Banjul Market, Gambia.

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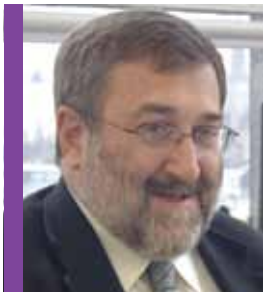

Responsible tourism in destinations

By **Harold Goodwin**, Professor of Responsible Tourism Management and Co-Director of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism at Leeds Metropolitan University

There is a proverb often heard in Asia which cautions that "Tourism is like a fire, you can use it to cook your soup, but it can also burn down your house". Tourism is not without negative impacts, but we know more about how to minimise the negative impacts and to maximise the positive ones. If tourism is managed and developed responsibly, it can make a significant contribution to livelihoods and to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. It is important to use tourism to bring sustainable development, and an international hypothecated airline fuel tax could assist with adaptation and mitigation in the developing world.

It is important to use tourism rather than to be used by tourism. Government needs to work with communities and the domestic and international industry to determine which tourism markets can be attracted and to focus on those which can best contribute to sustainable development. For example, New Zealand in 1999 developed the 100 per cent Pure New Zealand brand which offered an authentic experience of landscape, adventure, people and culture; and chose to attract those tourists who were most likely to enjoy the experiences New Zealand had to offer and recommend it to their friends and most likely to benefit the country. New Zealand took control of who it invited.

A whole of government approach

At the first International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations in 2002, held alongside the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa's experience of implementing Responsible Tourism was reviewed, and the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism in Destinations defined the principles and recognised that the harnessing of tourism for sustainable development required a whole of government approach. Responsible Tourism is about using tourism "to create better places for people to live in and for people to visit." This necessarily requires that many government departments and agencies participate

in ensuring that tourism is managed to benefit the destination, for example, immigration, aviation, transport, heritage, conservation, national parks, environment, planning, public works, the police, investment promotion and licensing; a whole host of agencies at national and local levels need to work together to ensure that tourism contributes positively. Rarely does the Tourism Minister have the authority and personnel to ensure a whole of government approach; an inter-ministerial working group on tourism would help.

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Measuring success

Too often ministers of tourism are judged by the number of international arrivals there are. This is misleading for two reasons: it obscures the more important indicator of bed nights, a better surrogate for tourism expenditure, and second because what really matters is the retained expenditure captured in the country. That is total expenditure by international visitors less imports needed to run the industry and any repatriation of profits, debt repayment or other leakages.

At the national level, it is generally income from international visitors that matters most. At the local destination level, it is domestic and international tourism that matters. For example, in Kerala, India, they have just 'celebrated' the end of charter-based inbound tourism. They have seven million domestic tourists per year and half a million international visitors. The independent travellers who come on scheduled flights are likely to spend more than the charter tourists. It is important that the indicators chosen to monitor the performance of the ministry and others reflect the national policy priorities.

All-inclusives are often assumed to be undesirable, but they have some advantages. They may be easier to tax than a large number of micro-enterprises; they confine inappropriate or unacceptable tourist behaviour; and well run all-inclusives can facilitate market access for the informal sector. It is not as simple as all-inclusives bad, traditional hotels good. These different enterprise models should be judged by their economic impacts rather than by their form.

Using tourism for sustainable development

Sustainable development is an aspiration. It lacks clear objectives, and it fails to attribute responsibility. It is everybody's responsibility and nobody's. A Responsible Tourism strategy is created by engaging the public and private sector in building a shared vision for sustainable tourism development and ensuring that responsibility for achieving the agreed policy outcomes is defined and accepted.

In Cape Town, the city council has defined the eight key issues confronting their community (water, energy and carbon emissions, solid waste, enterprise, skills and social development and local procurement to reduce leakages) and established a common standard for measuring progress on the eight priorities to be applied by local government and the private sector in the city. Progress will be reported publicly.

Sustainability is more than just economic development. It is about addressing the local challenges, for example, staff training and progression into management roles, paedophilia, sex tourism, craft development and conservation. It is about minimising the negative impacts and maximising the positive ones to ensure that the communities get the advantages of tourism and as few of the negatives as possible.

Maximising economic impacts

There are broadly three ways in which tourism benefits local communities and improves their livelihoods: employment and direct sales of goods and services to tourists through craft and guiding; indirectly through employment in enterprises, which sell, for example, local food or uniforms to the tourism businesses, whether hotels or restaurants; and the infrastructure gains, which include roads, water supplies, improved transport links and the internet – where tourism demand contributes to its development. The Gambia is Good project has brought hundreds of local subsistence farmers, mainly women, into the cash economy by enabling them to grow fruit and vegetables for sale to hotels. The initiative has also significantly reduced Gambia's imports.

The economic benefits of tourism are maximised when local employment and economic linkages are maximised. As with any export, the producer

captures only a fraction of the retail value. Transport, distribution and marketing costs are generally expended abroad and can be regarded as leakages, although they are in fact necessary costs. In tourism, the transport costs are high because the flight cost is high, although all twentieth century leakage figures should be treated with scepticism because of the reduction in flight costs as a proportion of total holiday costs. Tourism actually compares favourably with crops like coffee. The tourism industry has two additional advantages: there are no quota or tariff barriers, and because the tourists travel to the factory to consume the product, there is always an opportunity for direct sales to be made to them by local businesses and sole traders.

Importance of the informal sector

Whenever a craft worker sells a souvenir to an overseas visitor, they contribute directly to export earnings to the national level. Work in The Gambia, with Adama Bah, demonstrated that it was possible to substantially increase the earnings of craft sellers, local guides, fruit sellers and juice pressers by improving their market access, the quality and variety of their goods and services and their sales methods. By reducing hassling of tourists in the markets, labelling the craft and demonstrating the making of the goods on the stalls, sales were increased. In The Gambia, the larger hotels have free market days when, on a rota, local craft sellers are invited into the hotel grounds to sell. They do very well on those days.

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In The Gambia, a couple of independent studies have found that the average British tourist spends about £24 per day from their pocket in the destination. Of this, about £8 is spent with the informal sector, multiplied by the average number of days (10), and 60,000 tourists, that is £14.4 million of local earnings; £4.8 million of which is with the informal sector – with almost no leakage.

Aviation and climate change

Funding needs to be found to pay for adaptation and mitigation in the developing world, and the aviation industry needs to accept *the polluter pays* principle. An equitable alternative to APD needs to be implemented. A hypothecated tax, based on airline fuel consumption, raised from those able to afford to fly, whether in the developed or developing world, for business or for leisure, to assist those bearing the brunt of climate change, would also encourage airlines to be more fuel efficient. A global tax on aviation based on fuel purchases and the DEFRA shadow price of carbon at £27 per ton could raise £16bn for adaptation, and this would transfer wealth from the relatively wealthy to the economically poor affected by climate change. This would cost an average of between £7 and £8 extra per passenger per flight.

Contact Details

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The **International Centre for Responsible Tourism** (ICRT) is a postgraduate research and training centre at Leeds Metropolitan University. Its MSc in Responsible Tourism Management is taught in Leeds, Bhopal in India and The Gambia, and we continue to look for new places to offer the course. We have 100+ students around the world and increasingly influential alumni.

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