

Tourism and the Majority World



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360 million tourists visit countries in the majority world every year. In the Pacific Islands, the industry accounts for 75% of the foreign exchange earnings and 50% of the GDP. But do the benefits of tourism stay with majority world countries? And do those benefits outweigh the environmental and social costs?

Tourism mirrors the world's social and economic inequalities and shares the environmental impacts of any major industry.

On the one hand tourism demonstrates the wealth of those in the minority world who can afford the luxury of international travel.

On the other, the development hopes of many majority world countries are pinned on tourism. It is one of the top three earners for over 50 of the world's poorest countries and is vitally important to their developing economies. Potential earnings for poor countries are, however, pitted against the negative effects the industry can have on local communities and environments.

THE EFFECTS:

ENVIRONMENTAL

Often, a destination depends on its environmental aesthetic, but large numbers of tourists can leave a trail of destruction resulting from construction, over demand for water supplies, sanitation and waste facilities. Western consumption patterns of basic services can have a huge impact in areas where the infrastructure is already struggling to cope. Golf courses are a particular problem. According to Tourism Concern, an average golf course in a tropical country uses as much water as 60,000 rural villagers. Even seemingly low impact activities such as hiking have resulted in trail degradation and deforestation.

ECONOMIC

For many countries in the majority world tourism is a major industry, yet the economic benefits of tourism are often not as high as they could be or are unevenly distributed. The term 'leakage' is often applied to tourist destinations in majority world countries. The demand

for western products, familiar to tourists, coupled with overseas ownership of the tourism infrastructure means a large part of the tourist dollar does not remain in the destination country. Instead the money leaks back to the home countries of tourists; over 60% of it on an average trip to Fiji. Even when the money does stay in-country, those in a community most able to cater to tourists are often either the already wealthy, or those with marketable skills, meaning that the benefits of tourism may bypass those with the greatest need.

SOCIAL/CULTURAL

Tourism development can mean displacement for the communities living on the land, impacting social and cultural ties as well as economic opportunities. The 2004 tsunami in India and Sri Lanka saw reconstruction strategies implemented that prevented local communities from returning to the coastal homes that were now prime locations for tourism development. One potential benefit of tourism is its ability to celebrate and revive local culture. Tourism may also commodify these cultures and traditions and encourage a view that they are or should be static, devoid of any natural social change. Differences in values between host and tourist and the unequal power context in which they occur can lead to inappropriate behaviour or the idealising of western lifestyles.

THE RESPONSE:

Over time, as the different problems associated with tourism have become evident, alternative forms of tourism practice have sprung up.

ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism combines visiting nature-based attractions with a concern for environmental protection. However, at times

environmental concerns have overridden the needs and rights of local communities.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainable tourism incorporates the ideals of sustainable development, combining a concern for the environmental, the economic and the social issues resulting from tourism.

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM (CBT)

CBT is normally small-scale and operates on a community level. In an attempt to prevent leakage and increase participation and control by the local community, it emphasises local ownership.

PRO-POOR TOURISM

To counteract the tendency of tourism to only benefit the economic elite, pro-poor tourism aims to design tourism strategies that benefit the poorest groups, facilitating their participation through measures including small loans or training opportunities.

JUSTICE TOURISM

Justice tourism includes an educational or social justice element stemming from the places a tourist visits and the people they meet. Participation in this form of tourism is designed to provide financial and/or political support for locals or to encourage activism on return to their home countries.

VOLUNTOURISM

Voluntourism is a holiday that includes a period of work on a project within the community the tourist is visiting. Although it may stem from a desire by tourists to 'give something back', it raises questions as to the usefulness of short periods of volunteering, the social/cultural impact of the volunteers and who is profiting from the practice.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

On a personal level, responsible tourism is a practice where the tourist makes decisions that consider the impact of their holiday and takes steps to alleviate the negative consequences. From the perspective of the travel and tourism industry, it encompasses the majority of concerns reflected in alternative forms of tourism and stresses the responsibility of the industry to implement good practice. The 2002 Cape Town Declaration attempted to bring these together. It defines responsible tourism as tourism that:

- minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people; and
- is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence'

HOW THESE FORMS OF TOURISM ARE PROMOTED

The different forms of tourism are promoted and certified by a variety of schemes and awards at the national and international level, they can offer guidance to tourism operators and an assurance to travellers. However, the cost of joining these schemes can be prohibitive to small, often sustainable and ethical, businesses. Ethical or environmental claims can also be used as a marketing tool by companies without real changes

to practice being made. A variety of organisations, such as Tourism Concern and the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, seek to raise public awareness of the issues and promote best practice. One approach used is codes of good practice or conduct aimed at industry or tourists. These are produced as a form of self-regulation by industry or by independent bodies. Dev-Zone has produced the Responsible Tourism Code for the Pacific, aimed at guiding tourists' behaviour when visiting the Pacific (www.responsibletourism.org.nz).

THE FUTURE

Alongside increasing interest in extending fair trade certification systems to include tourism, the industry is finding it can no longer ignore its role in climate change. Solutions such as carbon offsetting are being adopted but have been criticised as a way of paying off the guilt rather than tackling the real problem. Such practices may delay individuals and

industry from changing their behaviour and ward off legislation. Increasingly, behaviour change based methods are being sought. Ideas such as slow travel that embraces train travel over a short haul flight or encourages people to take one longer holiday rather than a number of short breaks are gaining ground.

MORE INFORMATION

Comments, critiques, links and resources
www.dev-zone.org/knowledge/Society_and_Culture/Tourism/

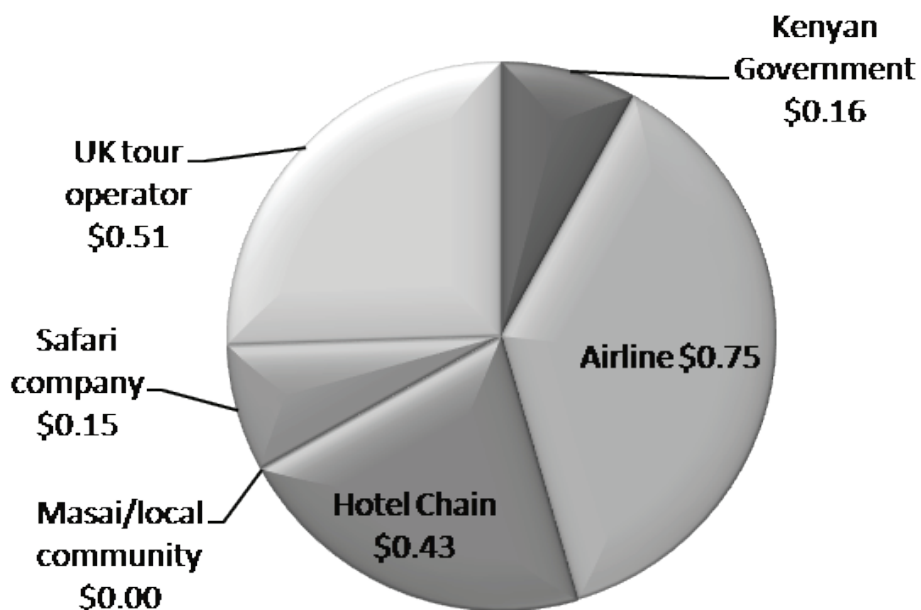
The Cape Town Declaration, 2002

<http://www.icrtourism.org/Capetown.shtml>

We have chosen to use the terms minority and majority world in this onepager instead of terms such as developed/developing or first/third world.

WHERE DOES MY \$2 GO? - ON AN AVERAGE TRIP TO KENYA

Only 40c of the US\$2 spent by a tourist will remain in the country. The cost of importing goods for tourists and debt service means only 28c is available for importing goods to serve development.



Source: Tourism Concern/Leeds DEC in Nowicka, Pamela. 2007. *The no-nonsense guide to tourism*