

Are Dark Tourism And Thanatourism Ethical**Amandio F. C da Silva**

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Abstract

Tourism has grown by leaps and bounds and is still one of the fastest growing industries in terms of revenues and employment generation around the globe. It covers a wide range of independent and yet interdependent sectors like transport, accommodation, travel services, food and beverage, recreation and entertainment, among others (Khan, 2014).

However, modern tourism is diverting into areas that a few years ago would not be considered as tourism, like dark tourism, than a tourism and slum tourism.

This paper tries to analyze the ethical issues linked to dark tourism/than a tourism, its impact on the local communities and other related issues.

Keywords: Ethics, tourism, dark tourism, than a tourism.

Introduction

With the advent of air travel, tourism has become a cash cow for every country in the world, boosting consumption and increasing the number of jobs geometrically. While this is obviously a positive sign for the global economy, the negative impact it causes is considerable. It causes irreparable damages to the physical environment and societies, influencing prices and giving rise to inflation.

Concepts like ethics, corporate social responsibility and triple bottom line have been implemented in the tourism sector, but not everyone follows them. In addition, tourism has expanded to uncommon areas like sex tourism, slum tourism and dark tourism/than a tourism. While some people do not consider these areas as particularly offensive or dangerous, how ethical are they?

Ethics, corporate social responsibility and triple bottom line in tourism

Ethics, from the Greek word *ethos* means a person's fundamental orientation towards life, or his character, morality, honorable code of conduct/behavior (Khan, 2014). It is a fundamental trait which one adopts and follows as a guiding principle of basic *dharma*¹ in one's life. It implies moral conduct and honorable behavior on the part of the individual. Ethics in most of the cases runs parallel to law and shows due consideration to others' rights and interests in a civilized society. Compassion on the other hand may induce a person to give more than what ethics might demand (Chartered Secretary (2003), *Ethics, Business and Profession*, p. 1673, as quoted in Paswan, 2015).

Ross (1930) presented seven basic principles for individuals to incorporate ethical actions in their decision-making process, *Fidelity* (an individual must keep his explicit and implicit promises made), *Reparation* (an individual must always repair the consequences of his previous wrongful acts), *Gratitude* (an individual must always show gratitude for the kindness that others have shown him or her), *Justice* (an individual must always try to distribute goods fairly among all the present), *Beneficence* (an individual should focus on trying to improve the lives of other human beings), *Self-Improvement* (an individual should focus on improving himself by focusing on virtue and intelligence) and *Non-Injury* (an individual should not harm others).

On the same lines, the UNWTO proposed the GCET (Global Code of Ethics for Tourism) in 1999, that are basic guidelines aimed at governments, travel industry, communities and tourists alike in

¹ Dharma is a Sanskrit (ancient Indian language) word with several meanings, depending on the context. It usually encompasses ideas such as duty, rights, character, vocation, religion, customs and behavior considered appropriate, correct or morally upright.

order to maximize the benefits of tourism and minimize the potentially negative impact of tourism on the environment, cultural heritage and societies across the globe. The ten principles proposed are:

1. Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies.
2. Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfillment.
3. Tourism, a factor for sustainable development.
4. Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement.
5. Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and its communities.
6. The obligations of stakeholders in tourism development.
7. Right of tourism.
8. Liberty of tourist movement.
9. Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry.
10. Implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

While most countries have implemented GCET guidelines, given the size of the industry and its composition (large companies and SMEs working together), it is very difficult to manage the ethical issues of such a complex supply chain (Keating, 2009).

Corporate social responsibility, as per McWilliams, Siegel & Wright (2006), are situations where the firm goes beyond compliance and engages in actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and which is required by law. It is understood as the obligation that companies have to develop and implement courses of action that aid in social issues that affect society.

While ethical conduct of the business is geared towards enhancing profits, public image, employee relations and credibility, corporate social responsibility is based on the premise of adopting voluntary initiatives and includes responsibility towards society, communities, abiding by legal regulations and accountability for environmental protection. The concept of corporate social responsibility is gradually becoming pertinent to the tourism sector, however as it is still not mandatory, tourism businesses have been lagging behind in adopting the concept (Khan, 2014).

The concept of triple bottom line reporting, proposed by Elkington (1994), also known as the accountability report in some countries or "People, Planet, Profit" in others, is a type of reporting that in addition to traditional financial reporting includes two other types of reporting: environmental reporting and social reporting. The concept helps the company enhance its long-term sustainability from both a financial and non-financial perspective.

The concept of triple bottom line reporting has been implemented in the tourism industry too, where it brings about increased efficiency and cost savings, better market positioning and decision making, wider choice of destination benefits and fairer competitiveness (Faux & Dwyer, 2009).

Dark Tourism

Dark tourism or than a tourism (tourism of death) involves the visit to real or recreated places associated with death, suffering, misfortune, or the seemingly macabre. Places of war, disasters, death and atrocities are subjects to visitors who are attracted towards sites, attractions or events linked in one way or another with death, suffering, violence or disaster. It may include museums, cemeteries, slums, concentration camps, war scenarios, and other places of tragedy (Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2016).

Some of the most popular are Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, Khmer Rouge massacre museum in Cambodia, Arlington National Cemetery in USA, etc. Than a tourism and dark tourism lovers crave for the real experiences in order to feel alive and difficult heritage sites offer such experiences of presence of excess. In addition, tourists are also interested in witnessing the past and its victims, and the establishment of the witnessing relationship depends on the interactive design present at the site (Knudsen, 2011). In addition, it gives the tourists a chance to travel back in time (Tarlow, 2015).

While dark tourism and than a tourism are used interchangeably, Light (2017) insists they are different; While dark tourism tends to be used as an umbrella term for any form of tourism that is somehow related to death, suffering, atrocity, tragedy or crime, than a tourism is a more specific

concept and is about long standing practices of travel motivated by a specific desire for an encounter with death.

The GCET recommendations and dark tourism/than a tourism

One of the main controversial issues of dark tourism and than a tourism is the aim of earning money out of death and suffering by commercializing the site (Garcia, 2012) and whether this kind of tourism could hurt the feelings of some people or communities, especially those who lost near and dear ones in the tragedy or at the site.

Overall, the debates about ethics of dark tourism have been inconclusive and have raised more questions than they have provided answers. While critics have quickly identified what they see as distortions or trivializations of places of death, they have been less willing to suggest ways to address the situation (Light, 2017).

In order to understand the ethics or lack of them as far as dark tourism and than a tourism are concerned, the ten GCET principles can be analyzed:

1. "Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies"; While death and disgrace locations' tourism may hurt the feelings of some people or communities, especially those who lost near and dear ones, dark and than a tourism tourists per se do not attempt to offend the local populace. As per Seaton & Lennon (2004), in addition to being places of interest to tourists, places of death and suffering can also play an important role within state and nation building projects. Or in other words, such tourism contributes for the local economy.
2. "Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfillment"; While every tourist of dark locations does not visit the place with the aim of entertaining himself, many have a deeply rooted curiosity and respect for the historical tragedy that took place and would like to see it personally and honor it. As per Simic (2009), the heritage of suffering and atrocity can be used within political projects to bring about reconciliation and healing between social groups within a state that had a story of conflict, in order to bring a new identity to both its citizens and the international community.
3. "Tourism, a factor for sustainable development"; Just like any other kind of tourism, dark tourism and than a tourism can become a source of revenue for the local population. Fonseca, Seabra & Silva (2016) argue that this kind of tourism is gaining an increasing interest, based on the number of visitors. As long as the flow of tourists is regular, it can become a regular source of income for the locals and better the standard of living of the community.
4. "Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement"; Heritage tourism per se aims at maintaining and respecting the cultural heritage of a local and to enhance it over time. Khan (2014) states that there should be a minimal time frame between the occurrence of a tragic event (that triggers the interest of tourists) and the 'touristification' of the place, in order to allow the pain of the tragedy to subside and for emotional wounds to be healed. As long as the site of tragedy is not immediately commercialized, it should not raise much ethical debates in the long run.
5. "Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and its communities"; The benefits and costs of any type of tourism accrue to two quite distinct groups of people. On the one hand, the visitors themselves receive benefits and incur costs in taking holidays. On the other hand, the resident population of the host region benefit from tourism (not only financially) but at same time incur costs of various types (Archer, Cooper & Ruhanen, 2005). Similarly, dark tourism and than a tourism also bring benefits and costs to the host country and its communities, by providing income for the locals and enriching the tourism experience of the tourists.

6. "The obligations of stakeholders in tourism development"; A successful tourism development depends greatly on excellent cooperation and communication between all stakeholders involved in the tourism system (Uran & Juvan, 2010). In the field of tourism, relationships and collaborations of various stakeholders can be crucial for long-term sustainability, competitiveness or even survival in terms of destination competitiveness as well as at the level of individual tourism projects (Peric, Durkin & Lamot, 2014). As such, the role and obligation of each stakeholder has to be clearly defined. The same applies to dark tourism and than a tourism without any exception. As long as all the stakeholders of dark and than a tourism fulfill their obligations, it does not violate the ethics of GCET.
7. "Right of tourism"; Community participation has proved to be a successful model for tourism development in developed countries, however, in some developing countries, there could be some barriers, namely operational barriers, structural barriers and cultural barriers (Tosun, 2000). In general, anyone can participate in tourism related activities, except maybe in the case of some totalitarian regime and very poor countries, where the corruption index is very high. The same applies in the case of than a tourism and dark tourism, as long as the tragedy site is not located in a travel banned area.
8. "Liberty of tourist movement"; Any kind of ban or sanction imposed by a country affects tourism and hospitality profoundly. At the macro level, both the supply and demand side of the targeted economy are affected by sanctions with direct impacts on the tourism industry (Seify & Hall, 2020). Travel bans and curbing tourist movements are usually sanctions imposed by governments in totalitarian communist countries or by some countries on other countries or by some countries to protect or hide certain regions. Here too, there is no difference between common tourism or than a tourism/dark tourism. In general, tourists have free movement permission in any kind of tourism.
9. "Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry"; While workers and entrepreneurs rights depend on the labor laws of the country they live and work in, migrant workers in certain developing countries are severely prejudiced and exploited by ruthless employers, due to the availability of low paid and low skilled precarious jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector and the abundance of desperate illegal migrants (Vettori, 2017). Workers and entrepreneurs in the dark tourism/than a tourism have their rights as per the laws and regulations of their respective countries and there is no specific restriction on their rights based on the peculiarities of this type of tourism.
10. "Implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism";The GCET has been object of several favorable and antagonistic pronouncements. The factors regarded as an advantage, such as its openness and call for responsibility on behalf of the different stakeholders, were, in turn, deemed a disadvantage to others due to their generic nature. Moreover, the arguments critical of the code highlight its lack of substance and little attention to such important issues as the impact of tourism on the environment and on its stakeholders (Lozano, Berjillos & Lara, 2018).A proper implementation of the GCET and its recommendations will depend on each country and the impact will be seen in every type of tourism including dark tourism and than a tourism.

Conclusions

After analyzing the ten recommendations of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the case of dark tourism and than a tourism, it can be seen that both dark tourism and than a tourism do not violate any of the UNWTO body recommendations. While dark tourism and than a tourism may hurt the feelings of some people or communities, on the other side, they provide revenue to the host country

GDP and employment to the local people, among other several benefits seen in common types of tourism.

In his article, Light (2017), based on a compilation of several authors decided the principal motives that lead tourists towards visiting places of death and suffering. The main ones, by level of motivation were: 1. Desire or opportunity for education, learning, understanding about what happened at the site; 2. Curiosity; 3. Connecting with one's personal or family heritage, visiting because of personal connections to the site, desire to see it to believe it, understand it better, desire to 'connect'; 4. General, leisure motives; 5. Pilgrimage, secular pilgrimage; 6. Interest in history and/or culture; 7. Remembrance; 8. Sense of moral duty or obligation, conscience; 9. Interest in death, morbid curiosity; 10. Visiting as part of an organized/planned itinerary; 11. Visiting somewhere important for national identity; 12. To visit a 'must see' site; 13. Desire to honor personal ancestors; 14. Desire for contact and connection with death/dark events/violence; 15. Personal recommendation; 16. To see a famous site associated with death; 17. Spend time with friends; 18. Desire to help with disaster recovery; 19. Other individual motives. Thus, it can be seen that most dark tourism/than a tourism motives are not for fun or to ridicule or humiliate the dead or the local communities.

So, it can be said that both dark tourism and than a tourism are ethical, even though it may take some time for the academic community to accept them as such.

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