

# CGG30 Unit 3: Culture and Tourism

## Activity 6: The Demonstration Effect

---

### Overview

Tourism can bring many economic benefits to a culture and inadvertently leave behind a series of problems. The demonstration effect, commodification, standardization, and transculturation are serious impacts on culture that are left behind after the tourist leaves. Tourist destinations are faced with dilemma, how much culture must be sacrificed in order to keep tourists coming to the area and bringing the economic benefits with them?

### Lesson

Economic benefits from tourism are not always a positive experience for a tourist destination. Although tourism can bring in much needed dollars to an area, the impact of the tourists can be devastating to a fragile cultural region.

The negative impact on a tourist destination can occur in many forms. The destruction of the natural environment is an easily seen impact, but cultural impacts are harder to detect. Culture is a major selling point for tourism and sometimes cultural traditions must be sacrificed to an extent for economic profit.

The tourism industry needs the local culture to be actively involved in the planning process in order to protect the cultural value of tourist destinations and not too feel threatened that their way of life is for sale. Too often control of the tourism industry lies in the hands of foreign companies whose interest lies in profit.

The impact of tourists' values and custom on local people is known as the **DEMONSTRATION EFFECT**.

**The demonstration effect can occur several different ways:**

**Commodification** occurs when traditional rites, souvenir, arts or festival lose their cultural meaning in order to sell the experience to tourists. There is the risk that cultural attractions will lose their **AUTHENTICITY** or realness. Festivals, shows, religious ceremonies are staged for cash, so that tourists can experience the local culture without understanding the cultural significance. This way, the tourists can come away from the experience and still believe they experienced local culture. Local souvenirs, music, arts, and crafts also change to meet tourist demands. Production of the above may be cheaper to mass produce in a different country rather than rely on the product being made locally in order to meet tourist demands. However the benefit of commodification is the influx of money, the creation of jobs and the multiplier effect of tourist dollars on a region. Thus the destination is left with a problem— do you sacrifice culture for profit?

Keeping tourists happy is always a challenge for a destination. The further a tourist travels the stranger or exotic a culture becomes to a tourist. Some tourists thrive on this difference, while other tourists only want the highlights of the culture and want the familiarity of home while away. **STANDARDIZATION** of cultural tourist areas means bringing recognizable features such as food, hotels, and movies to exotic destination to make the tourist feel more comfortable in their surroundings. Standardization also means

taking a culture and changing it to appeal to the tourists. A local delicacy in Korea, which may contain dog meat, may be left off the hotel menu to appease North American tourists who would find this upsetting. Although this type of meat is acceptable and normal to the Korean diet, it is not to Americans.

Once again, the local culture is left with a problem—how much of the culture must be changed to meet the tourists' demands?

Tourists may come to an area to experience local culture, but they often leave behind problems. One of the biggest problems created by tourism is the effect on the culture itself. The physical landscape of a cultural area can be commercialized or developed to meet the needs of tourists. Large-scale tourist developments can also affect nearby areas through increased tourist traffic, possible increased crime levels, land use competition between the development and the traditional way of life also occurs. Access to cultural land by residents can be restricted for tourist development. Bali, Indonesia has seen the prime agricultural land; beachfronts and water supplies disappear to hotels and golf courses.

Local residents also see their traditional way of life come under threat. Seasonal work patterns change to meet the tourist season. Traditional jobs are now commercialized. In Atlantic Canada, more money is made by boats taking tourists to see whales than catching fish in some seasons. This change in employment means the potential loss of skills for future generations. **TRANSCULTURATION** occurs most often with the young people of an area. They are influenced and want to copy the behaviour and lifestyle of the tourists. by the clothing, the music, the products and language used by the visiting tourist and over time it can be reflected in the local culture.

### **HOW CAN CULTURE BE PROTECTED?**

So what can a culture do to protect itself from problems yet keep tourists coming to the area? Education of tourists and residents is one of the most important solutions. Educating tourists on the cultural importance and meaning of festivals or attractions can allow tourists to more fully appreciate the culture of an area. Tourists can also prevent cultural problems by educating themselves about the culture of the area they visit. By doing so they can avoid irritating residents with their attitude.

In Muslim countries, Muslim women have to be extremely careful of how they cover themselves in public. Female tourists must be aware that by wearing shorts, skirts or bathing suits they are disrespecting the local culture. There is the fear that by appearing in this dress, tourists can unduly influence locals to follow their lead and thus create tensions within the community. Residents can be involved in this process that gives them a sense of control in protecting their culture.

The physical landscape that contains cultural features should be planned to allow both protection and allow for growth. Effective land use planning, such as designated tourism development areas or zones, will prevent problems such as overcrowding and conflicting interests later on. This will only work as long as all stakeholders (residents, cultural leaders, tourism sector) have input into the decision making process.

Time is also solution. Rushed development of the tourism industry brings potential profits and the cultural landscape of an area into conflict. By developing the tourism sector in an area gradually, the previous solutions can be implemented effectively.

## Assignment

The information in the chart below shows the economic impact of tourists on the Caribbean cultural region.

TOURISM ECONOMY OF THE CARIBBEAN					
COUNTRY	GDP Per Capita (2000) US\$/person	Tourist Arrivals (2000)	Population	Value of Tourism Economy (2002) US\$	% Contribution of Tourism Economy to GDP (2002)
Antigua & Barbuda	8 200	237 000	64 000	528 000 000	72
Bahamas	15 000	1 596 000	283 000	2 497 000 000	46
Br Virgin Islands	16 000	281 000	21 000	343 000 000	85
Cayman Islands	24 500	354 000	39 000	468 000 000	31
Cuba	1 700	1 774 000	11 096 000	2 572 000 000	11
Dominican Republic	5 700	2 973 000	8 129 000	4 136 000 000	18
Haiti	1 800	140 000	6 684 000	568 000 000	8
Jamaica	3 700	1 323	2 652 000	2 025 000 000	27
St. Lucia	4 500	270 000	154 000	380 000 000	51
U.S. Virgin Islands	15 000	607 000	119 000	1 629 000 000	42

Examine the statistics that are provided above.

1. Calculate the Tourism Penetration Ratio (TPR), which is the number of tourist arrivals divided by the population, for each of the countries above. Example Antigua & Barbuda:  $237\,000 / 64\,000 = 3.7$   
This means there are 3.7 tourists for every person that resides in Antigua & Barbuda.
2. What are the positive and negative consequences of having more tourists than residents?
3. What is the demonstration effect and what are two ways that it can occur?
4. What type of policy would be in place by the government to protect its inhabitants from the effects of tourists? Do you think that a policy developed in the Caribbean could be used in a strict religious country like Iran or Saudi Arabia? Or vice versa?