Tourism and Trust: Theoretical Reflections

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Abstract
Tourism researchers have increasingly, but selectively and uncritically, engaged with the notion of trust. This study therefore aims to provide a stronger theoretical foundation for understanding tourism-related trust, starting from consideration of uncertainty and the nature of tacit knowledge. The relationship between displacement and uncertainty is at the core of the distinctiveness of trust in tourism, highlighting the importance of institutions, but also recognizing the diversity of tourism contexts. Three disciplinary perspectives on trust are considered: economics, psychology, and sociology. After outlining their general characteristics in relation to McKnight and Chervany’s typology of trust, we review their application in tourism, and conclude by identifying a future research agenda to address the distinctive characteristics of trust in tourism.

Keywords
trust, uncertainty, tacit knowledge, displacement, disciplines

Introduction
Social scientists have been increasingly interested in the concept of trust as a response to incomplete knowledge (Giddens 1991) leading to uncertainty. As Lewis and Weigert (1985, p. 976) comment, “Trust begins where prediction ends,” and tourism, as with all arenas of life, is replete with uncertainty. It is not just the absence of knowledge that is important but also the types of knowledge, notably the distinction between codified (manuals, websites, databases, etc.) and tacit (personal) knowledge (Polanyi 1958). There are significant barriers to being able to express or transfer tacit knowledge (Zander and Kogut 1995): in other words, it is “ineffable” (Grant 2007, pp. 175–76) and may be latent (Agrawal 2006). This is at the heart of uncertainty and the importance of trust. The situational nature of trust poses additional challenges in tourism: it is inherently context specific and involves making decisions about, and in, places (destinations) for which the individual has limited tacit knowledge (Williams and Baláž 2015). Uncertainty therefore is related to the displacement of tourism to “other places” characterized by varying degrees of institutional difference. This uncertainty is articulated in different forms ranging from persistent concerns about safety and security, to episodic political, health, and economic events, as well as natural hazards: trust is important in all these settings.

Tourism researchers have increasingly engaged with the notion of trust, partly because of the growth of online activities. However, they have largely borrowed definitions or concepts without firmly grounding these in their diverse but specific theoretical frameworks, especially the competing perspectives of economics, psychology, and sociology (McKnight and Chervany 2001). This theoretical “disembedding” has truncated understanding of trust, while also contributing to skewing the distribution of research on trust to selective tourism contexts, particularly relationships between tourists and tourism providers.

This article has three main aims. First, it revisits the theoretical underpinnings of trust, framed by the relationships between uncertainty and different types of knowledge, while exploring the distinctive approaches of economics, psychology, and sociology: particular attention is given to how the relationship between uncertainty and displacement shapes trust in tourism. Second, it utilizes McKnight and Chervany’s (2001) typology to assess how these different disciplinary conceptualizations are selectively applied in tourism research. Third, it explores the potential for further application of different theoretical conceptualizations of trust across varied tourism contexts.

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Definitions and Distinctiveness

The importance of trust arises from the challenges posed by uncertainty. Evans and Krueger (2009, p. 1003) contend that “there are inherent risks in any social situation and we often trust that others will not attack us, tell our secrets, or break our hearts. Without the capacity to trust, we would be unable to accept these ordinary uncertainties.” Trust represents the glue that holds social life together (Luhmann 2000), and only trust allows us to develop relationships with Blau’s (2002, p. 346) “erstwhile strangers,” that is, to operate or act under conditions of uncertainty. While perception of, and decision making under conditions of, uncertainty is a matter of an individual agent, trust involves at least two parties (trustor and trustee), which invokes additional complexities, as discussed below.

Definitions of Trust

Most definitions of trusts revolve around beliefs and expectations, trusting intentions and behaviors, with broad convergence around trust as referring to vulnerability, positive expectations, and interdependence. For example, Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995, p. 712) define trust as “willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.” Rousseau et al. (1998, p. 395) similarly write that “trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another.” Most definitions refer to one or more psychological concepts, such as “confident, positive expectations” (Lewicki, Tomlinson, and Gillespie 2006, p. 994), “willingness to rely on another party” (Doney, Cannon, and Mullen 1998, p. 604), and “willingness to depend” (Gefen 2000) or to be vulnerable due to potential betrayal of the trustee by the trustee (Thielmann and Hilbig 2015, p. 252). There are variations around these central themes. For Gambetta (2000, p. 217) trust is “a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both before he can monitor such action (or independently of his capacity ever to be able to monitor it) and in a context in which it affects his own action.” Hardin (1992, p. 153), on the other hand, argues that trust is “encapsulated interest”: “You trust someone if you have adequate reason to believe it will be in that person’s interest to be trustworthy in the relevant way at the relevant time.”

This article adopts a definition that broadly follows Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) and Rousseau et al. (1998), considering trust to be a response to uncertainty involving a trustee’s willingness to accept vulnerability based on having positive expectations about the benevolence and competence of the trustee. The definition is generic and applies as much to commercial as to non-commercial relationships (e.g., between citizens, or between citizens and the state) as to tourism versus nontourism activities. It is not limited to a rational view of trust.

Looking beyond this definition, it is important to recognize that trust is a complex and multifaceted concept, and we utilize McKnight and Chervany’s (2001, p. 40) typology of trust to frame our discussion (Figure 1): this is based on “the stages” of trust origin, trust formation, and trust operation. Dispositional trust or propensity to trust (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995) is personality-based trust. It denotes general beliefs about other people (Kramer 1999, p. 575), that is, that others can be relied on across individuals and situations. Das and Teng (2004, p. 109) define the related concept of trust propensity as “one’s personal tendency to believe in others’ trustworthiness.”

Institutional trust combines conditions of structural assurance and normality of situation (McKnight and Chervany 2001, pp. 37–38). Structural assurance refers to general beliefs about protective environments and safeguards, for example, where clients of a commercial agent believe that the latter follows laws and rules that benefit clients. The expectations of situational normality are beliefs that trust environments operate “as usual.” A tourist, for example, believes that no major negative events (such as pandemics or natural disasters) will impact his or her intention to buy a travel package. The other set of trust concepts relates to specific persons
(trustees) and situations, including the trustor’s beliefs about the assumed competence, predictability, integrity, and benevolence of the trustee. Trusting beliefs (whether in the form of dispositions or expectations) result in trust intentions (“to believe or not to believe in the trustee”), and trust-related behavior. McKnight and Chervany (2001) noted that the vast majority of trust concepts and definitions concern: (a) attitudes, beliefs, and expectations; (b) intentions; and (c) behavior. This reflects the predominance of research on business, marketing, and management. There is far less research on dispositional and institutional trust. The same broad pattern is observable in tourism research on trust, discussed below.

While McKnight and Chervany’s typology frames the discussion in the article, it is also important to note Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) distinction between organic, contractual, and relational trust. Organic trust is based on absolute belief in the moral authority of an institution, requires consensus about both beliefs and moral vision, is unconditional, and results in strong social bonds. It is unlikely to occur in most forms of tourism, with the exception of religious or faith-based tourism. Contractual trust is largely instrumental, involves narrowly defined mutual performance expectations among contracting parties, with breaches being observable, and parties being held to account for these. O. E. Williamson’s (1993, p. 461) transaction costs economics emphasizes that the purposefulness of these safeguards to mitigate potential opportunistic behavior depends on “the degree to which the associated investments are cost-effective.” Contractual trust is central to most commercial tourism transactions: for example, purchases of transport services are closely regulated, with mutual expectations between passengers and carriers, and breaches are sanctioned via fines, compensation, or passengers being refused boarding. Finally, relational trust describes the extent to which there is convergence in each group’s understanding of its and the other party’s expectations and obligations. This is established in repeated interactions between exchange parties and develops over time (Loureiro and González 2008; Kim, Chung, and Lee 2011; Cohen, Prayag, and Moital 2014; Han and Hyun 2015; So et al. 2016). In tourism, this higher form of trust underpins destination or brand loyalty, or the relationships between regular visitors (including second home visitors) and residents, as opposed to infrequent or one-time visitors.

Having established a definition of and typology of trust, the article considers whether and how situational factors shape the nature of trust in the tourism arena.

The specificity of trust in tourism. Trust is always conferred over specific domains and contexts. This is particularly germane for tourism research, which “is still at the stage of borrowing constructs from other established disciplines and developing research models to test its compatibility in selected industrial sectors” (Wang et al. 2014, p. 1). This section explores whether there are distinctive properties of trust in the tourism domain. The first point to note is that, within the tourism domain, there are diverse trust contexts but these mostly involve four main types of relationships: (a) between tourism service providers and individual tourists; (b) among tourism firms; (c) between tourists and local residents or hosts and guests; and (d) between tourists, tourism firms, local residents, and government. Trust is also manifested in different ways within each context: for example, trust between tourists and tourism providers may inform how tourists respond to uncertainty at the holiday planning stage, or when responding to chaos or hazards during a holiday. We refer to all four contexts in the following discussion but, given our focus on the conceptualization of trust, the article is structured around competing disciplinary perspectives and McKnight and Chervany’s (2001) typology. Increasing online activities influence all four of these relationships to different extents because of the additional uncertainties stemming from lack of physical proximity: lack of observation of body language, handshakes, etc. (Kim, Chung, and Lee 2011). These uncertainties, and related trust issues, vary across different types of online information (Munar and Jacobsen 2013).

The key domain-specific characteristics of tourism stem from the relationship between uncertainty and displacement, that is, from “crossing borders and ‘tacit knowledge terrains’” (Williams and Baláž 2015). The WTO (2002) defines tourism as “activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.” Displacement is therefore an inherent and distinctive feature of tourism, as widely observed by tourism researchers (e.g., Maser and Weiermair 1998; Shaw and Williams 2004). Uncertainty and vulnerability stemming from displacement of tourists from a familiar locality—in physical, social, or cultural terms—is due to the importance or absence of particular forms of tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1958; Grant 2007) of destinations: especially embedded knowledge about institutions, procedures, and routines and enculturated knowledge about culture, customs, and language (Blackler 2002; Williams and Baláž 2015). In short, to participate in tourism, or certain types of tourism, requires propensity to tolerate the uncertainties associated with lack of tacit knowledge of other (different) institutional environments. It also implies acceptance of deviations from “normal” situations in these destinations, which are associated with specific events or hazards. Displacement therefore reinforces the importance of institutional trust (Figure 2), although dispositional trust also plays a key role in shaping beliefs, expectations, intentions, and behavior.

This poses the question of whether a separate definition of trust in tourism is required, which will be addressed by considering examples from different contexts. First, in terms of tourist–tourism relationships, Moliner et al. (2007) found that tourists’ perceptions of the competence of travel agents was determined by cognitive trust, the assessment of their professional performance, while their perceived benevolence was determined more by affect trust, that is, the emotional value of their services. The authors conclude that, in tourism,
emotional and social values probably take longer to establish than perceived competence, but there are no fundamental differences with other forms of consumption. The same applies to how the acquisition of tacit knowledge through experience informs cognitive and affect-based trust (Moliner et al. 2007; Loureiro and González 2008; and Filieri, Alguezauí, and McLeay 2015): displacement intensifies the challenge of acquiring tacit knowledge, but the relationship between trust and uncertainty remains fundamental for tourists. Turning to relationships between firms, the limited tourism research that engages with trust closely follows the generic literature on this topic. For example, Czernek and Czakon’s (2016) study of tourism firms’ co-operation, drawing on Das and Teng’s (2004) generic work on the calculative nature of trust, found limited tourism-specific findings. Similarly, the research on tourism stakeholders’ trust in tourism policies and tourism policy organizations (Nunkoo 2015; Nunkoo and Gursoy 2017; and Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2012) does not highlight major tourism specificities.

In summary, there is no convincing evidence for the need for a separate definition of trust in tourism. Moreover, situations and relationships in tourism are too diverse across different types of context, and a shifting range of stakeholders (constituting trustees and trustors), to be encompassed by a single “tourism-specific” definition. This does not point to the need for context-specific definitions because much of the landscape of trust in tourism is strongly generic and has considerable similarities with other forms of services (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995). However, although trust in tourism does not require a different definition, there is a need to consider how displacement shapes “the stages” of trust origin, trust formation, and trust operation (McKnight and Chervany 2001).

**Theoretical Perspectives**

Möllering (2001, p. 404) contends that in tourism, “many scholars simply take the concept of trust for granted and concern themselves only with its functional consequences” while relatively few have sought to establish the foundations of trust. This is an important lacuna because of the diverse theorizations of trust. Here we follow Rousseau et al. (1998), who differentiated between psychology, which views trust as internal cognition; economics, which considers it to be rationally calculated risk; and sociology, which understands trust as being socially embedded. Figure 3 presents an overview of some of the key concepts within the different disciplinary approaches to trust, as well as the overlaps among these. We first consider the approach of each discipline to theorizing trust, followed by their application to the stages of trust theorization (Figure 2) as applied to tourism.

**Economics: Bounded Rationality and Transaction Costs**

The starting point in economics is the limitations of neoclassical approaches which assume that behavior is driven simply by self-interest maximization (Evans and Krueger 2009), a conceptualization that allows no rationale for trust. In contrast, behavioral economics assumes bounded rationality, whereby individuals are intent on being rational but their capacities are limited. This leads to transactions costs theory (O. E. Williamson 1985), which emphasizes there are real costs in collecting information and making decisions, and that economic actors are opportunistic in acting strategically to promote their self-interest (O. E. Williamson 1993). Trust is a means to reduce the costs of extensive information searches, expensive negotiations and contracts, and close monitoring of every transaction. It is essentially an efficiency perspective: rational partners “purposefully create bilateral dependency and support it with contractual safeguards, but only in the degree to which the associated investments are cost-effective” (O. E. Williamson 1993, p. 461). Trust operates at two scales, micro and macro: as rational individual behavior, or as effective economic governance at the societal scale (Murphy 2006, p. 432). The latter resonates with institutional trust.
At the macro scale, sources of trust “arise from the institutional environment of laws, norms, and standards” (Beugelsdijk 2005, p. 375) that vary across time and space. O. E. Williamson (1993) recognizes six main aspects of the institutional environment within which transactions are embedded: culture, regulation, politics, corporate culture, professionalization, and networks. These are a “set of shift parameters, changes in which elicit changes in the costs of governance” (p. 457). They range from formal laws and regulations to customs and habits. Where the institutional environment provides general safeguards for exchanges, then transaction costs will be reduced. In contrast, when the institutional environment safeguards are weak, additional transaction-specific safeguards are required with associated costs (p. 476). In other words, the macro approach provides an economic interpretation of institutional trust. The macro approach is relatively underdeveloped in the generic literature, but some studies provide evidence that the reduction of transaction costs by trust can be a source of national competitive advantage (e.g., Dyer and Chu 2003).

At the micro scale, transaction costs were initially conceptualized in terms of calculus-based trust (Das and Teng 2004), that is, rational estimation of costs and benefits to economic agents of depending on different strategies, ranging from formal contracts to trust. The original transactions cost theory has several limitations. First, it assumes participants in a transaction are neutral in their attitudes to risk (O. J. Williamson 1985), an oversimplification that ignores risk aversion/tolerance differentials. It also does not recognize the different weights individuals assign to gains and losses of the same magnitude, that is, how they are valued: yet losses are known to loom significantly larger than gains of the same magnitude, that is, the notion of loss aversion (Tversky and Kahneman 1992). A trustor faces a dilemma between selecting positive utility from a gain from a transaction if the trustee behaves as expected and negative utility from a differently weighted similar loss of utility if the trustee betrays expectations. Second, transactions cost theory does not address ambiguity aversion, the preference for known risks over uncertainty (Ellsberg 1961), and the latter lies at the heart of trust. Prospect theory (Tversky and Kahneman 1992), which seeks to analyze how individuals actually make decisions, addresses both the concepts of loss aversion and ambiguity aversion. However, it does not directly engage with trust because it focuses on individual decision making whereas trust always involves two or more agents. Nevertheless, it is important because a global study of the key concepts of prospect theory found that less loss-averse individuals are less fearful of potential abuse of their trust by others (Rieger, Wang, and Hens 2011, p. 18). We return to this in the discussion of future research agendas.

The main advantage of the economics approach is its parsimony (Anheier and Kendall 2002, p. 353) in conceptualizing the costs of uncertainty, while loss aversion and ambiguity aversion provide additional insights into how trust impacts on transaction costs. However, the focus on economic factors is narrow: for example, it does not acknowledge that individuals can act pro-socially and not only opportunistically (Taylor-Gooby 1997). Moreover, the micro-scale dominance of research means that “economics has begun to recognise the importance of trust but tends to underestimate its complexity and to misconstrue it”

![Diagram](image-url)
Application of economics theories to trust in tourism. Wang et al. (2014, p. 6) stress the potential contribution of transaction costs to analyzing consumer trust in hospitality: “transaction cost economics can contribute useful terms, such as risk, vulnerability, and opportunism [which] can provide insights into the nature of trust.” However, there are very few attempts to measure how much transaction costs have been reduced by trust even in the generic literature. The authors found no papers, outside of laboratory conditions, which quantify the difference between transaction costs with or without trust in the other party, let alone how transaction costs vary depending on the level of trust. Rather the generic papers are informed by normative beliefs that trust reduces transaction costs—but by an unknown quantity. In response to this challenge, some behavioral economists have used experimental methods, especially “trust games,” to estimate how trust impacts on transaction costs (Berg, Dickhaut, and McCabe 1995). However, there are gaps between these experimental estimates and “the field” or actual conditions that shape situational trust. These are particularly important in tourism, where variable contexts influence trust and transactions costs.

Tourism, fundamentally, involves the mobility of individuals between places, which necessarily involves displacement, resulting in additional uncertainty about the transaction costs incurred, over and above those generally encountered in service transactions (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995). This is partly due to lack of tacit knowledge of the destinations, exacerbated by the multiple and difficult-to-cost elements such as ambience that constitute the tourism experience. Displacement links to institutional trust, highlighted in Figure 2, and to O. E. Williamson’s (1993, p. 457) argument that six aspects of the institutional environment shape transaction costs: culture, regulation, politics, corporate culture, professionalization, and networks. The displacement of tourism consumption to environments with different institutions, that consumers have limited tacit knowledge of, creates potentially higher transaction costs. This leads to the need to invest in specific safeguards (contracts, insurance) and/or monitoring arrangements, although there is also greater uncertainty about the reliability of safeguards and monitoring arrangements in another place, especially when abroad rather than in the “home” country. In other words, reduced institutional trust increases transactional costs. Trust is one means of reducing these costs, but this will vary across different institutional environments (destinations). Despite the importance of institutional trust in tourism, there has been no direct research on this issue, or attempts to quantify the resulting impact on transaction costs. This reflects the generic challenges, mentioned above, of how to operationalize the impact of trust on transaction costs.

Considering the other “stages” in Figure 2, there are no studies of dispositional trust within the transactions costs framework, which is also true of generic research; this is hardly surprising as disposition is essentially a psychological and sociological construct. More surprisingly, there are no applications of transaction costs to actual tourism behavior (as opposed to pretrip behavior), although traditionally this could be studied via retrospective surveying while recent digital methodological innovations enable concurrent data collection on trust.

Instead, research is heavily concentrated in two “stages”: first, interlinked expectations, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, and second, intentions. Loyalty is an important theme in many of these studies. In terms of attitudes, beliefs, and intentions, Kim, Chung, and Lee (2011) provide an interesting study, partly based on transaction costs concepts, of expectations and attitudes relating to loyalty in online commerce. Although they found that loyalty was related to trust, trust was not related to perceived transaction costs. Pesämäma, Hair, and Haathi (2010) examined interfirm relationships, specifically the selection of business partners. Although their research was only implicitly about transaction costs, they did address the governance of networks, an important concept in transaction economics. Empirically, they found that trust explains much of the variance in loyalty orientation.

Turning to trust and tourism intentions, the emphasis has also been on loyalty, which is perhaps the most obvious focus in economic exchanges. For example, Moliner et al. (2007) specifically drew to the notion that trust reduces transaction costs when searching for information. However, most studies of the relationship between trust and intentions only implicitly draw on transaction costs theory; for example, Wu and Chang (2006) analyze the role of calculative trust (and implicitly transaction costs) between online travel agents and demonstrate how party trust and control trust are positively related to transaction intentions, underlining the importance of reputation and image.

To a considerable extent, the relatively limited number of studies on attitudes etc. and intentions reflects the challenge of directly measuring transaction costs. Instead, tourism (in common with generic) researchers mostly turn to psychometrics to elicit beliefs about transaction costs, utilizing questions such as “online shopping saves money” or “I believe the vendor is honest.” But the lacuna in economics research on trust in tourism goes beyond measurement issues. Notably, there are relatively few applications of prospect theory (which bridges economics and psychology) in tourism studies (Ramos, Daamen, and Hoogendoorn 2014). Several tourism studies confirm the basic and insightful concepts of prospect theory, such as loss aversion and ambiguity aversion (Nicolaou 2008; Nicolaou 2012; Nguyen 2016), with Kim, Chung, and Lee (2011) commenting specifically on the link between loss aversion and attitudes to reducing transaction costs in online commerce. Reviews of classic expected utility (EU) versus prospect theory (PT) applications in travel and tourism also
suggest that PT is most useful when describing decisions under uncertainty and loss-aversion effects, both of which are exacerbated by displacement and lack of tacit knowledge. Travelers do exhibit loss aversion and try to avoid choices associated with losses (Avineri and Chorus 2010, p. 295; Van Wee 2010, p. 387). Yet no studies seek to operationalize how trust can reduce transaction costs although loss aversion provides a bridging concept between transactions cost and PT, which has particular value for understanding trust. However, a word of caution is necessary. Tourism typically involves extremely dynamic information environments about multiple competing destinations with multiple attributes. In contrast, Timmermans (2010, p. 381) argues that prospect theory is static and does not allow modeling of taste variation and the reorganization of travel plans.

In summary, the main attraction of the economics approach is its parsimony and clear conceptualization. Understandably, it has almost entirely been applied to two of the four major contexts identified earlier, that is to commercial exchanges between customers and suppliers, and between firms: and, even here, there has been reliance on psychometric measures rather than the direct measurement of transaction costs. Also striking is the focus on attitudes etc. and intentions, rather than on the macro-scale institutional environment and the notion of institutional trust, which is resonant with how displacement-related uncertainty shapes tourism transactions.

Psychology: Cognition and Affect

Psychology provides broader perspectives that reflect our definition of trust as involving the trustor’s willingness to accept perceived vulnerability based on having positive expectations about the benevolence and competence of the trustee. Trust operates at different scales—both organizational and interpersonal—but we focus initially, and mainly, on the interpersonal. In psychology theories, trust is generally recognized as having two main dimensions, cognition and affect. Affect-based conceptualizations of trust emerged in response to the perceived limitations of rational decision-making models (Kramer 1999, p. 573): the overestimation of cognitive capacities, the limits of conscious calculation, and the lack of stable values and preferences. This has been further elaborated into a concern with how social orientation to others, or to society, is implicated in trust and linked to notions of relational trust (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1997) informed by social identity theories (Kramer 1999).

Cognition-based trust and affect-based trust provide different explanations of how beliefs, expectations and attitudes are formed, verified, and evaluated. For McAllister (1995, p. 25), cognition-based trust is grounded in individual beliefs about peer reliability and dependability, while affect-based trust is focused on reciprocated interpersonal care and concern and is rooted in emotions. This is illustrated by how holiday decision making is based not only on rational analysis of the available information but also on emotional responses to perceived characteristics. The differences between cognitive-based and affect-based trust are informed by different constructions of risk and uncertainty, and of codified versus tacit knowledge. Cognition or competence-based trust is based on a rational assessment by a trustor whether or not the trustee is seen as trustworthy. It is subject to performance-based benchmarking; for example, looking at the probability distribution of the online reviews of a product (codified knowledge), in other words looking at (known) risk. In contrast, affect-based trust is subject to belief that the trustee acts in his or her best interest, and this is mostly based on the emotional attachment of a trustor to a trustee. Verification of such beliefs is subject to tacit knowledge about the trustee’s behavior and is more likely to be based on uncertainty than risk.

This conceptual differentiation has a time dimension (Evans and Krueger 2014). Affect-based trust builds on personal experience and takes longer to establish than cognition-based trust. Lewicki and Bunker (1996) suggested a trust-building model, which consists of three sequential and linked levels: (1) calculus-based trust, representing the lowest level, and most fragile form of trust, may be based on heuristics given the incompleteness of knowledge, especially in relation to complex experiential goods; (2) tacit knowledge-based trust, which is formed over time with increasing mutual knowledge, and represents relatively strong bonding; and (3) identification-based trust, which is based on shared interests and values. The assumed linearity of this model is, however, open to question.

Identification based trust is the strongest form of trust and least fragile in the face of changing environments: this is particularly important in tourism where displacement involves mobility, and temporary presence in different institutional environments. However, Lewis and Weigert (2012, p. 26) comment that the affective dimension “involves a feeling of self-trust as well as other-trust, and this is why, when trust is betrayed, the emotional pain of self-reproach is experienced side-by-side with strong emotions toward the betrayer.” This may undermine the individual’s confidence in being able to assess the trustworthiness of others, thereby inhibiting their willingness to trust in future. For example, the tourist’s feeling of betrayal when a holiday destination provides low satisfaction is intensified where it had been selected based on trust in the recommendations made by others that (s)he socially identifies with. Disappointment in VFR tourism is likely to be even greater because it is based on identification-based trust with close friends or family that has been established over time.

Turning briefly to the organizational level, there is considerable interest in the role of trust in intraorganizational cooperation, coordination, and control (Kramer 1999), including how it can replace hierarchical control (Daley and Vasu 1998) by reliance on formal and informal rules (Kramer 1999). Another important aspect of the organizational level is reputation-based trust. This is both an asset and limitation: on the one hand, a good reputation leading to positive
expectations can extend the trustee’s market while it is also an imperative to suppress opportunistic behavior, and the pursuit of short-term gains. Peer-to-peer electronic and virtual communities (Facebook, TripAdvisor, Airbnb, eBay) are examples where trust expectations are informed by reputation (Resnick and Zeckhauser 2002; Xiong and Liu 2004). Reputation-based trust on these platforms may be based on a substantial volume of the reported experiences of other people. Some platforms enable aggregating and averaging of satisfaction scores which can inform expectations about trustworthiness.

In summary, psychology theories provide a broader focus than economics on the role of trust under conditions of uncertainty, especially by incorporating affect. Much of the existing research is at the level of interpersonal trust, but organizational trust provides a higher level of aggregation, which partly addresses institutional environments and institutional trust, including cross-cultural studies (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). Understandably, there has been more research on dispositional trust in psychology than in other disciplines: for example, Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995, p. 715) consider this in relation to trust propensity: “a stable within-party factor that will affect the likelihood the party will trust,” while Das and Teng (2004, p. 109) define this as “one’s personal tendency to believe in others’ trustworthiness.” The main focus of psychology research, however, has been on attitudes, expectations, and perceptions as well as on intentions, often being linked to personality traits (Thielmann and Hilbig 2015).

Application of psychology theories of trust to tourism. There is a more substantial literature on the operationalization of trust concepts in psychology than economics, mainly involving either survey or experimental methods, and this partly reinforces the dominant psychology perspective in the trust literature. An unintended consequence, in tourism and other fields, is a tendency to seize on existing psychometric measures, without fully engaging with their theoretical framing. Some researchers do seek to operationalize the properties of trust more fully, with Artigas, Yrigoyen, and Moraga (2017), for example, constructing scales for trust in the public and private institutions of a destination. However, most measures of trust employed in tourism do not include fundamental properties such as the relationship between uncertainty and vulnerability or willingness to depend. There is also little explicit engagement with how displacement shapes trust in tourism and, to some extent, this reflects the dominance of research on interpersonal as opposed to organizational trust.

Uncertainty is manifest in self-protective behaviors, especially pertinent in research on the digital tourism economy. Perceived security, for example, is a key determinant of trustworthiness in online purchases of tourism products (Kim, Chung, and Lee 2011, p. 264), as is data security (Gregory, Daniele, and Altinay 2014), in the “faceless and intangible” environment of eCommerce (Beldad, de Jong, and Steenhouder 2010); these tourism studies mostly replicate the generic the approaches to studying online services. They particularly focus on either how individuals respond to the information provided on tourism providers’ websites, or on social media commentaries on such firms. When faced with potential information overload or missing information, which is characteristic of online searches for knowledge about tourism firms, several strategies can be used (García-Retamero and Rieskamp 2008). A trustor is likely to rely on simplifying heuristic rules (for example, satisficing, stereotyping, bandwagon, and herding bias) to reduce uncertainty about the trustworthiness of reports, such as relying especially on more recent hotel reviews (Sparks, So, and Bradley 2016). Displacement effects have been addressed, although mostly implicitly. Meta-analysis of the literature on online reviews (Schuckert, Liu, and Law 2015, p. 615) indicates that reviews by experienced travelers are considered more trustworthy. But how trust mitigates the uncertainty effects of displacement is rarely explicitly engaged with. The same applies to other arenas within tourism where trust is important such as actual behavior while on holiday.

There is engagement with displacement effects in term of willingness to accept vulnerability, although much of the research is within the framework of generic research, notably that about online purchases, including beliefs (Kusumasondaja, Shank, and Marchegiani 2012), expectations and attitudes (Filieri, Alguezaui, and McLeay 2015; Gregory, Daniele, and Altinay 2014; Pappas 2017; Sparks, So, and Bradley 2015), and intentions (Agag and El-Masry 2017; Filieri, Alguezaui, and McLeay 2015; Kim, Chung, and Lee 2011; Ponte, Carvajal-Trujillo, and Escobar-Rodriguez 2015). Some research is closely linked to displacement effects, for example, on health and safety (Abubakr and Ilkan 2016). Additionally, the role of trust in the acceptance of tourists by locals in tourist destinations has been researched, with a focused on expectations of the trustees’ honesty and benevolence (Artigas, Yrigoyen, and Moraga 2017). Previous experience (including of other places) generally tends to reduce perceptions of being vulnerable via positively influencing cognition and affect-based trust (Artigas, Yrigoyen, and Moraga 2017; Kusumasondaja, Shank, and Marchegiani 2012).

Turning to the organizational level, several tourism studies have explored the role of reputation, especially in relation to internet platforms such as TripAdvisor and Airbnb. Trust is particularly important in the latter because, as in the pre-digital era, tourists are often paying to share the provider’s private space, their home. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there is a considerable tourism literature on the role of trust and reputation, especially in relation to online platforms. Attitudes to trust loyalty have been researched (Kim, Chung, and Lee 2011) as have the effects of loyalty to particular organizations on the intentions to revisit or use particular services (Han and Hyun 2015). Organizational practices have also been researched. For example, ineffective responses to complaints by Airbnb influence customers’ perceptions, contributing to “faded trust” (Phua 2019), while managing more than one listing
contributes to diminished “cue trust” (Xie and Mao 2017). These are mostly framed within the conceptual paradigms established in generic research, but there are exceptions. For example, Tussyadiah and Park (2018) address displacement by analyzing how projecting an image of being a well-traveled individual informs the self-marketing of Airbnb hosts.

Both cognitive and affect based trust are important in terms of relationships between trustor and trustee, at the interpersonal and organizational level, and these frequently interact. Choice of a travel agency based on customer reviews is an example of cognition-based trust whereas the emotional bond to a specific tourist guide is an example of affect-based trust. The latter is more likely to develop where the trustor has tacit knowledge of the trustee. Moliner’s (2007) findings emphasize the roles of both affect and cognition in attitudes to travel agencies.

In summary, the main advantages of the psychology approach are a broader perspective and identification of distinct but related cognition and affect dimensions. However, tourism researchers have often disembedded trust from the theoretical frames of uncertainty and the role of tacit knowledge. In terms of the different “stages” (Figure 2), there are few explicit studies of dispositional trust in tourism but exceptions include Ponte, Carvajal-Trujillo, and Escobar-Rodríguez’s (2015) analysis of disposition to trust third-party certificates, and Agag and El-Masry’s (2017) analysis of how propensity to trust influences attitudes to online travel websites and purchasing intentions. Institutions are touched on in some of the research on organizational trust in tourism, but only through selective focus on particular practices such as dealing with complaints or information provided on websites, without reference to the effects of displacement. There is also almost no research on behavior. Instead, most research focuses, not entirely unexpectedly, on attitudes, perceptions and expectations, or on intentions, with some blurring or combination of these. In terms of the four contexts identified earlier, psychology theories have the flexibility and breadth to be applied to all of these, but tourism research has focused almost entirely on tourist–tourism provider relationships, with a few examples of research on policy and community, and none on host–guest relationships.

Sociology and Trust: Institutional and Interpersonal Perspectives

Sociology, rather than seeing trust as a rational choice outcome in the face of uncertainty, emphasizes what Giddens (1990, p. 33) terms its “presumed reliability,” and the inevitability that all trust ultimately involves “blind trust.” There are two main foci in sociology: the macro or institutional which, more than in any other discipline, could be expected to relate to institutional trust, and the micro or interpersonal that has strong ties with social psychology.

In terms of the interpersonal level, Luhmann (1979, p. 20) considers that future expectations can be articulated in terms of familiarity, confidence, or trust. Familiarity or confidence can provide sufficient bases for actions so that trust is only necessary in the face of high levels of risk and uncertainty. Given that trusting involves recognition of vulnerability to negative outcomes if trust is betrayed, this brings into play Simmel’s notion of “suspension” (Möllering 2001) of the fear of uncertain outcomes; this resonates with willingness to accept vulnerability. Luhmann’s conceptualization is dynamic recognizing that, following repeated actions, perceptions of risk and uncertainty can decline, leading to reliance on confidence rather than trust.

Interpersonal trust is shaped not only by experiences or knowledge of individuals but also by depersonalized category-based trust and process-based trust, both of which have implications for considering uncertainty related to displacement. In category-based trust, trustworthiness is assessed on the basis of social categories (Kramer 1999) which serve as trust cues. These may originate in the trustee’s identity, reputation, social status, membership of a specific social group, or simply his or her appearance (Yu, Saleem, and Gonzalez 2014; Sofer et al. 2015). Where the trustor is a member of that group, then social identity based on shared group membership and maintaining the distinctiveness of the group comes into play (Tanis and Postmes 2005). In short, it leads to greater propensity to trust members of the same group. In contrast to categorization, process-based trust focuses on how previous personal relationships between individuals shape trust (Rus and Iglić 2005, p. 374). Drawing on Granovetter (1982), personal trust is considered to be found in densely connected and relatively closed social groups: these are typically friends or family. This is expanded further in discussion of the macro level.

At the macro level, attention shifts to social norms and to institutional trust: “actors base their expectations regarding the behaviour of individuals who they do not know on the quality of the broader institutional system” (Rus and Iglić 2005, p. 374). In effect, institutions generalize trust among individuals based on prevalent social norms, that is, informal social understanding of expected behavior whether by, say, tourists, service providers, policy makers, or local residents. This taken-for-granted trust can be found in a variety of communities and organizations, which serve to socialize their members in terms of whom to trust and not to trust. Institutional trust incorporates both formal laws and regulations as well as social capital, a network concept that spans the interpersonal and the institutional level. Putnam’s (2000) distinction between thin and thick trust is useful. Thick trust resonates with the notion of preexisting trust that is strongly embedded in small, dense networks usually of friends and family, whereas thin trust is found in larger but less dense networks, perhaps of everyday or work contacts. In tourism this is exemplified by the different types of trust implicated in say traveling with a group of family or close friends, as opposed to a large tour group.
There are important implications depending on the relative importance of institutional versus interpersonal trust (Rus and Iglić 2005). Institutional trust encourages exchanges not only with close friends but with “erstwhile strangers” (Blau 2002). This opens access to a larger range of businesses or other actors, providing access to greater resources and enhanced performance or (especially in the case of tourism) experiences. In contrast, interpersonal trust constrains the range of businesses and other actors that are interacted with, having negative consequences for performance.

In summary, sociological theories have limitations especially for seeking a standardized operationalization of often blurred concepts. However, they have three main advantages. They identify different forms of trust, link these to different institutional settings (Möllering 2005) that are potentially critical to tourism research, and also serve to counter the reductionist focus of psychological theories on the individual or individual organization. In terms of the “stages” of trust, they put more emphasis on institutional trust and less emphasis on dispositional trust than psychology, offer strong insights into the formation of expectations, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as behavior, but are relatively absent from research on intentions.

**Application of sociology theories of trust to tourism.** Overall, there have been relatively few applications of sociology (related) theories of trust to tourism compared to other domains (Nunkoo 2017, p. 282). Yet sociological theories of trust provide insightful perspectives on tourism, starting with Luhmann (1979) distinction between familiarity, confidence and trust. Tourism involves various degrees of displacement, and it can be assumed that the greater the social and geographical distance between the origin and destination, the more likely that individuals will depend on trust rather than confidence or familiarity. For example, trust is more likely than familiarity to be called into play in making decisions about international rather than domestic destinations. Yet, over repeated visits to particular international destinations, acquired knowledge may lead to greater reliance on confidence, or even familiarity, providing an important insight into the nature of destination loyalty.

In terms of interpersonal trust, the nature of uncertainty associated with displacement has implications for the balance between categorization versus process trust. Where the individual tourist seeks novelty in the form of visiting a sequence of different destinations, there are limited opportunities to develop process trust and therefore considerable reliance on categorization trust with respect to tourism providers, as well as residents and other tourists at the destination. Categorization trust is likely to draw on a range of trust cues including race and ethnicity, language spoken, nationality, and the banal everyday customs of service delivery or social engagement. However, trust is dynamic and there may be shifts between categorization and process trust across, or even within, individual holidays or between reliance on trust and confidence/familiarity. Repeated visits to the same destination can bring about such shifts.

Social identities can also play a role in trust as, for example, in how tourists decide which other groups of tourists to trust when sharing holiday activities. Backpackers may be more likely than mass tourists to identify with and trust (some) local residents, although this is not necessarily reciprocated. Social identities also play a role in the context of trust in interfirm relationships: Ngoasong and Kimbu (2016) report the importance of the groups that individuals identify with in interfirm relations, in the case of tourism entrepreneurs’ access to microfinance schemes.

At the institutional level, most tourism research has been informed by notions of social capital. In Moscardo’s (2014) overview of social capital in tourism, this is defined in terms of goodwill and access to resources, with trust being seen as both a formative influence on and the outcome of social capital. The temporality of tourism means that, in relationships among tourists or tourists–tourism providers, institutional trust is more likely to be based on thin rather than thick trust, although less so among tour groups originating in local communities, or shared interests such as a sports teams on tour. Interestingly, in a follow-up empirical study of destination community social capital, Moscardo et al. (2017) showed that participants found it difficult to articulate how social capital could be fostered, highlighting the nuanced and complex nature of both the concept and the complexity of tourism products; however, the effects of displacement are not explicitly assessed.

One of the few tourism studies with firm roots in sociological theories of trust (although interwoven with social psychology and notions of transaction costs) is Czernek and Czakon’s (2016) research on interfirm co-operation in Poland, an institutional context characterized by low social capital (p. 392). Drawing especially on Granovetter’s (1982) work on the social embeddedness of economic activity, they emphasize how social ties can transfer information and reduce uncertainty. Van der Zee, Gerrets, and Vanneste (2017) findings resonate with this, demonstrating how trust among network members enhances interactions and collaboration, which facilitates the thickening of network structures. Roy, Hall, and Ballantine (2017) also engage to some extent with the sociological theories of trust, alongside social psychology. They find that social capital and personal relationships strongly influence trust formation, and consequently exchanges, in the food chain. Neither study, however, explores how trust is formed, whether via categorization, process, or social identities.

There is some focus of sociological theories around policies, governance, and communities. Bramwell’s (2014) work on how trust influences the governance of sustainable tourism was an early marker. Notably, a cluster of papers by Nunkoo and associates (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2012; Nunkoo 2015; Nunkoo and Gursoy 2017; Nunkoo and Smith 2013, 2014) draw on sociological theories alongside...
psychology theories, although most are based on rational decision-making models rather than the sociologist’s taken-for-granted trust. Nunkoo (2015) draws particularly on social exchange theory (Croppranzo and Mitchell 2005), which has parallels to economics in analyzing costs and benefits of exchanges, but recognizes that these can be both economic and social (Blau [1964] 2017). He finds that public trust influences local or national attitudes to the policies and the acceptability of development projects. This is echoed in an earlier study (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2012) that demonstrates that citizens perceive a high degree of uncertainty in, and have concerns about, the political and economic consequences of tourism policies, but are willing to engage in conditional co-operation with government. However, most studies in this cluster of papers involve questionnaire surveys including relatively limited constructs relating to trust, and methodologically belong more to the psychological than the sociological tradition.

In summary, there are relatively few applications of sociological theories of trust in tourism, and this may partly be due to the challenges of operationalizing sociological concepts (Glaeser, Laibson, and Sacerdote 2002). In tourism research, applications of sociological concepts have largely relied on questionnaire surveys and have tended to utilize social psychology constructs, which may partly explain the failure of many researchers to engage in depth with sociological theories. In terms of “stages,” unsurprisingly, dispositional trust does not feature prominently, but several researchers have addressed institutional trust. Moscardo et al. (2017) explore social capital but the most direct engagement has come from Sun, Yang, and de Jong (2019) who, although writing from a geographical perspective, does draw on sociological theories in addressing the importance of cultural specificities in shaping trust. Attitudes and beliefs receive more attention, mainly in the work of Nunkoo and associates (e.g., Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2011; Nunkoo and Gursoy 2016). Intentions are largely absent from sociological research but behavior does feature, particularly inter-firm relationships (Ngoasong and Kimbu 2016; Roy, Hall, and Ballantine 2017). Turning to the four contexts, there is little research on tourist–tourism provider relationships or, surprisingly, host–guest relationships. Instead, most research has focused on either interfirm relationships (Czernk and Czakon 2016; Ngoasong and Kimbu 2016; and Roy, Hall, and Ballantine 2017) or the relationships between government, NGOs, and residents (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2011; Nunkoo and Gursoy 2016; Sun, Yang, and de Jong 2019).

Conclusions and Further Research

Reflections. Responding to the increasing, but selective and often uncritical, engagement of tourism research with trust, this article seeks to provide stronger theoretical foundations for understanding tourism-related trust. Our starting point is that trust is strongly inter-connected to the concept of uncertainty. It is lack of certainty or of tacit knowledge that creates the fundamental requirement for trust in all types of tourism contexts: “Trust begins where prediction ends” (Lewis and Weigert 1985, p. 976).

Unsurprisingly, theories are less well developed in the arena of trust compared to uncertainty because trust is a multidimensional concept (Figure 1). It is challenging to analyze trust dispositions, institutions, attitudes and beliefs, and intentions and behavior via any single theory, while theories also blur across disciplinary boundaries, with psychology overlapping strongly with micro-scale approaches in both economics and sociology.

Concepts of uncertainty, vulnerability, and positive expectation are manifested strongly and distinctively in tourism. While many aspects of uncertainty, such as fuzziness of service outcomes, are common to other services (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995), displacement is a distinctive feature of uncertainty in tourism. It also gives rise to uncertainty in at least one context, host–guest relationships, which is unique to tourism. However, we conclude that a single highly specific definition of trust cannot cover all situations in tourism. This is because of the substantial diversity between and within the four main tourism contexts identified. Moreover, we consider that the tacit knowledge and uncertainty effects of displacement can be incorporated within the overall conceptualization and definitions of trust that are found in the three main disciplines considered, sociology, economics, and psychology.

Our discussion suggests that while all three disciplinary perspectives are present in the generic and the tourism literatures, psychology tends to be more influential, because of the way it opens up a range of fruitful subconcepts such as vulnerability, benevolence, positive expectations, and integrity. These are also relatively easier to measure (directly) than either transaction costs or sociological constructs, especially given the strong strand of survey-based research on the role of trust in tourist–tourism provider relationships, notably in the digital economy. There is also selective focus on the “stages” identified by McKnight and Chervany (2001) (Figure 1). The tangle of expectations/beliefs/attitudes and perceptions, along with intentions, is the principal foci of tourism research. In contrast—and largely similar to the generic literature (McKnight and Chervany 2001)—disposition and institutions receive far less attention. The uneven distribution of research across these “stages” is also related to the dominance of psychology theories and that discipline’s focus on perceptions and behavior. Only sociological approaches substantially engage with institutional trust. A recurring issue, overall, is the very limited explicit engagement with the distinctive uncertainty challenges posed by displacement.

Another feature of research on trust in tourism is the highly uneven focus on the four main contexts identified. Most of the research is on tourist–tourism providers, drawing strongly on generic management research, and having a strong focus on online activities. Analysis of interfirm
relationships also largely draws on generic management research. There is a modest but important body of research on community–government–NGO relationships, drawing on both sociology and psychology; to some extent, this is distinctive given how the profound cultural and environmental impacts of tourism are influenced by displacement-related uncertainty. The most striking gap, to the authors’ best knowledge, is the very limited explicit engagement with host–guest relationships, a context where trust (and the related concept of familiarity) plays an important role.

Future agendas. First there are major gaps in terms of the “stages” of trust. Dispositional trust seems the least researched type of trust in tourism studies, which is quite surprising. Trust in “strangers” (Blau 2002) is an important precondition for participation in tourism. Moreover, the World Value Survey (WVS) series indicates substantial variation in trust propensity across countries (Inglehart et al. 2014). Therefore, an important research question is the extent to which such dispositions vary across countries in terms of trust and tourism? Institutional trust has been approached, if at all, from the perspective of structural assurances. Nunkoo’s articles, for example, presented trust formation as a result of the interplay between political institutions and local residents. In contrast, little attention has been paid to “situation normality.” Established trust beliefs and behaviors related to the normal operation of institutions can be subject to modification or disruption in the case of sudden changes, whether relating to the natural or social environments. In terms of contexts, there are gaps in all four of these, some of which are indicated below, but they are especially pronounced in host–guest relationships.

Next we consider the future agenda in terms of the three main disciplines. In economics, the trust disposition of different types of tourists, for example, package versus self-guided tourists, is underresearched (but see Nicolau 2008 and 2012). This is despite there being significant differences in risk/uncertainty tolerance and loss aversion across specific modes of holiday organization, with high loss aversion being associated with higher preference for package holidays (Williams and Baláž 2013). Similar issues arise over reliance on VFR tourism as opposed to using commercial accommodation or when using large travel companies with strong brands and a substantial (trusting) customer base as opposed to small firms, where the customer has tacit knowledge of the owner, manager, or key employees. Trust is a means of reducing transaction costs for tourists, and this is likely to be especially important for those who are loss averse, that is, who value negative utility more than similar quantities of positive utility. Prospect theory also points to the scope for research on ambiguity aversion (preference for tourism experiences with known risks rather than high uncertainty) which can be linked to trust.

Although transaction costs propositions are widely accepted, they have never been quantified in tourism research, to our knowledge. Yet, there are several possible ways to test and quantify these propositions. For example, trust games can use tourists’ willingness to pay to elicit the costs of safeguards and controls under different levels of (dis)trust for different tourism products, under different balances of (tacit) knowledge and uncertainty. Alternatively, in firm-to-firm trust, willingness to pay for safeguards and control could be derived indirectly from secondary data on insurance premiums, hedging procedures, and the penalties incorporated in tourism contracts. Behavioral economics recognizes the difficulties of estimating transaction costs, and that heuristics may be used in the face of dilemmas such as information overload, or incomplete information. The specific trust heuristic involves “assuming the best” when exchanging assets that are difficult to price (Uzzi 1997). This resonates with the notion of “positive expectations of trustees” in our definition of trust: it is another area that merits investigation in tourism. Finally, there is considerable scope for research on institutional trust that draws on macro-economic recognition of the importance of culture, regulation, politics, corporate culture, professionalization, and networks as framing individual transactions (O. E. Williamson 1993). How does the uncertainty associated with displacement influence attitudes and intentions to visit particular countries, and to what extent is this mitigated by laws and regulations, or by the reputation heuristic based on accumulated transactions? (See Metzger, Flanagin, and Medders’s [2010] generic research on online transactions.) Laws and regulations generally seem under-researched in tourism, and this is particularly striking in relation to trust.

Sociology theories can also be applied in several areas. In terms of displacement and institutional trust, the World Value Survey identifies major differences in trust in strangers between nations and cultures. Are these differences manifest in different modes of travel and leisure, or in choice of destination or behavior at destinations? This also has implications for our understanding of host–guest relationships, where both interpersonal and institutional concepts of trust have not yet been investigated in tourism: what is the balance between familiarity, confidence, and trust in host–guest relationships, and how do these vary across destinations and different tourist groups? This also links to issues of trust in community cohesion, where macro and micro perspectives on social capital can be seen to merge.

In terms of interpersonal trust, there is considerable scope for research on categorization in all four contexts considered. We know very little about how categorization may be used by tourists in forming attitudes or intentions in the face of an otherwise bewildering social complexity: for example, in what circumstances to apply familiarity, trust, or confidence, and how this relates to reputational trust (Loureiro and González 2008). This applies for example to the decision about which tour company or transport company or accommodation provider to rely on: for example, how to categorize the individuals encountered at agencies or
reception. This also applies to interfirm relationships, as well as host–guest relationships. In some instances, racial or national stereotyping may be important, as are other social constructs. Social identities perspectives can also enlighten our understanding of the development of trust between various groups, whether tourists, hosts, or tourism businesses.

Psychology theories are most influential but the distribution of research is highly uneven. The vast majority of the literature on trust in tourism considers consumer trust in service providers, especially online (Sparks, So, and Bradley 2016; Oliveira et al. 2017), or in firm co-operation (Wu and Chang 2006; Poppo, Zhou, and Li 2016) and customer loyalty (Moliner et al. 2007; Pesämaa, Hair, and Haahiti 2010; Loureiro and González 2008; Cohen, Prayag, and Moital 2014). However, while there are many papers on the benefits that tourism service providers accrue from their customers’ or business partners’ trust, the benefits tourists accrue from trust have been less explored (but see Cao, Galinsky, and Maddux 2014).

There is also scope for research on the temporal dimension of trust, and especially on how the basis of trust shifts over time from being calculus based to tacit knowledge-based trust, and eventually identification trust (Lewicki and Bunker 1996): these shifts are made more complicated in tourism by the effects of displacement on tacit knowledge, and uncertainty. This has clear application to understanding how customer loyalty is constructed, or how inter-firm relationships change over time, as does the trust between hosts and guests, but there has been little research explicitly on the role of displacement in these relationships.

There is a need for future researchers to be more explicit about the concepts they use, from whatever discipline, and to question their validity, rather than seeing them as easy-to-borrow constructs and scales. Most research currently abstracts scales from theories so that, for example, trust is reduced to a few specific (and tested in particular contexts) measures in psychology. These tend to be given constructs with outcomes rather than focusing on understanding how aspects of trust are formed.

There is also need for more dynamic perspectives not only in conceptualization but in field work, implying longitudinal research. For example, Murphy (2006) argues the need “to shift our understanding of trust beyond static conceptualizations—of trust as instrument, input, or structural component of networks—toward a more dynamic or relational perspective.” For example, how does trust in service providers, local residents or fellow tourists change during the course of a visit?

Finally, we end by emphasizing that while this paper has focused on the distinctive approaches of different disciplines to trust, and trust in tourism, we also recognize the interdisciplinarity of tourism (Darbellay and Stock 2012). This is already evident in the blurring that has been observed, partly methodologically driven, of psychology with either sociology or economics approaches, especially at the micro-scale.

Addressing the different types of trust constructs is likely to require different disciplinary inputs with, for example, sociology or perhaps economics informing the study of institutional trust, while psychology shapes the conceptualization of intentions. These different concepts then need to be mutually interrogated, to expose their limitations and to build new theoretical bridges to address these challenges.

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