

Research Probe

This Department has been specifically created to include findings of special significance and problem areas of subtle nuances in tourism research. Insightful contributions presenting the state-of-the-art, preferably from the developing societies, will be appreciated. It will also encourage scholars and authors to think against the grain, probing the consistency of theoretical notions and research trends whose heuristic value is all too often taken for granted. For details, contact Editor-in-Chief, Tourism Recreation Research, A-965/6 Indra Nagar, Lucknow, India. e-mail: tvsingh@sancharnet.in

The Tourism Industry's Welfare Responsibilities: An Adequate Response?

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It has long been recognized that the global tourism industry is fiercely competitive and dominated by transnational corporations, mainly based in developed countries. These organizations leverage power over the suppliers of the tourism product, potentially creating unequal exchange and power relationships. They are forced to compete through international mergers and acquisitions, and are able to survive on small margins because of substantial economies of scale. This results in continuous new product development and aggressive marketing through lower prices. The resulting instability of the sector makes it difficult for companies to plan for a more sustainable future, and 'against such a background taking steps to behave more responsibly has traditionally received a predictably low priority' (Miller 2001: 590). At the same time, pressure on companies to take responsibility for the environmental and social damage that tourism can cause, and for the well-being of the tourists who pay its wages is growing, not just among community and lobby groups, but also within the wider public. Despite the difficulties, there is a general perception that companies have absorbed the message that they need to think more about the ethics of their actions, and that they are taking steps to behave more responsibly. This research probe offers some observations on the tourism industry's response to the increasing awareness of the need for ethical practice and on the nature of responsibility exhibited.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The currently popular concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) represents the objective of forging stronger connections between business and society and allowing companies to take a direct role in improving the

business environment (Laing 2004). It is claimed to be a

commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, quoted in Kalisch 2000: 2).

This would appear ideally suited to benefit the welfare of tourism industry stakeholders. Certainly, acknowledgement of CSR and the perceived need to respond to ethical considerations are increasingly expressed in tourism business practice. Yet there are important questions relating to the choice of social responsibilities that tourism businesses can sensibly undertake and the ways in which they can be measured and justified (Henderson 2007).

Some specialist operators are unhappy with such terms as 'responsible' and 'ethical', believing that the former can falsely raise expectations, while the latter may be vague and difficult to define (Weeden 2005: 238). Kalisch (2002) argues that CSR represents a recognition that tourism sustainability cannot be achieved unless corporate bodies take greater responsibility towards society in general. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC 2002: 1) articulated the *raison d'être* of CSR in tourism partly in terms of poverty alleviation and social equity, and this appears to be consonant with one of the other more recent fashionable marketing concepts, pro-poor tourism (e.g., see Butcher 2003; UNWTO 2004; Hall and Brown 2006).

Corporate social responsibility is in danger of becoming just another fashion and a cynical means of conveying the impression that the corporate world willingly embraces ethical concern and acceptance of its moral responsibilities (Briedenham 2004). For such approaches to represent a

fundamental re-evaluation of tourism’s role in relation to global equity there needs to be an – as yet apparently unrealistic – significant commitment to directly address the structural causes of global inequity (Chok et al. 2007).

Can stakeholders and companies negotiate a responsible path, then, or is there a need for independent or regulatory organizations to guide and exert pressure for tourism development to be pursued for the collective good (however defined)? The CSR literature gushingly suggests that companies should learn to be inspired by their customers and other stakeholders, and to combine this inspiration with the confidence to take socially responsible products beyond niches and into the mainstream. Once these products are in the mainstream, we are told, the evidence shows that they are unlikely to be rejected, and other companies may well imitate them (Laing 2004: 58; Burgess 2003). These aspirations are based on a number of contested observations and assumptions (Hall and Brown 2006: 160):

1. that ethical production and consumption are growing and diversifying, linked to a desire for quality products and services not constrained by socio-economic boundaries. Yet, the rhetoric of enthusiasm for working for and purchasing services from companies with responsible practices is in conflict with the reality of often poor working conditions part-driven by a widespread desire for low prices and convenience;
2. that relatively limited stakeholder pressure can inspire wider-ranging beneficial effects. In practice, most information available to consumers and employees is imperfect; decisions are not well informed by evidence of ethical and sustainable practice, although increasing amounts of useful information are being made available in the public domain through the Internet;
3. that independently-verified information on services and products generates positive response from consumers and has benefits for companies. However, the different cultures in which tourism business takes place have varying conceptions of ethics and responsibility (e.g., Yaman and Gurel 2006). This renders the concept of ‘independence’ arbitrary in a global tourism context.

Pro-poor and fair trade tourism should represent important elements in the CSR debate, shifting the emphasis from short-term ‘doing good’ to finding ‘win – win’ situations (Ashley and Haysom 2005). Locke (2003) recognizes a four-fold typology of CSR approaches that demonstrates how these are apparently becoming more proactive (Table 1). Advocates of pro-poor tourism (PPT) approaches, for

example, would see companies shifting from the ‘philanthropic’ to ‘encompassing’ mode. But while the table implies a clear and positive progression, in reality most of the tourism industry has not gone far enough ‘across the columns’ to make much difference.

Table 1. Approaches to Corporate Social Responsibility

Minimalist	Philanthropic	Encompassing	Social Activist
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic stakeholder support <input type="checkbox"/> Addressing aspects that are generally human resource oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Tokenistic	<input type="checkbox"/> Project specific <input type="checkbox"/> Related to specific issues relevant to the particular organization <input type="checkbox"/> Donations and gifts <input type="checkbox"/> Seeks to change	<input type="checkbox"/> Looks beyond the immediate business stakeholder group to the broader community <input type="checkbox"/> Embedded in company values and management style <input type="checkbox"/> Seeks to lead change	<input type="checkbox"/> Approach is the foundation of the business <input type="checkbox"/> Business is a catalyst for change <input type="checkbox"/> Seeks to effect change in others

Sources: Locke 2003; Ashley and Haysom 2005; Hall and Brown 2006: 161.

Assessing Progress

The tourism industry in many respects mirrors the way in which contemporary business organizations represent a wide range of forms, activities, linkages, and senses of corporate ethos, from the highly rigid and bureaucratic to the highly flexible and ad hoc. Fisher (2003) draws a distinction between surface and deep approaches to ethics in understanding the difference between the rhetoric concerning ethics and actual business practice. She argues that a surface approach to ethics, which is associated with self-interest, will not promote ethical behaviour, while a deep approach, motivated by the desire to do the right thing, does have the potential to do so. The difference between the rhetoric and business practice suggests that most businesses either intentionally or unintentionally adopt a surface approach to ethics.

It is, therefore, important that a company should be assessed against a number of criteria in order that its ethical position and sense of (social and environmental) responsibility can be determined. Such ethical benchmarking criteria are brought together in Table 2. It should be borne in mind, however, that few elements of social citizenship are based solely on ‘rights’, and that all imply responsibilities.

Table 2. Ethical Benchmarking Criteria for Tourism Companies

Criterion	Issues
Access and equity considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the company represent, facilitate and accommodate a wide range of disabilities? • What is the company's policy on maternity rights and childcare facilities? • Does the company pay men and women equally? • Is there positive discrimination in favour of any particular (minority or disadvantaged) group? • Is there an equitable promotions policy? • Does it have a scheme to monitor the number of people it recruits from traditionally disadvantaged sections of the population? • Does it positively encourage survival and physical access for such groups? • Are its premises accessible to the (variously) disabled?
Client rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the company fully respect the rights of its clients – tourists – as recognized by international conventions? • Does it endeavour to provide full and impartial information? • Does the company make available client surveys and questionnaire responses? • Does the company respond promptly and effectively to client complaints?
Employees' rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the company respect its employees' right to belong to a trade union? • Is there a constructive dialogue with the workforce? • Does management receive disproportionate benefits? • Are employees asked to work unacceptably long hours? • Are employees asked to work in unhealthy conditions or are put at risk of injury? • Does the company have a proportionate part-time and seasonal workforce complement? • Is there encouragement and support for employee mobility?
Human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the company trade with countries or organizations with a poor human rights record? • Does the company research how tourism planning and development processes are executed? • Does the company positively support the participation of local people in deciding the nature and scale of tourism developments?
Exploitation of developing countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the company exploit developing countries, for example, by driving down wage and price levels? • Does the company ring-fence employment roles in developing countries for Western nationals?
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the company's attitude to local sourcing, energy saving, renewable energy and recycling, conservation, organic agriculture, pollution and climate change? • Does the company have ethical codes of environmental behaviour for its employees, sub-contractors and clients?
Animal welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the company respect animal welfare and avoid inflicting suffering on animals? • Does the company positively contribute towards species conservation?

Source: Hall and Brown 2006: 162

Tour Operators' Role

Tour operators provide an important link between tourism supply and demand, facilitating the circulation of products and information between the two (Curtin and Busby 1999), and representing a critical pressure point in the mass tourism system. They trigger the actions and responsibilities of other tourism stakeholders (Budeanu 2005), in terms of supply chains, consumer behaviour and destination response. Many would argue that tour operators should take their responsibilities more seriously.

Indeed, calls by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development for 'voluntary initiatives' in support of sustainable tourism development that would 'preferably exceed' any relevant standards (CSD 1999), presented an important external stimulus to action. At the same time, negative publicity – not least accrued in tourists' and employees' blogs – has seen 20 operators (including TUI,

Thomas Cook and Accor) establish, with UNWTO support, a Tour Operators Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development website (<<http://www.toinitiative.org>>) to detail company case studies of claimed 'sustainable' and 'responsible' activity. These feature under headings that include integrating sustainability into business, supply chain management, and co-operation with destinations.

Miller's (2001) examination of the role of corporate social responsibility in the global tourism industry identified and evaluated a number of factors influencing the responsibility of tour operators' positions. He found that smaller companies better understood the destinations to which they took their clients and so had a heightened awareness of destination issues and problems, albeit coupled with an inability to provide solutions to them. Larger tour operators were seen as being financially able to take remedial steps, but were so removed from the destination that they

often lacked awareness of the issues and problems found there. There were, of course, exceptions to this simplistic generalization.

Yet, it is clear that tour operators need to monitor in greater depth company performance and provide accessible outcomes of such monitoring to validate their claims for destination responsibility. Few tour operators appear willing to take action without external pressure to do so. Gordon and Townsend (2001) found inaction justified by operators on the grounds of such constraints as tourist attitudes and health and safety liability.

Although market surveys repeatedly indicate that consumers regard the environment as an important consideration, the gap between what respondents idealize and their actual behaviour is often substantial. Thus, views are held that destination marketing which promotes 'sustainable tourism' probably results in more business (Berry and Ladkin 1997), while received wisdom suggests that market advantage forces companies to improve their ethical performance. Conversely, as more tourism companies see the need to adopt the marketing clothes of social responsibility, so the concept loses its ability to provide market advantage, merely preventing companies from becoming uncompetitive; it may thus be seen as a necessary extra cost. In this way, the over and indiscriminate use of 'social responsibility' in tourism business literature renders the concept relatively meaningless and leaves stakeholders justifiably cynical, in much the same way as has befallen the fate of 'sustainability' marketing.

Codes of Conduct

One earlier response to the criticisms of tourist and tourism company behaviour has been the creation of codes of conduct or behaviour. Three general guiding principles emerged in these: understanding the culture visited, respecting and being sensitive to the host population, and treading softly on the host environment. Again, companies were able to emphasize how such codes were being applied to the behaviour of their clients while minimizing adoption within the realm of their own business conduct. Evidence of codes' effectiveness is scant in the absence of significant research (Cole 2007).

Even at face value, a wide range of critical issues surround such codes in tourism: their numbers and indiscriminate application have devalued their intrinsic worth; better co-ordination of and consistency between codes is needed to avoid confusing and conflicting messages being communicated; there is little data available on their effectiveness; the ethical purpose of a code may be

subordinated to the role of a marketing rather than a monitoring tool; few codes offer measurable criteria or conform to a widely accepted set of standards; and, most obviously from the foregoing, the existence of a code is no guarantee of ethical behaviour (Hall and Brown 2006: 170). The WTTC has established a database of codes of conduct for the travel and tourism industry, yet what is really needed is an appropriate reference system that can help improve industry credibility (Mowforth and Munt 2003).

Within the tourism industry there is evidence to suggest that codes of practice and conduct have been employed to deflect responsibility from company management either to employees or, more especially, to tourists. That is not to argue that tourists should be absolved of responsibility for their behaviour in destination environments. But it suggests that codes of behaviour drawn up for tourists (although often not by tourists nor with such 'stakeholder' representation) may reflect an element of lateral displacement of responsibility both from tourism companies and from host destination authorities.

At a wider level, a global code of ethics might be viewed as a frame of reference for the responsible and sustainable development of world tourism (Weeden 2005: 235). Yet, the global code as evolved by the WTO (2001) only tinkers with the hegemonic structure of tourism, the roots of which lie in the profit-driven global economic system that largely disregards social costs (e.g., D'Sa 1999).

This raises the question of how far the tourism industry(ies) wields power in a wide range of markedly different contexts, and whether it can realistically be a force for global welfare enhancement through deliberate policies and explicit acts. Superficially, there appears to be something of a paradox here that only serves to constrain positive action. On the one hand, we are often told that tourism does not have a loud voice or strong representation in government in the tourism generating, usually most developed countries (e.g., McKercher 1993). This is perhaps reflected in the way in which 'tourism', if it is explicitly named at all, may be located within different state departments and ministries in different countries, and may even be moved from one to another over time.

On the other hand, in less developed countries and regions where tourism may play a much more significant, even dominant, role in the local economy, the power and influence of tourism, derived externally and/or from within, may be substantial. In the context of Barbados, for example, Pugh (2003) invokes the concept of symbolic power to illustrate this reality drawing on a relatively local example. Symbolic power is:

a legitimating form of power which involves the consent or active complicity of both dominant and dominated actors (Hillier and Rooksby 2002: 8).

In Barbados, there appears to have been a 'democratic' consensual approach to the work of the National Commission for Sustainable Development (NCSD). Yet a sustainable development policy prepared by the NCSD in 1998, notionally the product of participatory procedures, did not include measures to control the direct environmental impacts of tourism because of the underlying role of its symbolic power. It was 'agreed' that tourism should not be questioned, despite the fact that all interest groups on the NCSD were supposed to discuss the environmental effects of each other's activities (Pugh 2003). Many members of the tourism sector did not feel the need to attend meetings of the NCSD, knowing that their actions would not be seriously questioned or checked by the Commission. As one member of the NCSD put it: "this is Barbados ... tourism gets special treatment, and I believe that it should ... tourism is our bread and butter" (Pugh 2003: 128). For Pugh (2003: 129), 'This creates the impression of rational consensus, where in fact the embodied and unconscious effects of symbolic power are really at work below the surface'.

Conclusions

In this short piece we have looked at some of the ways in which the tourism and travel industry has reacted to perceived requirements for a better ethical underpinning and sense of responsibility towards the industry's stakeholders. The sector, or at least various elements of it, has adopted notions of corporate social responsibility and ethical codes of behaviour and conduct. Yet there remain many shortcomings and inconsistencies that can have a negative effect on the welfare of tourism workers, destination residents and environments, and tourists themselves. Small individual companies often have a clear understanding of the welfare problems entailed by tourism but lack the capability to do anything about them, while the more powerful majors are too distant from sites and issues to be aware of the requirement for remedial action. This raises question marks over the industry's ability to sustain stakeholder well-being. Two points can be made. First, without some form of legally enforceable regulation of industry activities, companies' responses to ethical challenges are likely only to be effective at the margins. Second, short of major global structural change, tourism will find it difficult to be an important element in poverty-reducing development policies.

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Submitted: July 30, 2007

Accepted: August 25, 2007

Research Probe

'Ethical' Travel and Well-being: Reposing the Issue

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Derek Hall and Frances Brown note the rise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in business, and rightly note that this mostly takes the form of a discussion about ethical tourism in the academic literature. Books from Smith and Duffy (2003) and Fennell (2006) are probably the main contributions here, the latter especially arguing that an examination of ethical theory is much needed to better inform the discussion.

The emphasis on ethics extends well beyond the academic discussion. The recent title, 'The Last Call: the Real Cost of Our Holidays' (Hickman 2007) written by the ethical lifestyle columnist for The Guardian newspaper in the UK, is a notable case in point. Echoing the themes in the paper under discussion here, he argues that mass tourism has ignored social responsibilities, and he promotes conservation, cultural sensitivity, and restraint on economic growth as the route to a more ethical industry. Calls for ethical benchmarking and regulation are the consequence of this viewpoint.

I want to advance a different perspective. Rather than the need to set down and enforce a set of ethical criteria, what is more constructive for those concerned with tourism's contribution to welfare is to look at the character of the ethical debate, notably what is taken to be 'ethical', and what assumptions are being made and accepted in this discussion.

Welfare Enhancement

The paper focuses on the 'welfare responsibilities' of the industry. No one could disagree with increased welfare, so on the face of it a greater regard for this would appear to be indisputably good.

The authors ask sceptically whether tourism can 'realistically be a force for global welfare enhancement through deliberate policies or explicit acts' (Hall and Brown 2008). Well, yes it can. Spain's remarkable economic growth

from the 1960s owes something to the development of a successful mass tourism industry which remains the country's biggest earner of foreign exchange. The tourism industry brought jobs and investment to some of the poorest areas in the south of Spain, areas in which people now enjoy far better levels of education, healthcare and income.

Paradoxically, the discussion of ethical tourism is unlikely to champion Torremolinos or Fuengirola as positive examples. Rather, they are more likely to be invoked as examples of unethical mass tourism. The tone of the paper, as with virtually all commentaries on ethical tourism, is that large scale tourism developments and big business are more likely to be damaging to welfare, and that smaller scale green niches are the way forward.

The problem in this discussion is that welfare has been divorced from, and is often counter posed to, economic growth. Look at post-war Europe, or South Korea since 1960, and it is clear that increased welfare, measurable through healthcare, literacy, infant mortality and general standard of living, correlates fairly well with economic growth. China's recent development of tourism would not pass the paper's ethical audit, but is contributing to economic growth that generates welfare – China's performance against the Millennium Development Goals is far better than, say, countries in sub-Saharan Africa in which ecotourism is often championed as an 'ethical' alternative. Given that, it seems perverse that so much of the discussion on socially responsible, ethical tourism focuses on small green tourism projects that make a virtue of changing very little at all.

It is pretty clear that what is taken to be ethical, or addressing 'welfare', is a product of what British philosophy Professor Robin Blackburn terms the 'ethical climate' (2001, introduction) as opposed to it being a given ethical imperative standing above contestation. The substantial separation of welfare from economic growth is part of this climate. That is

not to argue that economic growth is the Holy Grail, but that it is badly neglected in much discussion of ethical tourism.

Measuring Ethics

The paper produces a table of ethical benchmarking criteria, and refers to the role of voluntary or statutory regulation of the industry to promote welfare. Again, I think that such a code, presented here as a universal imperative for the industry, is to miss the point.

Take, for example, the 'environmental' criterion, which refers to the need to check the company's attitude to 'recycling, conservation, organic agriculture, pollution and climate change' (Table 2).

Many, myself included, would argue that a commitment to modern scientific techniques in agriculture (something that many ecotourism integrated conservation and development projects stand squarely against) provides far greater possibilities for the populations of developing countries than any amount of ethical benchmarking and auditing of tourism. Yet the paper does reflect much opinion on ethical tourism in the literature and amongst niche companies and NGOs. For example, many of the environmental NGOs involved in ecotourism stand against genetically modified technology, and some projects explicitly link tourism to promoting subsistence, 'organic' agriculture in the name of supporting 'local knowledge' (Butcher 2007, chapter 5).

Likewise, to question a company's commitment to renewable energy may not be particularly progressive in countries that lack an electricity grid.

Ethical tourism is an etiquette, a discourse, a sensibility that is pervasive across many involved in writing about and organizing what most people would regard as 'ecotourism'. It is a stifling etiquette. Certain niches are casually associated with sustainable development and with being ethical (or at least having the potential to be these things) and through this association acquire the moral high ground in the debate. To question these claims then becomes being 'unethical'. Drop the etiquette and we would be left with a more frank debate on what are political and economic options.

Companies and trade bodies have become attuned to this ethical climate and it becomes the focal point in discussions of CSR generally. For example, witness the way the International Year of Ecotourism of 2002, co-sponsored by the World Tourism Organization, declared that ecotourism 'embrace(s) the principles of sustainable development' (UNEP / WTO 2002, p.1), that as such it can 'provide a leadership role' to the rest of the industry and

that it plays an 'exemplary role' in 'generating economic, social and environmental benefits' (ibid. p.7). Green tourism awards and trade bodies such as The Travel Foundation, in promoting CSR, adopt the same terms of reference in their pronouncements on what is and is not ethical or sustainable. It is hard to see what lessons the Spanish Coasts, the Portuguese Algarve or the island of Malta have to learn from 'ethical' ecotourism – certainly very few concerning well-being or development.

Ecotourism

The promotion of green ethics in discussions of tourism and well-being is especially prominent with regard to the developing world. The paper under discussion makes reference to the 'win-win' scenario, often invoked in relation to tourism in these countries, through which the environment is conserved and the community can enjoy increased welfare. This is the basis for the ethical credentials of small-scale ecotourism and related niches.

Leaving aside the very poor record of such projects, and, in the case of NGO initiatives, their inability to survive when funding expires, what are the assumptions underlying such ethical claims?

Firstly, the projects claim to be participatory – to involve local communities in design and operation. This is in-keeping with the wider trend towards 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' and similar attempts to factor in the community in rural development. If the community is involved, then welfare is likely to be addressed (and indeed participation, if it is regarded as an entitlement to democratic rights, may be regarded as benefiting welfare in and of itself (Sen 2001).

But, invariably, the priorities of NGOs, companies, and aid agencies are decided prior to participatory processes in the developing world. Certainly, some involvement in deciding how a project should operate might yield some small benefits. Substantially, though, in practice participation in small-scale tourism simply involves local communities in renegotiating the terms of their poverty. So whilst participation invokes agency – the neopopulist's aim of 'doing development for oneself' – it masks a profoundly narrow set of options for rural communities. Small-scale tourism promises small-scale benefits – but nothing beyond, as further development damages the 'sustainable' and harmonious relationship between the local community and the environment.

Secondly, ethical tourism is taken in the paper to be tourism that promotes conservation (see Table 2). In fact, the claim made for tourism is that this can occur at the same time and in the same place as welfare benefits – the tourists

will pay to experience pristine nature, the local people will be incentivized to protect it and sustain traditional ways of living in harmony with nature, and this ensures the tourists will keep coming – a sort of virtuous circle, or as some have it, a 'symbiosis' between people and nature (Goodwin 2000).

Yet the circle is a static one – it may yield limited development, but it simultaneously caps that development within strict, localized natural limits. This is completely alien to development as has taken place in the developed countries.

Thirdly, welfare is promoted, it is argued, by deference to local knowledge and tradition. The local culture is treated with great sensitivity, but at the same time the aspiration for change is not on the agenda. The invocation of local knowledge as reflecting local agency reifies local knowledge and creates 'culture' as a cage from which there is no escape. To start with local knowledge in development is often worthy, but to treat it as the basis for development, as most ecotourism projects do, is quite another thing (Butcher 2007, chapter 5).

So ecotourism, the exemplar of ethical tourism, the type of tourism most often held up as a normative goal for all due to its ability to improve welfare and save biodiversity, is perhaps not so virtuous. You may disagree, but the point is that the terms of the ethical debate do not encourage a frank exchange. What too often passes for debate is Wheeler's (1994) view, ironic and pessimistic in equal measure (we need to save the planet but we are just acquisitive ... and the green alternatives are no different), or academic nitpicking (e.g., whether fishing is ethical or not).

Climate Change and Ethical Consumption

If one holds the view that climate change is the biggest issue facing humanity, then ethical action would be to not fly on holiday, to reduce the carbon footprint as much as possible. This is a quandary for promoters of ethical tourism. For example, Tourism Concern, like other advocates of a new, ethical tourism, have for a long time argued that travelling in the right way to the right places can make a difference. As consumers, the choice may now be to travel to assist people in a destination, but contribute to carbon emissions, or to

stay at home to the short-term detriment of the community but with the long term future of the world in mind.

The paper does not really address this – climate change is another item on a long list. Yet it has trumped all other 'impacts' in terms of its importance in contemporary political debate.

However, perhaps this quandary reveals that as consumers (and a significant part of corporate social responsibility is directed at promoting ethical consumption or appealing to ethical consumers) our options are limited. If we fly it is a problem. If we don't, people miss out on prospective revenue. Similarly, if we buy a coral necklace from a beach vendor in Thailand the seller is better off, but we encourage damage to the coral. If we do not, fearing for the survival of the coral, he is no better off.

These are not 'win-win scenarios'. In fact, they only reveal that ethical consumption is a limited moral and ethical universe. In this universe we are creators of a 'human footprint', users of finite resources – we are rarely presented as agents capable of creative solutions and the development of new resources. For example, preoccupied with our human (carbon) footprint, it is easy to lose sight of the possibilities for carbon-free flying within a few generations.

The extension of travel, holidays – and more importantly the potential for more to partake of them through development – is part of progress that we would be misguided in reigning in, through an ethical climate that everywhere sees natural limits (the poorer the area, the greater the biodiversity, the more severe the limit) and balks at the ability of human societies to overcome them.

Finally, this is not an unqualified thumbs up for the free market or big companies. However, the separation of welfare from economic growth and the association of ethical tourism with small-scale initiatives that promote a localized harmony between people and nature together mean that the terms of the debate are skewed away from a rational assessment of the contribution of the tourism industry to human welfare.

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Submitted: September 28, 2007

Accepted: November 20, 2007

Tourism Ethics Needs More Than a Surface Approach

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I applaud Derek Hall and Frances Brown for taking the time to address an area of study that, at least in my view, is essential to the future advancement of tourism on many levels. The following few remarks are offered for the purpose of helping to stretch our thinking on many of the ethical themes that have emerged here and in the literature over the past 15 years. Although tourism ethics is still very much at an incipient stage, there are important contributions being made that will resonate with both the applied side of the 'industry' as well as the theoretical realm, and where a critical nexus can have far-reaching implications. Ethics, and the related concept of responsibility, have gained momentum in response to the failure of more traditional approaches (i.e., impacts) to fix the many problems that plague tourism. As such, the incorporation of ethics into tourism research comes packaged with a broad array of theoretical tools that provide opportunities to look at tourism problems from a number of different perspectives.

Concerning the divide between industry and non-industry perspectives on tourism, I'm not sure I agree with the authors when they argue that we need [only?], 'observations on the tourism industry's response to the increasing awareness of the need for ethical practice...' in moving forward with the issue of ethics. I'm not discounting the importance of industry feedback on such an issue, but I don't think the industry is prepared or indeed equipped to make these changes or assessments alone (i.e., we choose to be ethical if ethics pays). Increasingly there is the recognition that, just like business in general, there is the need for a dynamic tension between business as a practice (and business ethics) and business education. Letting industry, therefore, dictate what is and what is not ethical in tourism is just as counterintuitive as making decisions about the tourism industry solely from an academic standpoint. In this, we are well behind many other fields/disciplines and the influence they have on ethical practices in every-day life.

Brown and Hall further observe that 'Corporate social responsibility is in danger of becoming just another fashion'.

Indeed, perhaps in the same manner of a range of different responses in tourism that were initially designed to change the nature of the industry, but have somehow so far failed in their attempts. Alternative tourism comes to mind, as well as ecotourism and now more recently pro-poor (as noted by the author) and responsible tourism. The authors call for a 'significant commitment to directly address the structural causes of global inequity'. But how many times have we seen this exact call? Numerous. The reason that these concepts fail to affect positive change in tourism is that we have been unsuccessful at understanding that at the heart of these types of tourism, in time and space, are human beings. For whatever reason, we hope, imagine, or wish that because of an orientation towards another newer form of tourism, humans (e.g., tourists) are about to change their innate characteristics—people will somehow be (or become) different by virtue of their association with this new 'caste' (see Fennell 2008). Simply stated, we in tourism studies have chosen to ignore research on human nature, especially with regard to the inherent tendency to balance costs and benefits as individuals (individual tourists, service providers and local people) and in interactions with others. No new form of tourism is suddenly about to change hundreds of thousands of years of natural selection. So, we can introduce any number of new flashy terms in tourism, but if we fail to understand why we act the way we do, then we are doomed to relive the failures of the past. As such, we tend to treat the symptoms of the problem rather than the problem itself. CSR, codes of ethics, the role of tour operators, and so on, are merely band-aid solutions of more firmly entrenched mysteries to tourism scientists.

Hall and Brown, citing Weeden (2005) argue that responsible tourism falsely raises expectations, while ethical tourism is difficult to define. I would argue that in fact it is the opposite as regards the point on definitional difficulties. 'Responsible' especially in tourism suffers by virtue of a dysfunctional or non-existent theoretical or conceptual basis; whereas we know what ethics is and how it has been defined and discussed for some 2500 years. If we in tourism have

trouble making any distinction along these lines, it is because of a failure to look outside of our rather insular walls in gaining any perspective of the bigger picture—which may be symptomatic of the need to gain respect through ‘disciplinary’ distinction at the expense of interdisciplinary knowledge that would help clear away the fog.

I think we need to place more thought into the issue surrounding the fact that, ‘a surface approach to ethics, which is associated with self-interest, will not promote ethical behaviour, while a deep approach, motivated by the desire to do the right thing, does have the potential to do so.’ This is a central matter to tourism ethics and one that deserves more than a passing comment. Unfortunately, the article fails to consider anything close to a deep approach. Ethicists would argue that some attempt needs to be made in tying the discourse to an understanding of the meaning of ‘good’ (teleology) or ‘right’ (deontology) in tourism, as philosophically loaded terms; to understand how virtue, ethics, hedonism, utilitarianism, the Golden Rule, Kantian ethics, or social contract ethics could help us navigate through the many difficult turns we encounter in such a dynamic and interactive sector of the economy. In the absence of a deep approach, the authors chose to favour the shallow through a consideration of codes of ethics, tour operators, and corporate social responsibility in a most rudimentary fashion. In fairness, the focus of the article is on the tourism industry, but there is so much more at hand that could have been used to push the discussion forward into new territory. And as for the aspect of self-interest noted above, and in reference to my previous comments here, an understanding of self-interest is an important part of who we are as human beings, for better or for worse, whether we choose to do the right thing (i.e., to suppress the need to be self-interested in favour of some level of altruism) or to do what’s right for ourselves (because we are on vacation and deserve it). This has been nicely articulated by Wheeler (1994: 648) who

observes that, ‘We are out for ourselves. It is a question of what is best for me and if someone...else pays the cost, then too bad as long as I get the benefits... isn’t this Darwin’s survival of the fittest?’ I don’t see how our research has even come close to addressing this first-order need.

Finally, I appreciate the fact that the authors have devised a method by which to assess the social and environmental responsibility of a given tourism company via ethical benchmarking. Criteria such as access and equity, client rights, employee rights, human rights, exploitation of developing countries, environmental and animal rights are included along with accompanying issues. The bigger question, however, lies in how such a scheme is to be implemented and by whom. Certification schemes in tourism are fraught with philosophical and operational problems (Jamal et al. 2006) and the implementation of an ethical system as such is bound to be just as contentious. In this regard I would urge the authors to read Mamic (2004), who would no doubt provide considerable scope to the ideas being presented here. So, when the author argues that, ‘there are important questions relating to the choice of social responsibilities that tourism businesses can sensibly undertake and the ways in which they can be measured and justified’, it may take more time to arrive at an acceptable stock of these benchmarking criteria beyond examples related to whether or not a company exploits developing countries. Defining exploitation will, no doubt, prove challenging.

I find myself tracing back to the title of this work in deciding whether there has in fact been an adequate response by the authors to what is posited as an inadequate response by the industry. There is not much that is new here, and this is indeed unfortunate because the door stands wide open with regard to how ethics can better inform tourism for the purpose of moving the agenda forward.

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Submitted: October 12, 2007

Accepted: December 10, 2007

Tourism and Welfare: A Good Idea and a Pious Hope!

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Hall and Brown are to be congratulated in bringing to our attention some of the most important – and controversial – questions relating to the social and ethical responsibilities of tourism companies. Somehow, there is a growing perception that ‘responsible tourism’ and ‘ethical’ practices are parameters for business practice. The fact that there is no consensus on how these factors should be defined and measured does not seem to have limited their significance. Hall and Brown (2008) note, quoting Henderson (2007), there are important questions relating to the choice of social responsibilities which tourism businesses can sensibly undertake, and ways in which they can be measured and justified. If welfare includes impacts on the wider society and not just in the sphere of tourism business activity, then what are these impacts and what benchmarks will we use to evaluate them? In response to the article there are eight points to be made.

First, tourism is a business and the tourism company, similar to any other, has to earn profits to survive. It, therefore, follows that the primary responsibility of company management is to survive at a profit level appropriate to reward the owners and or shareholders and with some margin to facilitate re-investment. There can be no doubt that the primary stakeholders are the company’s investors. Without an appropriate and acceptable level of profit, the business will not survive, and a failed business however ethically and responsibly-managed, cannot generate any economic, community or welfare benefits. A Friedmanite economist might argue that the company has only responsibility to its shareholders, and any other considerations are extraneous to the purpose of the company. Not many development advocates would subscribe to this view but it does emphasize that profit comes first in the agenda and the distribution of that profit is very much a secondary consideration.

Second, and encapsulated in Kalisch’s statement is that ‘tourism sustainability cannot be achieved unless corporate

bodies take greater responsibility towards society in general’. This statement has no substance in fact or experience. Even a cursory examination of international tourism arrival figures (the usual proxy for demand) since 1950 indicates a continuous average growth rate of plus 4 per cent per annum on a global basis. The growth of long-haul tourism and tourism to developing countries has also increased and all indications are that it will continue to do so. From this statistical base it is clear that tourism has been economically sustainable. What should be appreciated is that business sustainability is an economic and financial criterion. Recently, notions of sustainability have been broadened to consider impacts, positive and negative, economic and non-economic on society. But to assert that tourism can only be sustainable with societal approval is a claim yet to be substantiated whereas it contradicts existing statistical evidence. It is perhaps unfortunate that the sustainability debate has been centred exclusively on tourism’s impacts whereas what drives tourism is market demand. Many tourists choose a destination sight unseen, that is, they may never have visited before. If they do not receive an acceptable welcome from local people because of their dissatisfaction with tourism and tourists, the visitors might not recommend it to friends. But this does not mean that tourism at the destination will stop as other, first-time visitors will arrive. Where is the evidence (case studies of destinations?) that demonstrates that sustainability is affected by local reactions to the type, scale and locations of tourism development. Residents may object to many aspects and characteristics of tourism development but in many cases it is the economic development advantages which prevail.

Third, and especially relevant to developing countries, is the constant search for investment funds. With the globalization of business, including tourism business, many governments recognize the dangers inherent in certain types of projects but lack either the expertise or countervailing power to modify or limit the investor’s requirements. Often

investment is a 'take it or leave it' decision for governments. The wide range of investment incentives available in both developed and developing countries attest to the competition for available funds. In such competitive circumstances it is often difficult to impose welfare considerations on investors for risk of the investment going elsewhere.

Fourth, relates to the nature of tourism stakeholders. Some writers on business practice refer to the concept of business in the community. At its simplest, the concept suggests that the company is not only part of the business community but also part of the wider community, including the local and national society. Therefore, corporate objectives should be aligned with social objectives including ethical business practices. However ethical or responsible business practices are, they will have, at best, a marginal contribution to addressing economic and social inequities in a country. Many of the dramatic claims for tourism such as the UNWTO's ST-EP (Sustainable Tourism-Eliminate Poverty) slogan is marketing hyperbole with little basis in reality. As noted above, tourism has been growing on a global basis for the last 60 years and poverty is still with us! As Hall and Brown (2008) and Hall note, without a consensus to change the world economic system, global inequities will remain. The failure of the Doha round of trade negotiations is indicative of the continuing trade tensions between the developed and developing worlds. It follows that tourism may have some localized welfare impacts but to broaden that claim to a country and societal basis may not be attainable – a pious hope.

Fifth is the irrelevance of the CSR criteria listed in Table 2. Companies, including tourism companies, operate in the environment within which they are located. The basic tenet of globalization is comparative advantage. Does Nike pay its workers in China US level wages and benefits? Do any companies operating in foreign locations pay home-base levels of remuneration and benefits to local employees? In both cases, the answer to the question is no! The Western-centric criteria listed in Table 2 are a utopian exercise – a wish list. The criteria have no evaluatory explanation or measurement benchmarks; these might be developed and used, but could result in the business moving to less demanding environments, a position which most governments would not accept. In Europe it is noteworthy that the British Government has opted out of the part of the

European Community's Social Charter limiting the number of hours a person can work each week on the grounds that it is 'bad for business.' The newly elected President of France has similarly reacted by introducing incentives for workers to break the limit on working hours per week. Government views on what is good for the economy do not always accord with welfare activists' views of what is good for the worker.

Sixth, a recognized feature of the tourism sector is that it is not an industry! It is essentially a combination of multi-sectoral activities as our continuing failure to define tourism exemplifies. The lack of definition, fragmented nature of tourism and the large number of small companies in many countries tends to make representation difficult. In many countries, tourism does not have a strong lobby base to advocate the positions of the sector. In these circumstances, the tourism sector is often a policy-taker and not a policy-maker. The national economic, social, cultural and political aims provide the parameters within which tourism companies operate. Against this background, it is difficult to envisage how tourism companies can initiate welfare programmes except for their own employees. Is it part of their role and responsibilities to extend these functions to the wider society?

Eighth, and as already suggested in this response, tourism companies are no different from any other businesses. To expect them to adhere to Codes of Conduct and a litany of CRS requests is unrealistic except where such actions may generate financial advantage or good public relations. Concepts such as ecotourism, equitable distribution of benefits, fair trade and sustainability objectives are easy to accept but are very difficult if not impossible to achieve. It may be that CSR will join other tokens in the academic dustbin. This comment does not advocate tourism or any other companies adopting unethical or irresponsible business practices. It may be that the company's overseas location provides a comparative cost advantage compared with local base which will generate a level of profit to raise employees' pay and other benefits above prevailing local norms. There may be good financial reason for doing so, e.g., reduce labour turnover, increase productivity and improve employees' loyalty to the company. These business decisions should not be mistaken for welfare actions which, arguably, are not a business obligation.

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Submitted: October 9, 2007

Accepted: December 20, 2007