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TOURISM AND THE PEACE PROPOSITION

by

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Abstract

The report is based on a 1995 investigation into the effectiveness of study tours offered by Community Aid Abroad in meeting its objectives. It examines the influence of the tours in encouraging the development of attitudes deemed conducive to more peaceful relationships among the world's people. Participants in the study tours were surveyed to identify their sociodemographic and lifestyle characteristics, and any changes generated by the tour experience in their attitudes to travel in general, relationships with the Third World, foreign aid, and aid to deprived groups within Australia. They were also questioned on post-tour membership in and donations to aid and community organisations. In general, the tour product was successful in encouraging appropriate attitude development, but it is concluded that most participants merely confirmed previously held attitudes, and that, if tourism is to contribute to peaceful and harmonious relations among people, there is a need for organisations such as CAA to attract a wider market, or for travel organisers to adopt elements of the study tour, and other, approaches which enhance the quality of host-visitor interaction and the opportunities for people to learn about each other. Some recommendations to this end are provided.

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TOURISM AND THE PEACE PROPOSITION¹

Ian Kelly

The present-day world is inescapably multicultural and multinational. Many of our most pressing problems require, for their cooperative solution, a dialogue that brings together people from many different national, cultural and religious backgrounds (Nussbaum, 1997, p38).

Introduction

Despite the negative image which many people have of tourists, there are those who claim that tourism can contribute to a more peaceful world by encouraging people to learn about each other and to understand, appreciate and accept the differences among our many societies. Few would dispute the view that enhanced understanding, appreciation and acceptance of such differences would be universally beneficial, but the question which arises is: Can tourism really contribute to those desirable objectives?

The question was debated at an international conference, 'Tourism: A Vital Force for Peace' held in Vancouver in October 1988. Despite the qualified optimism apparent there, the arguments against the above claim are numerous and convincing. Commentators point to the negative impacts which arouse resentment and hostility in the communities subjected to tourism, and not only in developing countries where the impacts are often most obvious. Negativities include damage to cultural and biophysical environments and inequalities in benefit distribution (Britton and Clarke, 1987); the over-exploitation of 'common pool' resources (Healy, 1994); the colonialist characteristics of modern tourism (Krippendorf, 1987); the promotion of indigenous peoples as subjects for tourist consumption (Silver, 1993); the barriers between hosts and guests created by tourist resorts and amusement parks (MacCannell, 1976); and the apparent links between tourism and crime (Kelly, 1993; Prideaux, 1994; Ross, 1994).

Tourists are also held responsible for disrupting traditional social patterns, and for introducing undesirable activities such as prostitution and gambling. In developing countries, ways of life and family harmony can be destroyed when children earn more from begging or providing guide services to tourists than the head of the family can from farmwork or fishing (McCarthy, 1994). In the eyes of many, tourism is tainted by the so-called 'sleaze factor' - the demand generated for sex tours, including those catering for paedophiles - and the spread of AIDS.

It may also be that, even with the best will in the world, the barriers to understanding between visitors and hosts are too great. It may be argued that, in many cases, the cultural gulf is insurmountable and the contact between them too fleeting. Even where the tourist visits a destination in order to learn about the host community culture, what they see is all too often trivialised and commodified, and not truly representative.

¹ This paper was published in The Proceedings of the Fourth Asia Pacific Tourism Association Conference, Tanyang, Korea, August 18-21, 1998, pp. 141-149.

However, the picture painted by this review is incomplete. Tourism is popular in many areas because of its contribution to foreign currency earnings, resource development, investment opportunities, direct and indirect employment, multiplier effects and modernisation of the economy (Harrison, 1992). In some areas, tourists are popular because living standards and community pride have been raised as the result of tourist developments, and desirable traditional skills and practices have been maintained to meet tourist demands. Balinese painting, Vietnamese water puppetry and Australian Aboriginal dance have experienced a revival and much wider exposure, supported by the income from tourism.

Var et al (1994) refer to the three levels of international relations generated by world tourism - dealings between governments, dealings between governments and corporations, and contact among private citizens. With respect to the first category, most governments have recognised the contribution which tourism can make to economic growth and have been encouraged thereby to cooperate with each other in pursuing these benefits. For example, the governments of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia have combined forces to offer visitors tour packages incorporating the attractions of the entire region. At the second level, there have been proposals to develop tourism following peace initiatives in Northern Ireland and in the parts of Israeli territory turned over to the Palestinians.

Despite the reluctance of some governments to ease visa restrictions, the scale of international travel and the growth of transnational travel and tourism organisations have contributed to a world in which national boundaries no longer constitute major barriers to tourist movement. The most serious discouragement to visiting a destination stems from civil or political instability and the perception that an area is unsafe. Clearly governments, travel industry organisations and, of course, tourists all have a vested interest in the development and maintenance of stable conditions and peaceful relationships.

Proponents of tourism as a force for world peace place more value on the third level of interaction, person-to-person contact. Nussbaum (1997) emphasises the need for people to overcome regional or group perceptions and recognise themselves as 'human beings bound to all others by ties of recognition and concern' (p 38).

However, it is likely that the ability of tourism to contribute to a more peaceful world by encouraging appropriate contact experiences may be enhanced by recognition of its potential to do so and by the purposeful implementation of actions directed to that end. Among Australian organisations addressing the issue is Community Aid Abroad. Through its subsidiary, One World Travel Tours (OWTT), CAA aims to encourage world peace by providing travellers with experiences which raise their awareness of developing country needs; encourage financial support for development projects; promote trade opportunities for developing countries; stimulate understanding of developing country cultures and problems, and of the complexities of the development process; and support for increased and more effective Australian Government aid. In the pre-tour literature, participants are urged to adhere to the following guiding principles of 'responsible travel' (CAA, 1990):

- to understand the culture being visited;
- to respect and learn from the people hosting the visit;

- to tread softly on the environment of the hosts.

The investigation reported on here was directed to ascertaining the extent to which One World Travel Tours has been effective in encouraging the development of traveller attitudes deemed conducive to peaceful relationships among countries.

Methodology

CAA provided a list of 289 past tour participants. A questionnaire was mailed to a random selection of 192 of these, and 86 usable responses were received. Among the questions there were some which sought information on participant sociodemographics, travel history, reasons for joining and changes in attitude which they attributed to the tour experience. Questions relating to travel history and sociodemographics were closed, but respondents were encouraged to provide detailed answers to the remaining, open-ended, questions. Responses to these were categorised for presentation in tabular format.

It is recognised that responses to such open-ended questions may be of limited reliability, reflecting subjective perceptions rather than objective measurement. To partially compensate for this the investigator joined a OWTT tour on which he could observe the extent to which the guiding principles above were reflected in tour management and visitor behaviour, and to facilitate in-depth discussion of relevant questions with participants.

Respondent Characteristics

Questionnaire responses indicated that CAA/OWTT tour participants were not representative of the general community in Australia in terms of certain sociodemographic characteristics. A key variable which emerged from the survey was gender, with the tour product offered appearing to be much more attractive to females than to males (57 females to 29 males.). This distribution matched that of the parent population. Seventy-five percent of respondents joined their latest tour alone and it is possible that the females among these attach value to the relative security offered by group travel. The majority of respondents lay in the 26-55 age groups. Most of the tours cited took place within the previous ten years, so it appears that participants were relatively mature.

Respondents also differ from the general population in that they are predominantly educated to a high level, with almost 90 percent holding university qualifications (Table 1). This is reflected in the occupational distribution, with over 77 percent in academic, professional and managerial positions. The majority lie in the middle-income level, but with no or few dependants.

To provide some insight into participant lifestyles, respondents were asked to indicate their hobbies, and most listed a number of outside interests (Table 2). The most popular category, physically active activities, included various sports and outdoor pursuits such as bushwalking. This was followed by an interest in the arts - music, film, drama and literature. Home activities included craftwork and gardening, etc., while a substantial number were involved in community service and environmental organisations and activities. There was little interest in passive activities such as spectator sports.

Table 1: Respondent Socioeconomic Characteristics (Total 86)

| OCCUPATION | NO. | % | EDUCATION | NO. | % |
|---------------------------|-----|------|----------------|-----|------|
| No response | 7 | 8.1 | No answer | 1 | 1.2 |
| Academic/Professional | 43 | 50.0 | Up to Year 10 | 4 | 4.7 |
| Managerial/Administrative | 24 | 27.9 | Up to Year 12 | 1 | 1.2 |
| Community work | 7 | 8.1 | Post-secondary | 3 | 3.5 |
| Trades/Clerical | 3 | 3.5 | UG degree | 43 | 50.0 |
| Farming | 2 | 2.3 | PG degree | 34 | 39.5 |
| ANNUAL INCOME | | | DEPENDANTS | NO. | % |
| No answer | 5 | 5.8 | No answer | 3 | 3.5 |
| 0-\$10000 | 1 | 1.2 | None | 59 | 68.6 |
| \$10001-25000 | 27 | 31.4 | 1 | 8 | 9.3 |
| \$25001-50000 | 44 | 51.2 | 2 | 8 | 9.3 |
| \$50001-75000 | 8 | 9.3 | 3 | 7 | 8.1 |
| Over \$75000 | 1 | 1.2 | 4 or more | 1 | 1.2 |

With respect to pre-tour organisation membership (Table 3), a little more than half of the respondents had been members of CAA before undertaking their latest tour, with no significant difference between the sexes. Males were more likely than females to have been members of other aid or environmental organisations, but females were more likely than males to have joined other organisations in addition to CAA

Table 2: Respondent Hobbies (first nomination)

| HOBBY CATEGORIES | MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| N/A | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Physically active | 9 | 18 | 27 |
| Arts | 1 | 17 | 18 |
| Home activities | 4 | 8 | 12 |
| Community activities | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| Intellectual/Educational | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Travel | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 29 | 57 | 86 |

Table 3: Pre-tour Organisation Membership

| SEX | N/A NONE | CAA | OTHER | BOTH | TTL |
|-----|-------------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| M | 4 | 16 | 6 | 3 | 29 |
| F | 11 | 29 | 4 | 13 | 57 |
| Ttl | 15 | 45 | 10 | 16 | 86 |

It appears then that in sociodemographic and lifestyle terms, the market for CAA and OWTT tours has largely consisted of young and mature middle-income adults, predominantly female, highly educated, employed in professional or managerial occupations, and with a range of physically active, intellectually stimulating and community-oriented outside interests.

Respondent Travel History and Motivation

Table 4 reflects the two-to-one female to male ratio in overall tour participation, but it also shows that females were marginally more likely than males to participate in more than one tour. The majority of respondents had travelled only with CAA/OWTT tours, but a substantial number had also experienced travel with another organisation.

Table 4: Number of Tours Taken

| NO OF TOURS | MALES | FEMALES | TOTAL | PERCENT |
|-------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| 1 | 17 | 30 | 47 | 55 |
| 2 | 6 | 14 | 20 | 23 |
| 3 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 9 |
| More than 3 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 13 |
| Total | 29 | 57 | 86 | 100 |

Table 5: Countries Visited

| COUNTRY | MALE | FEMALE | % | COUNTRY | MALE | FEMALE | % |
|-------------|------|--------|------|-----------|------|--------|-----|
| India | 15 | 25 | 46.5 | Australia | 1 | 3 | 4.7 |
| Thailand | 3 | 10 | 15.1 | SE Asia | 1 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Vietnam | 2 | 2 | 12.8 | Indonesia | 1 | 1 | 2.3 |
| C. America | 5 | 2 | 8.1 | Tanzania | 0 | 1 | 1.2 |
| Philippines | 1 | 4 | 5.8 | Laos | 0 | 1 | 1.2 |

A wide range of destinations was represented in the sample (Table 5). The most popular choice was India, probably because it has been offered for the longest period of time. Only Central America was more popular with males than with females.

Table 6: Reasons for joining tour

| Interest area | Total | Male | Female | Interest area | Total | Male | Female |
|------------------|-------|------|--------|---------------|-------|------|--------|
| N/A | 2 | 1 | 1 | Group travel | 11 | 3 | 8 |
| CAA projects | 51 | 20 | 31 | Remote access | 8 | 2 | 6 |
| Non-tourist | 24 | 6 | 18 | Purpose | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| 'Real' people | 18 | 6 | 12 | Sensitivity | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Specific country | 16 | 6 | 10 | Cost | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Educational | 14 | 4 | 10 | Enjoyment | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Cultural | 13 | 6 | 7 | | | | |

Most respondents provided a number of reasons for choosing their last study tour (Table 6). Overall, participants were most attracted by the opportunities to see at first hand the processes associated with development work, and CAA projects in particular. A large proportion were drawn by the access the tour provided to particular countries, the prospect of meeting the host people, especially the villagers, and of visiting the more remote areas of the destination.

The access factor appears to relate to the perception that the study tour offered a non-tourist, non-commercial experience. It also appears to relate to the desire for an experience which is educational and/or cultural, and for a holiday which is purposeful. Some specific interests were listed, for example, in health and women's projects. However, it is apparent from the responses that the predominant concern was with authenticity and an expectation that the study tours would provide participants with an experience which was not staged for their benefit.

Impact of Tour on Participants

Table 7: Impact on Destination Choice

| IMPACT | MALES | FEMALES | TOTAL |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| N/A | 7 | 12 | 19 |
| No influence | 6 | 19 | 25 |
| Asia/3rd World | 7 | 16 | 23 |
| Non-tourist areas | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| Australia | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Western countries | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Wider choice | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 29 | 57 | 86 |

With respect to impact of the tour experience on holiday destination choice, a large proportion of respondents gave no answer or indicated no influence (Table 7). However, a number of the latter, mostly experienced travellers, claimed that the tour experience had

confirmed their previous views. Interest in Asia and less developed countries was stimulated by the tour experience, although some found the poverty disturbing, and the antipathy to mainstream tourism was again highlighted. The small number who indicated an increased interest in travel to Western countries were attracted by the comfort offered and the reduced potential for damage to these cultures.

It is clear from other responses (Tables 8, 9,10) that the tour experience did influence the attitudes of participants, many of whom stressed the importance of first-hand observation. A number of respondents, especially females, indicated that the tour experience had contributed to deeper understanding of the problems facing less developed countries, and an almost equal group accepted that countries like Australia bear some responsibility in this matter. Some respondents stressed the importance of interdependence in the relationship.

Table 8: Impact on views on relationship with Third World

| IMPACT | MALES | FEMALES | TOTAL (%) |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| N/A | 5 | 7 | 12 (13.95) |
| No influence | 3 | 1 | 4 (4.65) |
| Deeper understanding | 6 | 22 | 28 (32.56) |
| Awareness of interdependence | 6 | 8 | 14 (16.28) |
| More questioning | 0 | 2 | 2 (2.33) |
| More responsible | 8 | 17 | 25 (29.07) |
| Overwhelmed | 1 | 0 | 1 (1.16) |
| TOTAL | 29 | 57 | 86 (100) |

Table 9: Impact on attitude to foreign aid

| IMPACT | MALES | FEMALES | TOTAL (%) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|
| N/A | 2 | 2 | 4 (4.65) |
| No influence | 2 | 2 | 4 (4.65) |
| More supportive | 13 | 27 | 40 (46.51) |
| More selective | 11 | 17 | 28 (32.56) |
| More doubtful | 1 | 5 | 6 (6.98) |
| Better informed | 0 | 4 | 4 (4.65) |
| TOTAL | 29 (100) | 57 | 86 (100) |

Table 10: Impact on attitude to Australian aid

| IMPACT | MALES | FEMALES | TOTAL (%) |
|------------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| N/A | 2 | 9 | 11 (12.79) |
| No influence | 4 | 5 | 9 (10.47) |
| More supportive | 7 | 17 | 24 (27.91) |
| More selective | 11 | 13 | 24 (27.91) |
| Less supportive | 5 | 10 | 15 (17.44) |
| Better informed | 0 | 3 | 3 (3.49) |
| TOTAL | 29 | 57 | 86 (100) |

These views were reflected to some extent in respondent attitudes to foreign aid. The majority of those who indicated change in their attitude became more supportive of foreign aid as a result of the tour, while most of the rest became more selective in that they believed aid should be more carefully targeted. A small number became more doubtful about the value of foreign aid.

Most respondents favoured small-scale, grassroots projects which contributed to local community self-sufficiency and empowerment, especially of women. There was scepticism about the motivation behind and the conditions attached to some forms of aid, and concerns about the bureaucratisation associated with government involvement.

Views were mixed on the issue of aid to deprived groups in Australia. Most were either more supportive or more selective, as with views on foreign aid. However, a substantial minority became less supportive. Most comments related to Aboriginal people, but other areas of deprivation were recognised. There was a view that all Australians had the right to Government support (rather than aid), and a concern that the problem is worsened by bureaucracy, paternalism, mismanagement and waste. Some respondents argued for a focus on the causes rather than the symptoms of deprivation in Australia. Some felt that aid, as distinct from government support, should therefore be directed overseas.

Table 11: Post-tour organisation membership

| PRE-TOUR MEMBERSHIP | NONE,N/A | CAA | OTHER | WITH-DREW | TOTAL |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| None/NA | 9 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| CAA | 36 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 45 |
| Other | 7 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| CAA+Other | 11 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 16 |
| TOTAL | 63 | 12 | 10 | 1 | 86 |

Table 12: Post-tour donations

| FREQUENCY | Male | Female | Total |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
|------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| None, N/A | 4 | 3 | 7 (8.14) |
| Once | 0 | 1 | 1 (1.16) |
| Occasional | 8 | 8 | 16 (18.60) |
| Regular | 17 | 45 | 62 (72.09) |
| Total | 29 | 57 | 86 (100) |

One indicator of activism is the extent to which tour participants take up membership in or contribute to aid organisations. Table 11 indicates that at least nine respondents became new members of CAA after their tour, and that at least six joined other aid or environmental organisations. One respondent terminated membership as a result of ‘disillusionment’ with the organisation following the tour experience.

The possibility of exaggeration in declared frequency of donations must be recognised, but responses (Table 12) suggest that financial support for aid organisations was at least maintained after tour experiences, and that females are more regular contributors to aid organisations.

Sample tour observation

As noted, the investigator also participated in a OWTT tour in order to observe the extent to which the guiding principles above were reflected in tour management and visitor behaviour, and to facilitate in-depth discussion of relevant questions with participants.

In terms of sociodemographic characteristics, reasons for choosing the tour, expectations and level of satisfaction, and impact on attitudes, the tour participants largely paralleled the survey respondents. An additional element of satisfaction related to the unscheduled people-to-people contacts initiated while waiting for repairs to the minibus.

However, it was noted that, when placed in ‘mainstream’ tourism situations, most tour participants displayed what are commonly regarded as mainstream tourism behaviours. This involved aggressive haggling over prices for craftwork and personal transport services, and avoidance, overt distrust and curt dismissal of beggars, even when their disabilities were clearly visible. It is likely that, to some extent, attitudes on haggling and beggars have been conditioned by claims in guidebooks and travel literature that the sellers enjoy haggling and that beggars should not be encouraged. However, in a poor country, the search for bargains is likely to be perceived as exploitative, and the rejection of beggars as insensitive.

Conclusions

The survey, tour participant responses and tour observation indicated the following:

- That the CAA/OWTT study tours attract a relatively narrow segment of the Australian population distinguished by a predominance of females, high levels of education, professional and managerial occupations, and leisure lifestyles involving intellectual, artistic or community-oriented activities..

- That those undertaking such tours are drawn by the perception that they are not mainstream tourism products, and that they offer opportunities to learn from culture-contact situations which are not staged
- That acceptance of the principles of 'responsible travel' is not necessarily translated into practice during a tour, suggesting a need for care in the selection of destination ground operators, guides and tour leaders able to set an appropriate example.
- That the CAA approach to achieving its objectives is effective largely because its tours attract people who already have or are inclined towards the desired attitudes.

Discussion

The sad truth is that tourists, like other human groups, are subject to negative stereotyping based on perceptions of so-called mass tourism, an evolutionary development which, like it or not, will be with us for a long time. But there are other types of tourism less likely to be damaging or to create hostility, and there should be a greater focus on these. Concern for the natural environment is now reflected in ecotourism, which seeks to involve tour organisers and visitors in the protection, and in some cases, the enhancement of environments.

It is submitted here that the value of intercultural contact in reducing tensions is now widely recognised. D'Amore (1988) draws attention to the proliferation of student and cultural exchanges, twinning of cities and states, and international sporting events as demonstrating the commonality of human goals and aspirations. However, only tourism provides the opportunity for people to interact with others on the scale required.

Despite the limitations apparent in the CAA/OWTT approach, it is submitted that there are elements therein which could be adopted by other tour operators in the effort to reach a wider audience.

There is evidence that host community sensitivities and environments are better protected if visitors are pre-informed about potential problems and ways of avoiding them. The provision of pre-tour literature, reading lists and briefing evenings help meet this learning objective, and contribute significantly to the quality of and satisfaction with the eventual visitor experience. It is likely that educating the host community about the visitors would have similar positive effects. Above all, there must be recognition of the value of planning, and of the need to involve the local community in order to gain their support.

There is a need for travel organisers to ensure that host-tourist contacts are positive, to arrange for visitors and hosts to meet on equal terms rather than in some kind of master-servant relationship. McIntosh et al (1995) refer to 'people-to-people' programs by which travel organisers arrange for families to meet and stay with host families in other countries. Transnational friendships may be kindled by bringing together people with shared interests, for example, in farming, small business, music or child-rearing. The quality of communication in such interactions is important, suggesting that tour guides must be selected for their ability to mediate informatively between visitor and host and exercise appropriate levels of control over tourist behaviour.

The tourists themselves must take some responsibility for the outcomes of their travel, avoiding those activities which are demonstrably damaging and encouraging, with their

patronage, tourism products deemed desirable. For example, it has been proposed that tourists boycott countries such as Myanmar (Burma) whose government-sponsored tourism development practices are grossly exploitative and fail to recognise the rights of their own people.

One element of the travel experience of which more might be made is the after-trip discussion. People are usually delighted with opportunities to talk about their travels, and this is encouraged by CAA/OWTT as a means of promotion and channel for activism. Newspaper and travel magazine editors could play a part by commissioning or more frequently accepting freelance submissions which seek to educate the potential traveller rather than merely advertise a product or destination.

In summary, it is apparent that the growth in tourist numbers, the expansion of tourism into remote and undeveloped areas, and its enormous cultural impacts constitute both threat and opportunity. If used wisely, tourism provides us with opportunities to satisfy a natural curiosity, to gain insights into other ways of life, to critically examine our own traditions, and to demonstrate that people throughout the world can live in harmony.

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