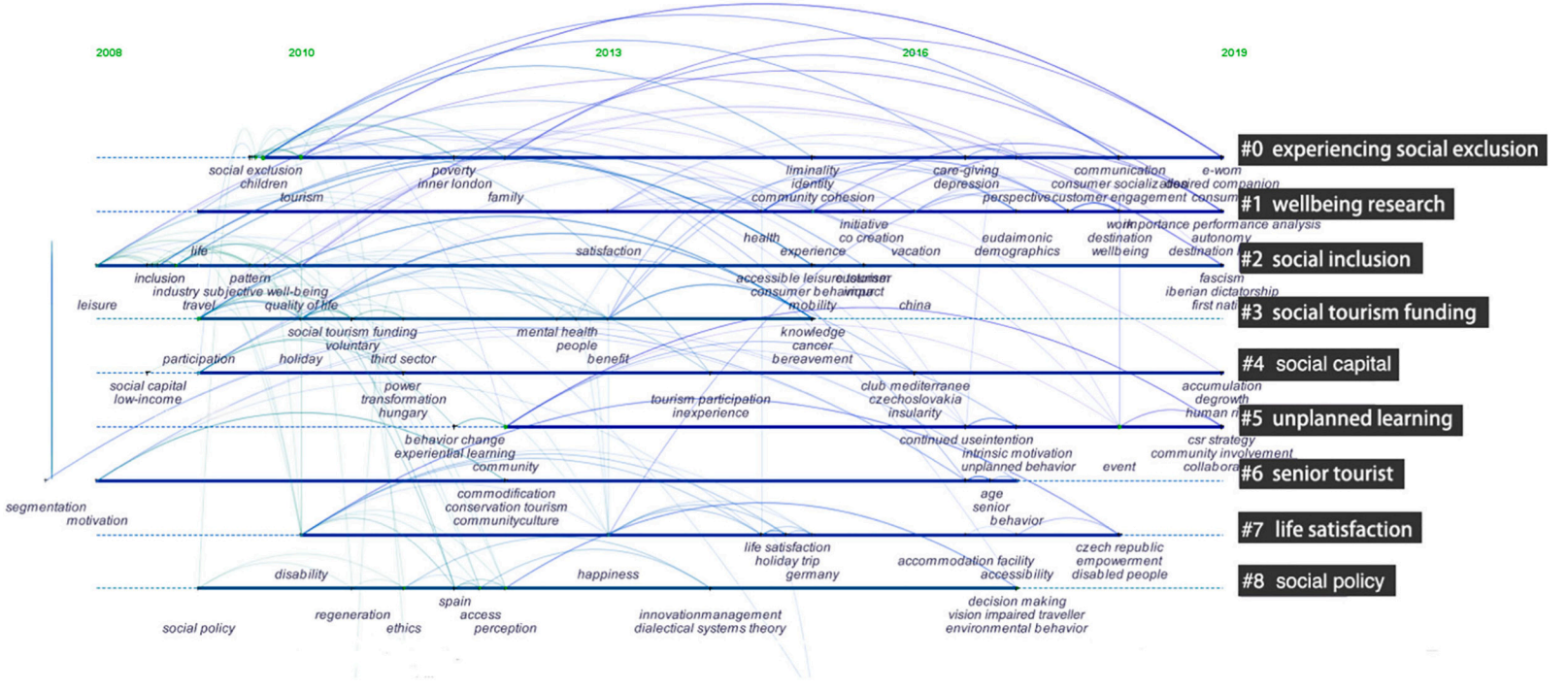

Fig. 2. Evolutionary trends in social tourism 2009–2019.

cluster between 2016 and 2019. The timeline analysis indicates years the results of keywords in a cluster began to increase, as well as decline.

At the general level, we note that early studies tended to focus on the types of people affected and their situational context in terms of social exclusion. Issues of social inclusion are connected to policies and positive outcomes for individuals, such as life satisfaction and wellbeing. These could be considered the theoretical foundations on which social tourism research is built. The middle period of the timeline shows evidence of an increasing focus on personal experiences and outcomes associated with participation in tourism amongst various groups, and a more granular understanding of the personal and social benefits. As the numbers of research articles increased towards the latter stages of the period, research becomes more sophisticated in terms of range of topics, thrust of the research and a widening of the areas of focus to include policy, supply side and destination factors, a wider range of disciplinary and methodological approaches.

Thus, in 2009–2010, studies focused on different social groups, such as people with disabilities, children and low-income families and the benefits provided by social tourism. These emphasized 'social capital' and other issues associated with people living on 'low incomes', including the social policy implications of a lack of access to tourism opportunities, and aspects of social exclusion. From 2011 to 2013, there was a general shift towards studies that were more focused on 'quality of life', happiness, subjective wellbeing, and satisfaction with life, in the context of mental health and other positive outcomes of social tourism participation. From 2014 to 2016 a continued focus on the demand side of social tourism is in evidence, with ' tourism participation', 'learning', 'experience', 'accessible leisure', 'vision impairments' all showing a more general shift from outcomes to experiences, either of daily life and situations, or of social tourism initiatives/programs. In the most recent period, studies have begun to broaden out to include supply side issues, and 'accessible' tourism has become more strongly linked to social tourism. Accessibility is a topic of research independently of social tourism, so this is important that links between accessibility research and social tourism are beginning to emerge. Additional developments include an emphasis on consumers and consumption, Corporate Social Responsibility, community involvement, and destinations. This is important since it corresponds with the shift in policy emphasis driving social tourism from social inclusion to economic sustainability and a market-based approach, and which is also reflected in the changing focus of the remit of the International Social Tourism Organization to include responsible and sustainable ideals (https://isto.international/).

Theoretical connections in social tourism

Having analyzed the focus of research articles in the field, we now turn to examine the connective theoretical tissue that underpins social tourism. The purpose here is to identify concepts and approaches from leisure and tourism studies that connect and inform the conceptual basis of social tourism.

Self-determination, choice and constraints

The early research on the psychology and sociology of tourism had conceived it as self-determined, free choice activity, which led to an enduring focus on hedonic motivations, experience dimensions and choice processes of tourists (see Cohen, 1979; Crompton, 1979). This lacked a grounding in social-psychological theory on the interaction between individual choices, social context and the nature of constraints. Yet, researchers in leisure and recreation studies had already begun to try to understand why some people did not participate in opportunities both at the general level and also from the context of specific activities. They identified types of barriers and examined the interaction between different factors that might explain a lack of interest or inability to access or participate in leisure (Godbey, 1985; McGuire, 1984; Searle & Jackson, 1985). This research was in part driven by an appreciation that price, or economic factors, were not necessarily the primary barriers to participation in (sometimes low cost) leisure and recreation and that other factors, such as time, facilities and awareness and interest were also important considerations. Whereas, tourism consumption, as an infrequently purchased and substantial item of household discretionary spend, was assumed to be determined largely by economic factors.

Tourism, as a type of leisure, is deemed to be consistent with self-directed, autonomous and non-deterministic (Pearce, 1982) activity, and hence governed by freedom of choice and personal control. Yet much of the early research in tourism failed to acknowledge that leisure choices are not made in completely idealistic conditions necessary for self-determination (Iso-Ahola, 1980) and therefore, that choices are rarely completely unconstrained. Acknowledgement that unconstrained self-determination is rarely possible in any tourism choice contexts (but is especially prevalent amongst low-income groups) provides important implications for the development of research on social tourism. Smith (1987) was the first to apply ideas from leisure studies on barriers that might affect people with disabilities to participate in tourism. He argued that barriers amongst this group are dynamic and contextual and could be categorized as; internal, such as lack of knowledge (information being a key facilitator for this group), health-related or social issues. Secondly, were environmental barriers, such as physical infrastructure, and finally, interactive barriers, including communication.

Recognizing the prevalence of some forms of barriers interacting with free choice decisions, research in leisure and recreation constraints developed rapidly into a theory of 'constraint negotiation' (Crawford et al., 1991; Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Participation in a leisure or recreation activity might indicate that individuals have successfully negotiated a series of constraints, such that constraints are not synonymous with non-participation (Gilbert & Hudson, 2000). The theory proposes that constraints are encountered in a sequential and hierarchical process, firstly at the intrapersonal level, whereby leisure preferences are formed based on perceived skills and psychological disposition towards the activity and therefore informs their preferences (Crawford et al., 1991). Intrapersonal constraints include mental health issues such as anxiety, stress and depression and evaluations of their capabilities or skills to be able to

participate. These types of issues have been found to be important challenges faced by people supported by social tourism programs (e.g. McCabe 2009). Successful negotiation of the intrapersonal constraints may also interact with interpersonal constraints, the availability of significant others with whom to participate in the activity. Finally, once these two types of constraint have been successfully negotiated, structural barriers, those that intervene between the initial preferences and actual participation may come into play, including economic resources, access, time and availability. These, as we know are the main proximal barriers to participation, which have been explored in some depth in tourism research.

Whilst some early tourism researchers did acknowledge differences in behavior patterns and potential barriers to participation (e.g. Mayo & Jarvis, 1985), the majority of research during the 1980s and 90s focused on qualifying and quantifying types and forms of motivations for tourism, with only three major contributions on issues of constraints to tourism. Firstly, Blazey (1987) conducted a study on differences between older travelers and non-travelers in a senior tourism program. Secondly, a small, qualitative study of non-travel amongst Norwegians (Haukeland, 1990) and, third, a short analysis of the issue of non-participation amongst U.K. consumers, and the charitable systems of support available at the time (Hughes, 1991). Whilst the perspectives of each were very different, the common denominator was the application of constraints theory developed in the leisure and recreation fields. Subsequently, there has been much significant research that has mapped the nature of travel constraints across a number of different groups and dimensions (c.f. Fleischer & Pizam, 2002). One area of related research that has examined barriers and constraints in detail is in the field of accessible tourism. A range of studies have assessed the types of barriers faced by people with disabilities that go far beyond access or infrastructure or information issues (e.g. Yau et al., 2004).

However, there has been quite limited application of constraints negotiation theory in either the mainstream tourism research field or directly in social tourism research with some exceptions (e.g. Kazeminia et al., 2015; Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008). Feminist perspectives on gendered leisure surfaced to challenge and account for the specific issues around access to, quality and experience of, leisure for women, such as self-determination and time constraints (Deem, 1996). Yet, quite limited research has addressed gender differences in the ways that constraints are negotiated (Hudson, 2000), particularly in sport and adventure settings (Doran, 2016). Other research has focused on the constraint negotiation process for older people, (Huber et al., 2018). This is perhaps unsurprising given that older people are more likely to have or develop some form of disability since aging is accompanied by physical, psychological and social changes. However, Huber et al. (2018) argue that in addition to the weak association between experience of constraints and non-participation, a lack of constraints does not necessarily lead to participation. Hence, facilitators are also important in encouraging individuals into leisure activities by helping them to form preferences. The authors propose Ecological Systems Theory as a mechanism to take a dynamic perspective on older individual's life-course events within the context of their social and personal situations. Thus, intra and interpersonal and structural constraints interact with facilitators in a micro and macro-level system. Whilst this current paper does not necessarily adopt that position, the notion of facilitators becomes critical in social tourism since the purpose of social support schemes is to overcome constraints through financial and/or other mechanisms.

In social tourism, it is important that we gain a deeper understanding of individual preferences for a variety of reasons. In some contexts, whereby exposure to tourism opportunities is extremely limited or non-existent (e.g. children who have had no prior experience of tourism), individuals may be unaware of the benefits of travel and experiencing new places/opportunities. For these groups, facilitation may be required to inform and educate them to develop preferences for tourism. In other contexts, whereby the needs of different disadvantaged groups are highly diverse, understanding of preferences for types of tourism, length of stay and activities is important to ensure that the best outcomes ensue from the provision of services and experiences. It is important that we recognize the types of constraints faced, which can be extremely diverse between the main target groups of social tourism programs, but crucially, also to understand how constraints can be effectively negotiated. Depending on the type of system of social tourism support available and welfare policies in place, choices may also be constrained by available supply (in the low or shoulder seasons, domestic breaks, and quality levels). Finally, detractors of social tourism policy argue that there is no role for the state in interfering in individual's choices in how they spend their free time. This argument fails to account for how constraints interact with choice contexts, specifically amongst those with multiple or high levels of constraints. Whilst constraint negotiation theory is not without criticism (Godbey et al., 2010), it does offer an anchor in social psychological theory on how preferences are formed, and choices influenced by both internal and situational factors. Overall, the application of constraints negotiation remains very limited in tourism (Wen et al., 2020) and yet the interaction between constraints negotiation and the application of facilitators in understanding the contexts and behaviors of non-participants in tourism offers great potential.

Outcomes based approaches

One of the most consistent areas of social tourism research has been on the positive outcomes associated with the provision of services or programs. This may be necessary due to requirements to justify public funding or to link outcomes to wider social objectives (Minnaert, Maitland & Miller 2009). Outcomes based approaches are widely applied in education and in the assessment of performance management in public administration (Heinrich, 2002). However, in leisure and tourism, this has been translated to the level of the individual and the attainment of goals or satisfaction with experience (Sirgy 2010). In this sense, in the context of general tourism research, outcomes are strongly associated with self-determination, motivation and choice as discussed above. Sirgy argues that much research in tourism has focused on satisfaction as the main mechanism to understand outcomes from tourist experiences, which consistent with debates in social psychology and personality theory, has argued for the efficacy of interactive theories including both situational and personal dimensions. These include expectancy confirmation, norms, equity and self-congruity approaches.

Sirgy proposed a theory of tourism and leisure satisfaction, applying principles from goal theory to elaborate a theoretical link between goal attainment and positive satisfaction as an outcome. This was specified in terms of concrete vs abstract goals, goals related

to basic vs growth needs, avoidance vs seeking dimensions, goals related to deprived needs, flow and autonomy goals. A second dimension of Sirgy's proposed theory was the expectancy principle. The argument ran that individuals are more likely to be happier if they select goals that they have a good chance of attaining. Finally, the attainment of goals is made possible through goal implementation strategies, which essentially are mechanisms that allow for the translation of abstract or fuzzy goals into concrete actions, travel choices.

In social tourism research as we have shown, the very high degree of focus on outcomes has been effective in highlighting the efficacy of the programs in terms of satisfaction or short-term effects on happiness, life satisfaction and wellbeing/quality of life (Mélon, Agrigoroaei, Diekmann, & Luminet, 2018). However, the research to date has been largely applied and contextual in character, in that it has sought to apply established measures of quality of life and subjective wellbeing to demonstrate the effects of a holiday on subjective perceptions of positive outcomes, relative to the wellbeing levels of the general population (McCabe & Johnson 2013), or to examine the wellbeing effects on a particular user group, such as first nation communities (Pyke et al. 2019). Another approach has been to assess motivations of social tourists in applying for schemes and programs of financial support (e.g. Carneiro, Eusébio, Kastenholz, & Alvelos 2017). However, there have been no attempts yet at understanding goal behavior of social tourists. This is an important omission (both in the general tourism literature and in social tourism) since studies on motivation for travel are limited in how far they can account for actual behavior, and satisfactory outcomes.

Indeed, studies such as Park et al. (2018) found that social tourist's satisfaction with their holiday could be biased towards positive evaluations as a factor of the financial support received. Additionally, social tourists' general level of subjective wellbeing is often at the lowest end of the spectrum in the community, due to their disadvantaged circumstances (McCabe & Johnson 2013). Similarly, the study of social tourist's goals and outcomes may need to take account of the impact of principles underpinning goal theory. For example, social tourists may be driven by 'seeking' goals (a momentary escape from difficult daily life circumstances), as much as 'avoidance' of difficult daily life circumstances. Their goals may be characterized as concrete and basic needs as opposed to abstract and growth needs, and yet satisfaction levels could be very high as a result. Sirgy proposes that higher levels of tourist satisfaction should be linked to selection of abstract, or high-level, and growth oriented (long-term, developmental) needs. Likewise, in many social tourism contexts where provision is targeted at specific, disadvantaged groups, rather than a universal benefit, users are deprived of opportunity and resources to participate unless in receipt of social support, such that they are likely to suffer from higher levels of need deprivation than general tourists. This might be expected to produce very high returns in satisfaction with the holiday, but may not translate into satisfaction with life in general since the daily life circumstances are not (directly) affected by the holiday (as found by McCabe and Johnson (2013), where limited effects on various domains of subjective wellbeing were evidenced as a result of the holiday). Alternatively, their general mental state might only be slightly improved by a short, basic holiday. The evaluation of tourist outcomes and the application of an evidence-based or outcomes-based approach to social tourism is rather unique in tourism studies and is useful in justifying social support for social tourism initiatives. Yet studies on the wellbeing outcomes for social tourist's is piecemeal and lacks systematic and comparative analysis.

In order to better understand the role that tourism plays in individual's lives and thus its role in wider society, further research is needed on goal-driven behavior and the links between holiday-making on personal outcomes in the long-term, as opposed to short-term effects. In order to do so, outcome measures and evaluation criteria need to be developed that go beyond standard approaches used to date on wellbeing and quality of life, and are more clearly embedded in the characteristics of tourism experiences, such as experience of novel environments and greater range of social interactions between people. Additionally, further research is required on the interaction between goals and outcomes that provides a deeper understanding of the context for positive outcomes from tourism experiences. Nilsson (2002) argued for this in relation to host-guest interactions in farm tourism, which he argued exemplified the early concept of social tourism in providing simple and cheap opportunities for people to mix and feel friendship with each other. Citing Reisinger (1994), Nillson related ideas underpinning social tourism to the 'contact' hypothesis, which argues that interaction between different cultures creates pathways to greater understanding between cultures, and thereby diminishes the risk of prejudices, conflicts, and tensions. Whilst social tourism is predominantly domestic tourism, interactions with people from different regions and in different environments to one's habitual community, may lead to a reevaluation of a disadvantaged person's life situation (McCabe 2009). Longitudinal studies, life-course analysis (Shaw et al., 2016), and mixed methods approaches are needed to build on existing quantitative approaches to understanding motivations and outcomes not only from social tourism but also other forms of tourism. This is particularly important if tourism is to recover from the current Covid-19 pandemic in a more values-based manner.

Distributive justice

One major rationale for social tourism as welfare policy or a goal of society, is the idea of equality of access to opportunity for everyone in a society, otherwise known as distributive justice. A detailed review of the traditions in moral philosophy is beyond the scope of the current paper, (c.f. Jamal & Camargo's, 2014 insightful summary). Instead, the main reference point for this debate is Rawls' (1972) depiction of social justice, which has influenced policy making and political philosophy for over a half a century. Rawls defined justice in terms of 'fairness' and defined the source of legitimate power for the state, if applied appropriately. Rawls' theory is based on the idea that citizens should be free and equal and that society should be fair, and he proposed that the justice as fairness principle offers a superior conceptualization of justice than utilitarianism (decisions are taken to produce the best outcomes for the greatest number of people in society, knowing that some will not benefit). Rawls argued that in a free and fair society, everyone is deemed to be born equal, and therefore no one is assumed to be more or less entitled to benefits of social cooperation due to their characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, class etc. Once that is established, Rawls proposed a distributive thesis based on equity. This

entails that social goods should be distributed equally unless unequal distribution would benefit everyone, but especially the worst off in society. This last point is called the difference principle.

Thus, Rawls' (1972) first principle states that everyone in a society has the same rights to access basic liberties. We can see that this principle is translated into article 7 of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO, 1999). This concerns the Rights to Tourism: "The universal right to tourism must be regarded as the corollary of the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, guaranteed by Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 7.d of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights." (https://www.unwto.org/global-code-of-ethics-for-tourism).

Rawls' difference principle lays the foundation for an ideally positive society, whereby all citizens understand that policy decisions are made to ensure that the economy works to everyone's benefit, and that those with natural advantages do not benefit at the expense of those least-advantaged members of the society. This idea directly maps onto article 7 of the Global code of Ethics for Tourism, when social tourism is conceived as action to redress inequalities through policies of distributive justice: "Social tourism, and in particular associative tourism, which facilitates widespread access to leisure, travel and holidays, should be developed with the support of the public authorities; Family, youth, student and senior tourism and tourism for people with disabilities, should be encouraged and facilitated." (UNWTO, 1999).

The notion of the Rights to Tourism has been discussed in the context of social tourism (McCabe & Diekmann, 2015). Not entirely grounded in ideals of distributive justice, but also incorporating a wider "human dimension of tourism" the UNWTO and E.U. have both sought to establish a framework for the incorporation of rights to tourism within the scope of human rights and international law (McCabe et al., 2018). This has been more successful where it concerns the human rights of people with disabilities and the entitlements that has driven the agenda for accessible and inclusive tourism to guarantee them, although there is still a long way to go before truly accessible tourism is established in law and in practice (Darcy & Dickson, 2009). Yet, there are very great variations in the ways that the Global Code of Ethics and other instruments have been applied in enshrining social tourism principles or ideas of distributive justice through tourism into practice and policy.

Minnaert et al. (2007) outline the ethical foundations underpinning different approaches to welfare societies as a way to account for the differences in policies on social tourism within a European perspective. Christian ethics for example, which underpins some western European democracies, stresses preferential love for the poor and disadvantaged in society, and Christian organizations are still involved in large-scale social tourism provision across the world for the elderly, people with terminal or chronic illness, children, people with disabilities and so on. This is contrasted with utilitarianism, which does not stress this duty of care towards disadvantaged strata in society and is concerned for individuals' autonomy. The role of the state here is not to interfere with people's choices and this translates into policies that disfavor social tourism provision.

However, there has been only limited application of ideas of distributive justice in tourism theory and research (Higgins-Desbiolles 2011). The key early reference work in this space is Hultsman (1995), who proposed an ethical framework for tourism services that was based on principles of moral philosophy and ethics, principally in the idea of placing limits on human's behavior to preserve the environment. Essentially, a humanist approach to tourism phenomena (as opposed to economic), what Hultsman (1995) called 'just' tourism, is necessary to allow tourists to "find meaning in and derive benefits from activities in which they engage" (560). In this way, tourism services would be developed in a principled way, with ethicality. Whilst Hultsman did not explicitly mention social tourism, it is notable that he referred to the Bureau Internationale du Tourisme Sociale (or BITS, which later became the International Social Tourism Organization) which was lobbying for ecological fairness and development in association with social tourism even at that time.

A values-based approach has subsequently been advocated within the Critical Tourism Studies agenda, and particularly relevant for social tourism is the idea of a 'hopeful' approach to tourism issues (Pritchard et al., 2011). In calling for a 'regime change' in approaches and ideologies to thinking on and about tourism, a hopeful tourism was driven by a growing set of ideas and individuals who rejected the ideologies of patriarchy and neoliberalism and this would shed new light on what was previously marginalized, oppressed and unrecognized. However, this was largely translated as an approach to knowledge production and failed to specify what a values-led and ethics-driven tourism practice would comprise, beyond the identification of relevant issues such as disability, social justice, class, quality of life and fulfilment. And yet, some research has been done within this approach on subjects (people with disabilities, older people's experiences) that do link to social tourism. The fact that social tourism has not been recognized explicitly within the areas of interest to critical tourism studies is perhaps symptomatic of this focus on alternative approaches and worldviews, whereas social tourism research seems more firmly rooted within conventional social science thinking. Perhaps another explanation is the shift taken towards economic policy and sustainability identified earlier. Much greater research is needed on an understanding of the way in which social tourism is considered in terms of notions of justice, policy-making and citizenship rights. There is little research that has systematically analyzed policy and the underpinning values of social tourism. Detailed research on the role of human-centered ethics in tourism from the perspective of tourists as opposed to their effects on host communities and the ecology, would provide a better understanding of the relationships between tourism and notions of citizenship, inclusion and justice.

Conclusions

Towards a model of tourism as welfare

In conclusion, we address what can we learn from the field of social tourism research that can be useful for future studies beyond the confines of the field itself. The aim of this review article was to evaluate the range of published research in social tourism, outline its

historical evolution and theoretical basis. The review highlights that research in social tourism is at an early and emergent stage. It has progressed from descriptions, case studies and explorations of its background to become an evolving and theoretically rich field. The contributions made in research on positive health, quality of life and subjective wellbeing outcomes for social tourists have undoubtedly influenced wider research on tourism's role in positive psychological outcomes. This is despite inconsistent results, small samples and lack of comparisons, which are exacerbated by the complexity and diversity of different systems of operation globally. Qualitative research in social tourism has highlighted that disadvantaged members of a society gain important and meaningful experiences from supported social tourism initiatives, such as family bonding, quality time spent together, increased leisure time, better mental and physical health, opportunities for new experiences, and relaxation and recuperation. These positive outcomes reemphasize the distinct role that tourism plays from other forms of leisure in providing opportunities for personal growth and development, balance leisure activities as opposed to everyday leisure, its function in family and social relationships and having specific benefits for different users, low-income families, children and young people, people with disabilities and older people.

Social tourism has been described as tourism that has a higher moral value (Minnaert, Maitland & Miller 2007). In developed societies, social tourism can be a useful policy tool to help government's work towards greater equality in fair access to full citizenship rights and social inclusion, offers potential cost savings, since a happier and more equal society reduces the need for social support, healthcare services and so on. Finally, social tourism can be highly effective as a stimulus to the domestic tourism economy, contributing to greater sustainability and resilience in the sector, particularly important in the current pandemic, which is posing a severe threat to the tourism and hospitality sectors in many nations across the globe. Accordingly, Fig. 3 proposes a 'tourism as welfare' model.

The antecedent for this model is Coalter's (1986) idea of 'recreation as welfare'. Coalter argued that governments would be much more interested in ideas of recreation as welfare as opposed to 'recreational welfare'. In other words, rather than trying to propose that tourism is of such intrinsic value that the state should put in place policies to remove constraints to access and actively put in place measures to ensure that everyone in society has an opportunity to participate, we should consider tourism as a remedy to urgent social problems, such as poor levels of overall happiness and satisfaction in life caused by mental health issues, social isolation, poor educational experience, and a range of other current social issues(Botterill and Klemm, 2006). These are all particularly apposite as we look ahead to the long-term consequences of the restrictions on mobility and social life put in place to help mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus global pandemic. A tourism as welfare approach reorients policy on tourism as a conduit to a fairer and happier society, that through the application of a stimulus approach, also facilities economic returns in the domestic tourism market, leads to a more sustainable domestic tourism economy, whilst contributing to the conditions for a fairer and more equal society. Taking a welfare

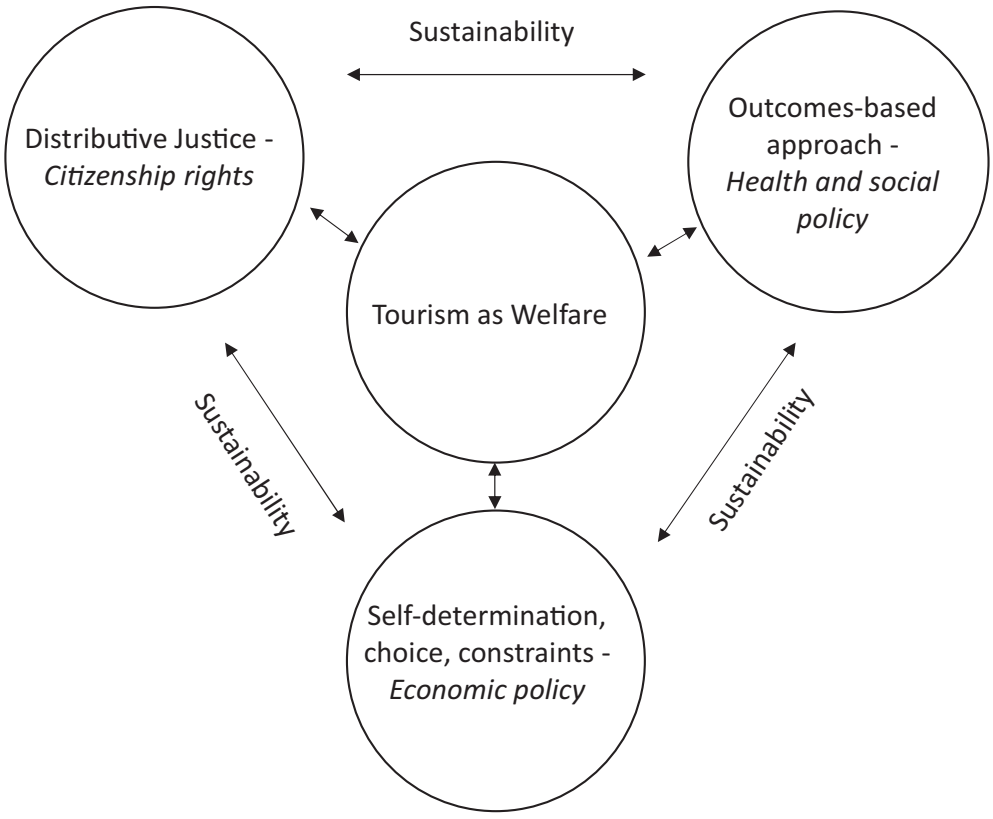

Fig. 3. A 'tourism as welfare' model.

perspective to tourism necessitates going beyond social tourism and its narrow application in specific user groups, to consider 'tourism for all'. However, such an approach would need to identify and prioritize excluded and disadvantaged members of society to ensure fair opportunity of access in a carefully coordinated, policy driven approach. It is in this way that social tourism can help contribute to a meaningful debate on tourism's role in modern societies, which it is hoped this Curated Collection contributes towards.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicting interests to declare in the production of this article.

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