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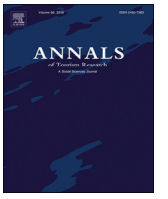

Research note

Bridging the global-local animal-based tourism divide

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Introduction

Current research on the use of animals in tourism points to a range of negative impacts. For example, Moorhouse et al. (2015) and Moorhouse et al. (2017) argue that tourists often do not understand their impacts on wildlife, are easily influenced by staff and other tourists, and by the misrepresentation of ethical standards in promotional materials. The industry's response is to gain competitive advantage by committing to principles of animal welfare in being more responsible. Booking.com (2022), for example, will not work with partners that support animal performances, animal fighting, animal racing, hunting, and wild animal rides (e.g., elephants).

Nevertheless, even with these changing practices, deep-seated issues still prevent the realisation of a better life for animals used in tourism. Many of these issues are culturally and politically embedded between what global institutions value and the values of local operators. For example, Duffy and Moore (2011) note that global governance influencers (e.g., Non-Governmental Organisations) wish to shift power away from host nations and into the hands of international power brokers. von Essen et al. (2020) concluded that cultural relativism is a problem in the treatment of animals in tourism, but so is the imposition of universal standards. Changes they recommend include new animal welfare legislation, best practice guidelines, certification and codes of conduct, better-educated tourists, and research on cultural differences.

Correspondingly, a gap exists between global principles and local cultural practices in animal-based tourism that eventuate in the failure to protect the interests and welfare of animals. In attending to this problem, I adapt Donaldson and Dunfee's (1994, 1999) Integrative Social Contracts Theory. Integrative Social Contracts Theory is a widely accepted business ethics model that supports a localised micro-social contract for regions to continue their practices, as long as they do not violate a global macro social contract. The first section of this research note explains the central tenets of Integrative Social Contracts Theory, while the second identifies several hypernorms that may be used to initiate new empirical studies on animal-based tourism using Integrative Social Contracts Theory.

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Integrative Social Contracts Theory

As global corporations strive to enhance their reputations through corporate social responsibility, issues persist regarding the assimilation of host culture ethical standards with those of the corporation. According to Carroll (2004), it makes little sense for corporations to adopt local customs and norms (moral relativism) because many countries do not have robust ethical standards. Central to Carroll's thesis is how best to reconcile "home-country and host-country ethical standards such that international business ethics moves toward universal ethical standards or norms" (p. 119).

Malloy and Fennell (1998) provided an early foray into ecotourism and corporate social responsibility by identifying distinct stages in the ethical evolution of organisations. First, a free-market philosophy of capitalism supports an "ours-for-the-taking" perspective on natural assets. A second socio-bureaucratic ecotourism culture stage advances beyond the market culture by respecting organisational policy and embracing local customs and norms. However, a "When in Rome do as the Romans do" philosophy is complicated as local customs may not be ethical in the interests of local stakeholders or the global community. In the final stage, the principled ecotourism culture operates according to local and regional laws, codes and norms but within a culture based on ecologically sound and universally just practices.

A framework that adds weight to the observations of Carroll (2004) and Malloy and Fennell (1998) is Donaldson and Dunfee's (1994, 1999) Integrative Social Contracts Theory. Donaldson and Dunfee (1999) argue that many global corporations adopt the cultural practices of host countries, but this is a mistake because it exposes the corporation to corruption and public relations disasters. The strength of Integrative Social Contracts Theory is that it creates moral tension between universal and local community norms, which should be an everyday aspect of doing business (Carroll, 2004). Furthermore, Integrative Social Contracts Theory is pluralistic in its orientation, not relativistic, because it tolerates local customs, traditions and practices through the concept of moral free space immersed in a broader social contract. The primary characteristics of Integrative Social Contracts Theory are as follows (Fig. 1):

> Hypernorms are "principles so fundamental that, by definition, they serve to evaluate lower-order norms, reaching to the root of what is ethical for humanity. They represent norms by which all others are to be judged" (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999, p. 46).

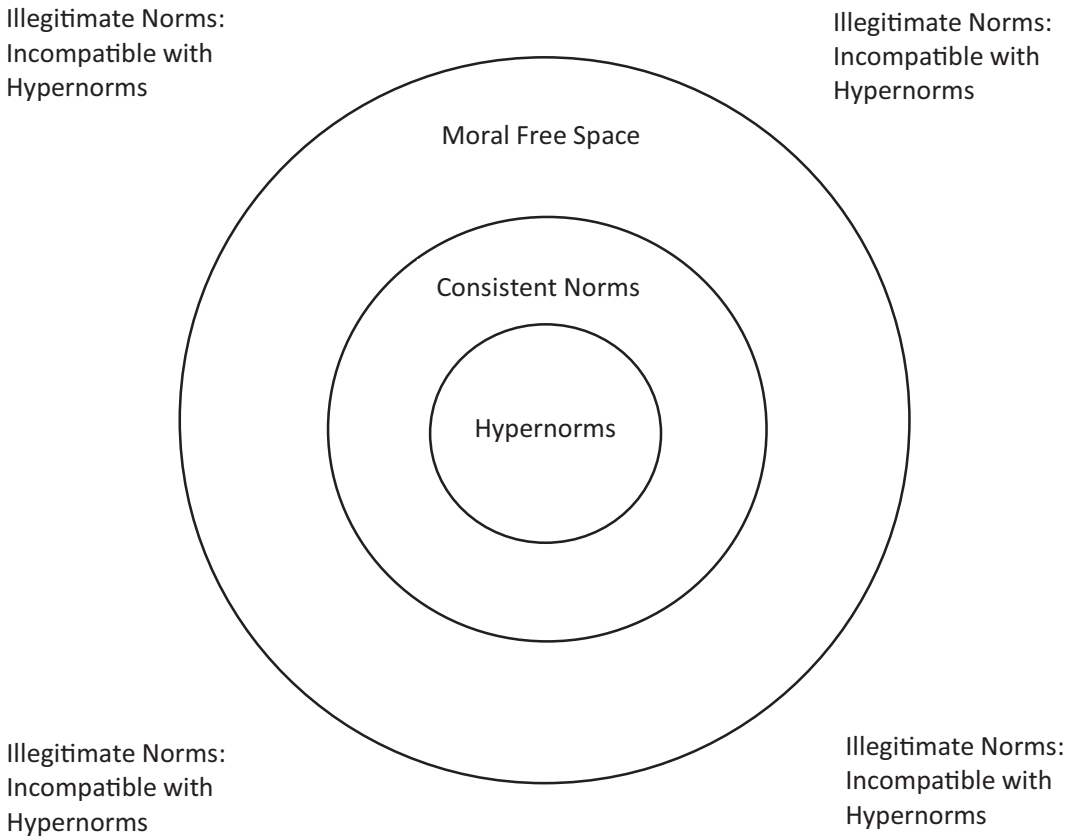

Fig. 1. Categories of authentic global norms under Integrative Social Contracts Theory.
Source: Donaldson and Dunfee (1999).

Consistent norms: More culturally specific values than those at the centre but are *consistent with hypernorms and other legitimate norms*, including those of other economic cultures. For example, most corporations' ethical codes and vision-value statements would fall within this circle (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999, pp. 52–53).

Moral free space: Norms that are inconsistent with at least some other legitimate norms existing in other economic cultures. These norms can be in mild tension with hypernorms, even as they are compatible. Moreover, they often express unique but firmly held cultural beliefs (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999, p. 53).

Illegitimate norms: Incompatible with hypernorms. When values or practices reach a point where they transgress permissible limits, they fall outside the circle and into the "incompatible" zone, e.g., exposing workers to excessive levels of carcinogens (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999, p. 53).

Integrative Social Contracts Theory and animal-based tourism

Fennell (2018) provided an initial application of Integrative Social Contracts Theory in tourism by conceptualising several key hypernorms, including altruism, recognition, education, autonomy/rights, justice, respect, and sustainability (see also Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013). These hypernorms are adapted here, based on new research on animal ethics and tourism, to address persistent cross-cultural problems in the use of animals in tourism. (Consistent norms and illegitimate norms would surface through the application of Integrative Social Contracts Theory at specific animal-based tourism attractions.) Hypernorms for animal-based tourism include:

1. The pinnacle of practice: Includes state-of-the-art theory and practice in animal tourism but also adopts knowledge and practice from tourism more broadly, as well as other disciplinary and practical domains (e.g., ethology) (see Fennell & Garrod, 2021).
2. Recognition of beneficence: Ethical operators embrace a principled organisational culture (Malloy & Fennell, 1998) or the advanced stages of corporate social responsibility identified by Carroll (2004). Operators who advance new thinking and practice should be recognised for their efforts.
3. Non-maleficence: Includes the principle of "do no harm" (von Essen et al., 2020), with particular emphasis on eliminating suffering in animals.
4. Enhance literacy and education: As tourists are largely unaware of their impacts on animals (Moorhouse et al., 2015), enhancing the literacy of all stakeholders is essential in better-educating tourists and the industry on the whole (Fennell, in press-a).
5. Justice: Commitment to an advancing state of justice involves moving away from no justice or shallow justice to deeper levels based on changing the narrative of what is sustainable and responsible in the use of animals in tourism (Fennell & Sheppard, 2020).
6. Recognise agency and self-determination: Agency is defined as "singular, intentional living beings acting on their own" (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, p. 1202). We suppress agency and self-determination in animals for purposes of commodification (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019) in asymmetrical operations regarding the value of different stakeholders (Fennell, in press-b).
7. Animal-informed consent: We should seek an adapted formulation of informed consent based on key indicative factors as proxies. Such includes detection and interpretation of emotional, cognitive, and behavioural preferences and physiological well-being as signposts for the *willingness* to participate in an activity (Fennell, in press-b).

Conclusion

Carroll (2004) argues that "the primary venue for ethical debates in the future will more and more be the world stage" (p. 114). This quote suggests that localised ethical issues—moral relativism—must be tempered in light of global-scale debates on what passes as morally right and wrong. In this vein, local cultural, religious and political practices should not be erased but ought to be scrutinised against a set of global principles. Donaldson and Dunfee's (1994, 1999) Integrative Social Contracts Theory provides a robust manner to accomplish this end, a model that has received scant attention in tourism studies to date.

Future studies should compare and contrast different animal tourism venues in different regions to uncover the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed model. Examples include an analysis of charismatic species such as pandas in China (Guo, 2021) and elephant tourism in Thailand (Rizzolo & Bradshaw, 2018). Such will entail fieldwork to directly investigate the political, economic, cultural, social, legal, and ecological conditions in which animal venues are situated. Cross-cultural investigations of this nature will indicate how much moral free space should be afforded to operators in these locations and the consistent and illegitimate norms that catalyse or constrain the interests and welfare of animals and people involved in this complex industry.

Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2022.103459.

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David A. Fennell researches mainly in the areas of ecotourism, tourism ethics, and moral issues tied to the use of animals in the tourism industry, and sustainability. A major thrust of his research involves the use of theory from other disciplines (e.g., biology, philosophy) to gain traction on many of tourism's most persistent issues and problems. Fennell is the founding Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Ecotourism*.