JULIO ARAMBERRI

**TWO AND A HALF FOUNDING MYTHS IN TOURISM RESEARCH**

Like other social sciences, the study of tourism has its own specific myths that provide the foundation for its research and its beliefs as well as for its fads. Like in other social sciences, tourism academics often accept those “explanations” or “theories” that, for different reasons, have successfully found a following. Like in other social sciences, those founding myths are often accepted in an uncritical way.

The two main founding myths in tourism research are tourism as a search for “authenticity” and tourism as an opportunity for “liberation” from the strictures of ordinary life or, by other name, of work. These two myths are often accepted as legal tender and their legitimacy often goes unexamined. This presentation will show that, if taken seriously, “authenticity” and “liberation” are strange bedfellows that cannot share the same cot.

This is, however, ignored by the other fundamental half-myth accepted by many academics—that tourism might become an authentic and liberating experience were it not for its rampant commodification. This latter concept unfortunately turns out to be an oxymoron that can only reconcile its extremes by ignoring their conceptual and historical strictures.

**KEYWORDS:** authenticity, liberation, commodities fetishism, commodification, high-brow, normativism.