





local traditions and values can either become meaningless (Greenwood 1977) or more significant (Van den Berghe 1994) once they are commodified in tourism; and local residents can either bear the brunt of resource degradation (Stonich 2000) or become the primary stewards of resource protection (Young 1999) in the context of tourism. We know practically nothing, however, about the impacts of tourism on the tourists themselves. How are they affected by what they see, do, and experience during their travels?

These gaps in our understanding can also be characterized in terms of theory versus data for different kinds of analyses. In their assessments of what motivates tourists (i.e., the psychosocial factors, material conditions, etc.), several scholars have posited generalizable theories (MacCannell 1976, Graburn 1983, Nash 1981). Yet, relatively little empirical data has been analyzed to support or refute such theories. Conversely, in the examination of the impacts of tourism, researchers have relied much more on data than on theory. Though the literature is well stocked with ethnographic case studies of tourism's impacts in host communities, we have yet to develop models or analytical frameworks that could help us predict the conditions under which locals experience tourism in particular ways.

I elaborate on these gaps in the literature with greater detail in the following pages. My main message is that we should be posing new kinds of questions in the anthropology of tourism, especially as we begin to consider the social, economic, and environmental merits of ecotourism and other alternative forms of tourism. In the past decade or so, the tourism industry has taken major shifts toward goals of economic and ecological sustainability, local participation, and environmental education. Just as the industry has changed, so too should our research objectives. I suggest that we devote more attention to two kinds of inquiry. On the host end, what are some of the factors that can explain particular kinds of local involvement in tourism? On the guest end, what are the differential effects of certain kinds of tourism on guests' attitudes and behaviors, both in the midst of their tour and once they have returned home?

Throughout the paper I refer primarily to tourism that involves people from Western developed parts of the world visiting either non-Western or economically underdeveloped parts of the world. Of course, the tourism industry includes many other types of travel and leisure, including family vacations to Disney World, group tours through art museums and battlefield destinations (on)-38f6y1ufy13nto1136y13n

One exception was Nuñez, who described weekend tourism in a Mexican village in 1963. In the past two decades, a whole field has emerged, complete with refereed journals, most notably *The Annals of Tourism Research*, conferences, university courses, and oft-cited seminal works. One of the best-known pioneering works in the academic study of tourism is by Smith (1989), first published in 1977. Her volume provided both a preliminary theoretical perspective and 12 case studies documenting the impacts of tourism. MacCannell (1976) has also been highly influential, especially for developing a theory of tourism in modern society. Several key scholars have published field-defining articles over the years (Cohen 1972, 1984; Crick 1989; Graburn 1983; Jafari 1977; Nash 1981; Nash & Smith 1991;) More recent introductory compendiums include those by Burns (1999), Chambers (1997, 1999), and Nash (1996).

Several factors make tourism especially relevant to anthropology. For one, tourism occurs in most, if not all, human societies. It is, at least, safe to say that people in nearly every society have been touched in some way by tourism. Many anthropologists have witnessed first-hand the changes wrought by tourism in their field sites. In fact, tourism seems to occupy at least a subsection in many studies that otherwise have little to do with tourism per se. Places off the beaten path—the kinds of places often of most interest to anthropologists—are increasingly opening to tourism as the international economy globalizes, and as transnational networks of transportation and communication are improved (Lanfant et al 1995). Today, tourists are gaining access to even the most remote destinations in the Amazon (Castner 1990, Linden 1991), the Himalayas (Jayal 1986, McEachern 1995), the Antarctic (Hall & Johnston 1995, Vidas 1993), and, yes, outer space (Rogers 1998).

The economic importance of tourism has also merited the attention of anthropologists. As Greenwood (1989) noted, tourism is “the largest scale movement of goods, services, and people that humanity has perhaps ever seen” (p. 171). The World Tourism Organization (2000) estimated that the number of international tourists traveling in the world in 1999 was 664 million. The International Ecotourism Society (1998) calculated that tourism receipts represent one third of the world trade in services. Such figures point to the fact that tourism is a significant catalyst of economic development and sociopolitical change, processes that are central to the interests of many anthropologists. Especially among those concerned about sustainable development and conservation, ecotourism has become a special focus.

Finally, tourism has captured the attention of anthropologists because it often involves face-to-face encounters between people of different cultural backgrounds. Lett (1989) once credited tourism with bringing about “the single largest peaceful movement of people across cultural boundaries in the history of the world” (p. 275). When tourists and locals come together, both have the opportunity not only to



meaningful (i.e., “not to be missed”). These might include the Grand Canyon, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Eiffel Tower. The act of seeing these “in person” and then sharing the experience with others through photographs, souvenirs, and stories allows tourists to reassemble the disparate pieces of their otherwise fragmented lives. Through tourism, then, life and society can appear to be an orderly series of representations, like snapshots in a family album (but see Lippard 1999). Indeed, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) has interpreted the ways in which tourism stages and displays the world as a museum of itself. By touring the sites of this global “museum” tourists can ultimately affirm and reinforce what they think they already know about the world (Bruner 1991).

In a similar vein, Graburn (1989) characterized tourism as a kind of ritual process that reflects society’s deeply held values about health, freedom, nature, and self-improvement. In this view, vacations can be interpreted as the modern, secular equivalent of the annual festivals and pilgrimages in more traditional, religious societies. Drawing on Durkheim, Graburn analyzed the ritual function of tourism in society, especially its role in building and maintaining a collective consciousness. The totems in the modern ritual of tourism appear on the pages of guidebooks, on websites, and on the surfaces of our souvenirs. Through the collective reverence of these totems, tourists are able to strengthen their connection to each other as well as to the larger society.

Turner & Turner (1978) theorized that leisure travel is indeed like a pilgrimage, one that can lift people out of the ordinary structures of their everyday lives. Tourism can offer freedom from work and other obligatory time, an escape from traditional social roles, and the liberty to spend one’s time however one chooses. Like other ritual activities, tourism ushers its participants to a state of liminality, or unstructured “time out of time.” In this way, modern tourism reflects the “antistructure” of life, an escape from something, rather than a quest for something (Turner 1969, 1982). Here then, the importance of authenticity is diminished as an explanation for what motivates tourists to travel (Bruner 1991).

In other studies related to the origins of tourism, anthropologists have sought to explain why some kinds of tourism arise in particular types of societies (Cohen 1972). In this line of research, tourism is conceptualized as a superstructural phenomenon, dependent on a range of material factors (Nash 1996). The question becomes what particular social, political, and environmental conditions in any given society give rise to certain types of leisure travel or particular types of tourists (Crandall 1980, Dann 1981)? What is it about Japanese society, for example, that compels its people to favor sightseeing in large groups?

## Assessing Local Choices and Constraints

Though anthropologists have delved into the factors that motivate tourists to travel, they have trained less attention on examining the conditions under which people in host destinations become involved in tourism. A first step in filling this gap would be first to recognize that not all people in a host destination participate in tourism

equally. Some members of a local area may participate directly, interacting with tourists on a regular basis as guides, performers, or artisans, whereas others may become involved only behind the scenes, working as support staff or as wholesalers of foods and supplies. From an economic perspective, local hosts will also differ in terms of how much time and energy they invest in tourism: Some will work as full-time wage laborers, whereas others will contract their labor occasionally or earn cash only through the sale of goods.

In teasing apart differences in how local hosts participate—or choose not to participate—in tourism, we may begin to analyze the range of factors that determine who gets involved, why, and in what ways. Only by asking these latter questions can we explore what tourism determines in people's lives and what factors in people's lives define their connection with tourism.

From case studies, we know that gender is one important variable that determines who within a host community participates in tourism. Swain (1989) found that gender roles among the Kuna Indians of Panama have shaped the local response to tourism. Specifically, Kuna women have produced mola artwork of fabric appliqué, thus maintaining a marketable image of ethnicity to tourists, while Kuna men control the political decisions that determine Kuna interactions with tourism. Wilkinson & Pratiwi (1995) found that women in an Indonesian village could not be involved in tourist guiding because it was not regarded favorably by villagers, the connotation being that women were perceived as prostitutes interested in con-

## IMPACTS OF TOURISM



Ethnographic case studies from host destinations around the world showed that wage labor introduced through tourism raises the opportunity costs of subsistence activities. Oliver-Smith (1989) described a case in Spain in which local hosts substituted their labor in farming with work in tourism. Mansperger (1995) analyzed how tourism among Pacific islanders led to the cessation of subsistence activities and made locals more dependent on the outside world. Seiler-Baldinger's (1988) research in the Upper Amazon attributed declines in health among locals to the fact that they moved away from subsistence activities to work in tourism. Rosenberg (1988) argued that tourism contributed to the demise of agriculture in a small mountain village in France, where grazing animals came to be used mainly for clearing ski slopes. The disruption of subsistence activities was not necessarily a problem in itself, but it became a problem when the flow of tourists was reduced, and people were left with no economic alternatives from which to sustain themselves. Unfortunately, this was (and still is) a relatively common phenomenon because the tourism industry is especially prone to boom-bust cycles.

A second problem anthropologists found with tourism-fueled development is that it often leads to increased wealth stratification in host communities, ultimately sparking or exacerbating social conflict. Among the Yapese, Mansperger found "the Chief is not sharing the entrance fees to the village . . . and money is making people stingy, therefore harming community spirit" (1995, p. 90). Vickers (1997) related a similar story among the Siona and Secoya of Ecuador, in which some individuals were working as native entrepreneurs, guiding tourists with outboard motors and even constructing their own lodges. Problems arose when those showing the most entrepreneurial spirit were perceived as seeking personal enrichment without regard for the welfare of the group. In these cases, as in many others, tourism seemed to contribute to increased social stratification and conflict.

Though the literature in the anthropology of tourism currently includes excellent descriptions of what can go wrong when tourism is introduced into local communities, the analysis so far has been strangely devoid of local voices. We have learned relatively little about how locals themselves perceive the array of pros and cons associated with tourism. Often our assumptions have been that locals were duped into accepting tourism rather than having consciously chosen such an option for themselves. Compounding the absence of local perspective has been a lack of rigor in terms of analyzing the pure effect of tourism on new problems and/or im-

conflicts in host communities, especially in developing countries.

causing increased wealth stratification in some communities, perhaps, people (host) communities. The construction of a local economy and the proclamation of tourism as a development strategy have often been the result of a top-down process.

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## Social and Cultural Change

In addition to economic development, intercultural contact and the changes that result from it have been an especially pervasive theme in studying the impacts of tourism (Nash 1996). An early example came from Nuñez (1963, p. 347), who described tourism as a “laboratory situation” for testing how acculturation occurs when urban tourists representing “donor” cultures interact with host populations in “recipient” cultures. Though anthropologists may shy away from the now politicized term acculturation, the concept behind it is still present in public and academic discourses on tourism in indigenous communities. Acculturation is what many fear will happen with the intrusion of tourists, consumerism, and the “commodification of culture” (e.g., Chicchón 1995, McLaren 1997, Rossel 1988, Seiler-Baldinger 1988).

“Commodification of culture” has been used to describe a process by which things come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, thereby becoming goods (Cohen 1988). Greenwood (1977) used the concept of commodification in association with tourism to describe how the *alarde* festival in the Basque town of Fuenterrabia lost its cultural and symbolic meaning to locals once it had been opened to tourists and marketed like any other commodity. The concern among many tourism scholars has been whether a cultural item or ritual loses meaning for locals once it has been commodified. Does the item become material property of the highest bidder rather than a spiritually, ceremonially, or in some other way significant artifact of the host culture? In applying this question to Australian Aboriginal bark paintings, Hall (1994), for example, found that once the paintings had been marketed to international consumers, they were uprooted from their traditional social and cultural context, and thus lost significance for locals. Picard (1990) asserted that Balinese culture has been so commodified that the distinction between what is Balinese and what is attributable to tourism is no longer clear, even to the Balinese themselves.

Often entangled in discussions of commodification is the idea that people in host destinations will lose their cultural identity as a result of tourism. Many worry that tourism may cause hosts to forget their past or “lose their culture” as they adopt the new lifestyles and ways of being they learn from outsiders. Erisman has argued that the massive influx of foreign goods, people, and ideas to rural host destinations has a negative impact, which, ultimately, “erodes people’s self-esteem” (1983, p. 350). In this view, tourism can lead to a kind of “cultural dependency” in which local people gain economic benefits, but only as they are catering to the needs of outsiders. Loss of identity occurs in this scenario as the local economy improves and hosts begin to act and think like tourists, whom they perceive as superior in every way. In other studies as well, commodities have been seen as an especially corruptive force among indigenous peoples. Reed (1995) noted that commodities are perceived as pulling people “deeper into the dark vortex of commercial activities and spewing them out on the other side of the ethnic boundary into the harsh light of national societies and the international economy” (p. 137).

Other scholars perceive tourism as affecting local identity through the conveyance of expectations. According to this view, tourists shape the outcome of touristic encounters by giving preference to locals who look and behave in ways that are authentically indigenous or ethnic. A problem here is that authenticity is a subjective concept, and tourists often define for themselves what is authentic, relying on popular stereotypes as points of reference rather than on historical or ethnographic facts (Adams 1984, Crick 1989). Boorstin (1964) described encounters between tourists and locals as “pseudo-events” that are based on what





With only a few exceptions, research in the anthropology of tourism has overlooked the origins and motivations of tourism from the hosts' perspective. Although many anthropologists have eloquently portrayed the ways in which tourism has changed the lives of locals, we have neglected to turn the analysis around and to imagine how hosts might be affecting guests. This trend may change as we shift away from assuming that tourism is always imposed on passive and powerless people. Even in cases where the forced and exploitative nature of tourism is irrefutable, we may begin to probe more deeply into understanding how locals themselves are perceiving the imposition, rather than continuing to rely on our own perspectives as anthropologists.

## ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TOURISM

In the 1970s and 1980s, review articles on the study of tourism often asked why anthropologists were avoiding tourism as a legitimate subject of analysis. Today, the question might be the opposite: Why are anthropologists paying so much attention to alternative forms of tourism? Especially in the past decade, tourism has gained a much more positive reputation among social scientists, environmental conservationists, development practitioners, and indigenous rights activists. This is because an expanding group of new tourism companies, often in partnership with nongovernmental organizations, now claims to go easy on the environment and on indigenous peoples, even as they strive for profit. These companies label their excursions variously as "ecotourism," "community-based tourism," "cultural tourism," or simply "alternative tourism."

Generally defined, alternative tourism includes "forms of tourism that are consistent with natural, social, and community values, and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences" (Eadington & Smith 1992, p. 3). This new brand of tourism has grabbed the attention of scholars concerned with recent agendas to link conservation and development (e.g., Guillen 1998, Lamont 1999, Sills 1998, Stronza 2000, Wildes 1998). At least a couple of new journals, including the *Journal of Ecotourism* and the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, have begun to focus on the possibilities and limitations of alternative tourism. In general, the literature seems more balanced than did earlier research on tourism. At least anthropologists are not automatically condemning the impacts of tourism on local communities. If anything, perhaps the scale has tilted in the other direction. Now the tendency seems to be to applaud tourism as a panacea for achieving a wide array of social, economic, and environmental goals. Munt (1994) observed that "[w]hile mass tourism has attracted trenchant criticism as a shallow and degrading experience for Third World host nations and peoples, new tourism practices have been viewed benevolently" (p. 50).

Ecotourism has gained a lion's share of the attention aimed at alternative travel. An early publication on ecotourism commissioned by the U.S.-based environmental group, Conservation International, identified ecotourism as "a form of tourism



Just as we lack an understanding of how hosts participate in the origins of conventional tourism, we also know relatively little about how and why local hosts get involved in ecotourism. Although locals may not be financing new infrastructure or negotiating directly with international travel agencies, they are nevertheless affecting what happens on the ground in many ecotourism sites. In cases where locals are opposed to ecotourism, for example, they may express their opposition by vandalizing infrastructure. Also, by hunting or clearing trails in areas around an ecolodge, locals can sabotage the image of pristine nature many ecotourism lodges promote. Bennett (1999) described a case in Panama in which members of the Kuna protested outsiders' investment in tourism by burning a hotel twice, and attacking one of the hotel owners. Belsky (1999) wrote about a similar example in the village of Maya Center in Belize, where the locals burned a handicraft center.

Local residents can also decide the fate of an ecotourism operation by playing competitor companies off on each other, setting the conditions under which they will tolerate or welcome the influx of tourists. If several companies are competing for the same acceptance of a community, they may become involved in battles over who can provide the best benefits, a situation in which the locals are determining, to some extent, the operating costs of the companies. In these ways, local hosts can influence the success or failure of tourism, regardless of the external inputs and intentions of outsider consultants.

## From Both Sides Now

In current efforts to make tourism participatory and to involve local residents as decision makers in tourism projects, anthropologists can make a significant contribution to the field by focusing more attention on the reasons local residents choose to, or are able to, become involved in tourism. This information will be important if we consider that the right external inputs are probably necessary, but not sufficient for ensuring the benefits of tourism for locals. Prevailing conditions, such as the structure of local political and economic institutions, ethnic relations, gender stereotypes, and the subsistence labor obligations of local would-be hosts may be particularly relevant.

A few scholars have already advanced hypotheses about local conditions most conducive to successful community based tourism. For example, Smith (1989) wrote, "Tourism is especially favored where significant segments of the population have minimal education or technical skills, inasmuch as other industries may require extensive training" (p. xi). In 1996, King & Stewart (1996) hypothesized that "[p]ositive impacts of ecotourism are likely to be the greatest when the indigenous culture is already in a state of decline as a result of natural resources scarcity" (p. 299). These are precisely the kinds of assumptions we may want to explore in the future. Although we now have many solid descriptive analyses of what happens when tourism is introduced to communities, we lack comparison across sites to analyze both the internal and external factors that determine why we find certain kinds of interactions with tourism in particular settings.



As with conventional tourism, we also lack information about the impacts of ecotourism on tourists. Researchers have invested considerable effort into the impacts of ecotourism on hosts, and much hope is pinned on the possibility that ecotourism will provide the economic incentive for hosts to maintain and protect the natural sites and cultural traditions tourists come to see. Less effort has been invested in analyzing the incentives ecotourism offers to tourists to change their own perspectives and behaviors. This gap in the research exists despite the fact that a significant goal of ecotourism is to raise environmental and cultural awareness among tourists.

We do not know, for example, what kinds of travel heightens consciousness or educates people in particular ways. We do know a lot about how tourists feel in terms of their accommodations—most companies request posttravel evaluations—



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**ERRATA**

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