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TITLE OF PAPER: Can tourist-host encounters be responsibly managed?

ABSTRACT: This paper considers the question posed by responsible tourism as to how tourist-host encounters can be managed in practice so as meet the objectives set out in the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism (2002). In particular, "to provide more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural and environmental issues", as well as "to ensure tourism is culturally sensitive and engenders respect between tourists and hosts" (Cape Town Declaration, 2002). It is argued that ironically social anthropology, which is often an ardent critic of tourism, has much potential to help resolve many of the practical management issues with regards to the tourist-host encounter. Furthermore, it presents and supports the strong business case for investing in the responsible management of tourist-host encounters. A literature review of a number of anthropological concepts and ethnographic studies is used to inform a theoretical framework on the factors or variables which can positively or negatively affect the nature of the encounter between tourists and their hosts. This framework is then tested on some research carried out in The Gambia to investigate the factors/variables that affect the nature of the tourist-host encounter between package tourists and "bumsters" (beach boys) in Kololi and Kotu tourist resorts. The findings are then used to inform practical guidelines for the responsible management of the tourist-host encounter both in The Gambia and more widely.

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Can tourist-host encounters be responsibly managed?

By Lucy McCombes

The nature and social impact of the encounter between tourists and the host population has been the subject of much criticism from many social anthropologists. Conversely, tourist-host encounters have been lamented as an opportunity lost by those who recognise this “meeting of two cultures”, or social contact¹, as an opportunity for economic development and promoting international peace and understanding. However, despite these concerns and enthusiasms, there appears to have been limited debate with regards to the practical measures that can be taken to manage the social impact of the interactions between tourists and their host communities more responsibly so as to minimise the negative social impacts and maximise the positive impacts. The other two aspects of the “triple bottom line”, namely the economic and environmental impacts of the encounter, have received more attention but are not the focus for debate here.

This paper considers the question posed by responsible tourism as to how tourist-host encounters can be managed in practice so as to meet the objectives set out in the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism (2002) aimed at creating “a better place for people to live in and for people to visit”. In particular, “to provide more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural and environmental issues”, as well as “to ensure tourism is culturally sensitive and engenders respect between tourists and hosts” (Cape Town Declaration, 2002). It is argued that ironically social anthropology, which is often an ardent critic of tourism, has much potential to help resolve many of the practical management issues with regards to the tourist-host encounter. Furthermore, it presents and supports the strong business case for investing in the responsible management of tourist-host encounters.

A literature review of a number of anthropological concepts and ethnographic studies is used to inform a theoretical framework on the factors or variables which can positively or negatively affect the nature of the encounter between tourists and their hosts. This framework is then tested on some research carried out in The Gambia to investigate the factors/variables that affect the nature of the tourist-host encounter between package tourists and “bumsters” (beach boys) in Kololi and Kotu tourist resorts. The findings are then applied to inform some guidelines for the responsible management of tourist-host encounters both in The Gambia and more widely.

1. Responsible tourism and the business case for positive tourist-host encounters

The responsible tourism movement recognises both the negative and positive aspects of tourism, but also the inevitability of human travel and increased tourism growth and its potential to help address poverty and inequalities. From this perspective, responsible tourism argues that there is often a need to proactively manage the tourist-host encounter in order to minimise the negative social impacts. Goodwin (2002, p16) argues, “...[a]s more and more people secure the income and leisure to travel we can reasonably expect very significant growth in international and domestic tourism. We need to learn to manage it. Better to do some things that are identifiable, specific and

measurable, than to do nothing to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts of the tourism industry. As the Asian aphorism has it: "Tourism is like fire. You can cook your supper with it, but it can also burn your house down."

Besides this compelling moral obligation, there is also a strong business case illustrated below in *Figure 1* which recognises that increasingly one of the important criteria that determines which tourist destination is most likely to be chosen by tourists for their holidays is the quality of tourist-host contact (Reisinger, 1994). Furthermore, on a global scale, it is an accepted "norm" that more than 60% of tourism repeats and referrals are, directly, generated by the good experiences that are part of a trip. In the majority of cases this experiential component is directly related to the interaction between the local population and the sustained, consistent delivery of service levels within the hospitality industry (Nizette, P. 2006).

Figure 1. Basic business case for promoting positive tourist-host interaction

2. Anthropology of tourism

Drawing on the work of some early social scientists², a distinct anthropology of tourism has emerged which is conveniently summarised by Burns (1999, p95) as having four main broad themes which can be captured by four key questions. Firstly, tourism as religion and ritual: *is tourism a modern form of religion or pilgrimage?* Secondly, tourism as social change: *does tourism damage culture?* Thirdly, tourism as symbolism and mythology: *can tourism offer "Paradise on earth"?* Fourthly, tourism in local-global relationships: *will tourism bring development?* Similarly, Crick (1989)³ and Nash (1996)⁴ summarise the main strands of enquiry within the anthropology of tourism.

The significant anthropological study of tourism only emerged in the 1980s and 90s after initial reluctance by the discipline to give it academic credibility. Nash (1996) and Nunez (1989) suggest that certain values in the culture of anthropologists and others initially discouraged tourism study and consequently retarded the rate of growth of such study in anthropology. Nash (1996, p3) argued "these values concerned work, the nature of scientific research and the peculiar character of the anthropological endeavour".

Today the anthropological study of tourism is more established, and it is now much more widely recognised that anthropology and tourism (as a field of knowledge) have obvious synergy as both seek to identify and make sense of culture and human dynamics (Burns, 1999). Burns (1999, p71) argues, "[b]ecause tourism is a global set of activities crossing many cultures, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the consequences of the interaction between generating and receiving tourism societies." Smith (1981) and Burns (1999) further illustrate a number of the important contributions that anthropology has to offer the study of tourism, in particular its "characteristic *comparative framework* (studying a variety of phenomena in different locations in order to identify common trends); a *holistic approach* (taking account of social, environmental and economic factors and the links between all three); and pursuit of *deeper level analysis* (i.e. what *causes* tourism)" (Burns, 1999, p72). In terms of methodology, anthropologists in their fieldwork try to understand the people they are studying through participant observation in which they observe what is going

on while taking part in the life of their subjects, and by the use of informants (Nash, 1996). Anthropologists are commonly regarded as neutral observers and mediators. The anthropology of tourism looks at the experience of tourism from the perspective of both the visited and the visitor, and explores the different typologies of tourists and their motivations for travelling. It also offers a number of useful concepts such as authenticity, sense of place, the tourist gaze, acculturation, back space, and the “Noble Savage”.⁵ As Burns (1999, pgi) describes it, “anthropology is the window through which tourism dynamics may be properly analysed and understood”. Thus there is a strong case to suggest that the anthropological approach has much to offer endeavours to better understand tourist and host behaviour, and thus inform and contribute towards the responsible management of the tourist-host encounter.

3. Tourist-host encounters and a gap in knowledge

Within the study of tourism and the anthropology of tourism, the nature and impact of the encounter between tourists (or guests) and their hosts has been of immense significance. Nash (1981) made the point that it is the cross cultural encounters and the consequential social transactions “that provide the key to the anthropological understanding of tourism”. The term “encounter” being used to refer to the personal interaction between tourists and hosts (Reisinger, 1994), although Krippendorf (1987, p57) proposes that “a meeting worthy of the name should be characterized by human interest and not primarily a financial one, by a mutual wish to understand and accept each other, by mutual esteem and consideration”. It is also worth noting the discussion surrounding the notion of “hosts” and “guests”. As Burns (1999, p99) explains, “the words are used in an *ironic* sense, the special rules that apply to willing hosts receiving invited guests in their home is suspended. The transaction becomes a commercial one”. Taking on board this point, this research uses the term “tourist” in place of “guest”. As an aside, rather amusingly in light of this debate surrounding the use of terminology, the Collins English Dictionary biological definition of a host is “an animal or plant that nourishes and supports a parasite”!

Moving on, the tourist-host encounter is staged within a network of goals and expectations (Sutton, 1967, p220). On the one hand, the tourist is mobile, relaxed, free-spending, enjoying his leisure and absorbing the experience of being in a different place. In contrast the host is relatively stationary and, if employed in the tourist industry, spends a large proportion of their time catering to the needs and desires of visitors. Tourist-host relationships are also determined by the characteristics of the interacting groups or individuals and the conditions under which contact takes place (Mathieson and Wall, 1982, p135). According to de Kadt (1979, p50), tourist-host encounters occur in three main contexts: where the tourist is purchasing some good or service from the host, where the tourist and host find themselves side by side, for example on a beach, and where two parties come face to face with the object of exchanging information and ideas.

Finally, although there has been much anthropological debate and theoretical concepts surrounding the negative and positive impacts of the interaction between tourists and host encounters (summarised in McCombes, 2007), it appears that this has not been accompanied by an equally strong parallel debate about how to manage these impacts in practice. Although a few sociological and anthropological works (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Reisinger, 1995) have made a start by identifying key factors which

create favourable conditions for the development of social contact⁶. Also, much worthwhile action has already taken place “on the ground” to address this issue, for example advocacy campaigns, some existing tourism projects and products, guidebooks, and policy declarations. However, the view is taken here that there are definite gaps in academic, professional, and public knowledge about best practice in the responsible management of tourist-host interactions. In particular, there is still little guidance on *why* tourist-host encounters can be problematic, and *how* to put guidance into practice to make encounters more positive for all parties. Similarly, there is little written on the roles and responsibilities of the different tourism stakeholders for implementing action.

4. A literature review of factors/variables which affect tourist-host encounters

Notwithstanding the dearth of information with regards to the practical management of tourist-host interactions, a literature review which “interrogated” works largely from anthropology of tourism identified a number of factors which are argued to affect the nature and impact of the tourist-host encounter. *Figure 2* below provides a summary of the findings from this literature review.⁷

Figure 2. Factors/variables which affect the nature of tourist-host encounters

INFLUENCING FACTORS	SOURCE
Tourist typology/ motivations for travel/ expectations	Sutton, 1967; Cohen, 1972; Smith, 1989; Burns, 1999; Carter and Clift, 2000; van Beek, 2003
Type of tourism/activities/ travel arrangement/tourist facilities	Hassan, 1975; UNESCO, 1976; Doxey, 1976; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; MacCannell, 1984; Krippendorf, 1987; Smith, 1989; Reisinger, 1994; Burns, 1999; O'Rourke, 1999
Social motivators and willingness of tourists to interact with host communities	Kelman, 1962; Nash, 1970; Robinson and Preston, 1976; Fisher and Price, 1991; Reisinger, 1994; Burns, 1999
Tourist & host socio-economic characteristics e.g. demographics, culture, nationality	Bochner, 1982; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Reisinger, 1994; Van Beek, 2003; Thyne et al, 2006
Equity of power and economic relations/feelings of superiority & inferiority/ demonstration of the material wealth of tourists	Doxey, 1976; Nash, 1989; Wood, 1993; Reisinger, 1994; Burns, 1999
Cultural differences	Sutton, 1967; Nash, 1970; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Bochner, 1982; Nunez, 1989; Reisinger, 1994.
Cross-cultural & interpersonal communication/language barriers	Smith, 1977; Bochner, 1982; Reisinger, 1994
Repeat visits/season/length of stay/ intensity/intimacy of interaction	Li and Yu, 1974; Doxey, 1976; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Krippendorf, 1987; Reisinger, 1994
Previous experience with tourists or host community	Mathieson and Wall, 1982
Tourist to host ratios/numbers and size of tour group	Cohen 1972; Doxey, 1976; Krippendorf, 1987; Smith, 1989; Pi-Sunyer, 1989
Opportunities for tourist-host contact	Kelman, 1962; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Krippendorf, 1987; Reisinger, 1994; Burns, 1999

Level of tourist satisfaction with quality & service	Mathieson and Wall, 1982
External social, economic, environmental, and political characteristics of the destination	Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Burns, 1999; Goodwin, 2006
Internal factors/strength and coherence of social structure and culture of the destination	Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Burns, 1999; van Beek, 2003; Goodwin, 2006
Extent of tourism development/diversity of local economy	Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Goodwin, 2006
Effectiveness of local tourism management strategies	Reisinger, 1994; Goodwin, 2006
Degree of involvement of host communities in tourism development/equity of distribution of tourism benefits	Doxey, 1976; Nash, 1989; Wood, 1993; Ashley, DilysRoe & Goodwin, 2001; Bah & Goodwin, 2003
Competition/access to tourists	Middleton, 2002; Bah and Goodwin, 2003
Begging and hassle	Bah and Goodwin, 2003
Bargaining & photography	MacCannell, 1992; O'Rourke, 1999
Feelings generated e.g. enjoyable versus stressful	de Kadt, 1979; Reisinger, 1994
Amount of information tourists & hosts have about each other	Reisinger, 1994
Spontaneity & perceived authenticity of encounter	MacCannell, 1984; Reisinger, 1994
Objectification of tourists & hosts	Simmel, 1950; Cohen, 1972; Nash, 1977; Krippendorf, 1987; Mowforth and Munt, 2003
Presence of cultural brokers e.g. guides	Smith, 1977; Crick, 1989; Van Beek, 2003
Voluntary versus imposed contact	Fisher and Price, 1991; Amir & Ben-Ari et al, 1985
Advertising/cyber media/marketing/consumer demand	Burns, 1999; Middleton, 2002; Cooper, 2005

5. Testing the theory: A case study from The Gambia (2007)⁸

On reflection of all these different factors identified in the literature review which are argued to affect the nature and impact of tourist-host encounters, it was postulated that this theory might be useful in informing the responsible and practical management of tourist-host encounters. Therefore, in order to test this theory, the researcher conducted some research in The Gambia entitled “*Ingredients for positive tourist-host encounters*” (McCombes, 2007) which had the following three objectives:

- i) To investigate the variables that affect the nature of the tourist-host encounter between package tourists and “bumsters” (i.e. beach boys) in Kololi and Kotu resorts in The Gambia.
- ii) To identify from the sample of package tourists if their experiences of tourist-host encounters had affected their willingness to return to The Gambia on holiday.
- iii) To identify what action tourists, bumsters, and other key informants think could be taken to better manage the interaction between tourists and their bumster hosts.

However, this paper will focus on the first and third objectives listed in order to present lessons learnt with regard to achieving the responsible management of tourist-host encounters in The Gambia, and more widely in order to fulfil the vision of the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism (2002).

5.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework (list of factors) obtained from the literature review was further categorised into five broad categories to provide a framework for analysis, namely: tourist and host (individual) characteristics, type of tourism characteristics, destination characteristics, characteristics/context of the encounter, and outside influences. A relationship was supposed that different variables have either a positive or negative impact on the nature of the encounter between tourists and their host community.

5.2 Bumsters and tourism in The Gambia (“The Smiling Coast”)

The Gambia is primarily a winter sun package holiday destination, although considerable efforts are currently underway to diversify and broaden the tourism market for cultural tourism, the River Gambia, eco-tourism, sustainable tourism initiatives, and an extended green summer season. In terms of its product, The Gambia markets itself using a number of selling points, namely the semi-tropical climate and The Atlantic coast, rich African heritage (largely based around the infamous slave trade), and a relaxing, unsophisticated atmosphere based on the Gambian people who, as a result of their friendly welcome, have earned the title “The Smiling Coast” for The Gambia.

For those not familiar to The Gambia, “bumsters” are The Gambian equivalent to beach boys common in many other tourist destinations. Putting to one side the public debate and myriad of explanations, “bumsters” have been conveniently defined as “young men who engage tourists in conversation/hassle tourists in order to establish a relationship with the intent of providing services for which they can earn either from the tourists or from stall holders who pay commissions” (Bah and Goodwin, 2003, p24). Other typical characteristics to add to this description would be that they operate illegally in the Tourist Development Area (TDA) using a variety of positive and negative approaches, are formally unemployed, and a small minority are female.

However, there are several different perspectives on bumsters who are a complex social phenomenon. The Gambia Tourism Development Master Plan acknowledges that “bumsters mean many different things to many different people and are seen with different lenses depending on what you make of them. Some find them pleasant and useful and others, in particular formal stakeholders in the tourism industry, regard them as a menace (DOSTC, 2005, p36)”. Overall, despite many anecdotal examples of positive encounters between tourists and bumsters, the social and cultural impacts⁹ of the “*bumster menace*” as it is known locally is an issue of great concern to The Gambian society and tourism industry. This phenomenon is popularly believed to negatively affect the image and security of the destination, as well as affecting the nature of the tourist experience and the encounters between tourists and the host population.

5.3 Data collection methods

Three methods of data collection were used on three different sample groups in order to triangulate and compare findings. A non-random and non-probability sampling strategy was used for a questionnaire survey of 52 package tourists, participant

observation (both covert and open) of 40 bumsters, and in-depth interviews with 36 key informants from the tourism industry. The data collected in the three different formats was then sorted through and evaluated in terms of the research objectives, theoretical framework identified through the literature review, and any new emerging themes. In terms of the data, it is important to note for all three groups that the sample sizes are small and thus the results can only be interpreted as indicative of trends and issues rather than being statistically accurate.

5.4 Key research findings on tourists' motivations and experiences with bumsters

The tourist survey showed that, at the end of their holiday, on average 49% of their experiences with bumsters had been negative and 51% had been positive. In comparison, the Gambia Master Plan airport and hotel surveys¹⁰ found that tourists described their experiences as 55% negative, 33% neutral, and 12% positive, and overall 68% expressed dissatisfaction. However, there is a need to put the threat posed by bumsters in perspective as, on the other hand, 93% of tourists in the Master Plan survey rated Gambian people's welcome as "good" or "very good"; and 95% stated that they would recommend The Gambia to a friend. It is also interesting to note that the reaction of tourists vary, and that 69% tourists used bumsters for one or more of a list of activities (trips (67%); help with shopping or going to the market (47%); "friendship" (44%); showing them the nightlife (28%); help with business (6%); "other" 19%) which indicates that bumsters are meeting a demand from tourists for their services.

In terms of tourists' motivations for coming on holiday, the survey showed that (unsurprisingly) tourists' primary motivation was good value and sun, sand, and sea. However, more interestingly, it also demonstrated that 27% of the sample identified culture/wanting an African experience as a primary or secondary reason for visiting The Gambia. To further substantiate this, the tourist survey found that there was a high uptake of cultural activities with 71% watching a cultural show, 67% visiting a village, 60% visiting a Gambian compound, and 50% visiting a museum.

Thus both the findings on tourists' experiences and use of bumsters, and their demand for authentic African experiences, provide supporting evidence for a strong business case for providing opportunities for positive interaction between tourists and local people.

*5.5 Key research findings on factors which contribute towards a **positive** encounter*

5.5.1 (Individual) tourist and bumster characteristics

In common with the key informants and bumsters, 58% of the tourist sample felt that a bumster's friendly/good personality was a main factor contributing to a positive encounter with tourists. Also, being well educated/having the required knowledge (26%), good communication/language/conversational skills with tourists (19%), and dressing "appropriately"/smartly (19%) were personal characteristics of bumsters that tourists felt contributed to positive interaction. Other commonly mentioned personal attributes of bumsters which tourists valued were a good sense of humour which was mentioned by 28% of the sample, being polite by 21% of tourists, and 10% mentioning a positive outlook.

In terms of tourists' personal characteristics, key informants and bumsters identified modest appearance, appropriate/"open-minded" personality type, philanthropic motivations, an interest in interacting with local people, accurate knowledge about local culture, experience/length of time spent in the Gambia, and (British) nationality, as variables which might help towards positive interaction with bumsters. This view is supported by the tourists' perspective, with 22% of tourists noting that their previous experience of The Gambia was likely to have positively influenced their interaction with bumsters due to an increased level of understanding. Furthermore, 38% of tourists identified their own personal attributes (such as their age, gender, personality, colour, body language, and whether they were independent travellers or philanthropists), as a factor which affected their attitude/relationship with bumsters, both positively and negatively.

5.5.2 Type of tourism characteristics

Both key informants and bumsters shared the view that the nature of activities involved with ecotourism and cultural tourism were more conducive to positive interaction between tourists and local people (including bumsters) in comparison to sun, sand, and sea package holidays. The consensus was that eco- or cultural tourists are more inclined to explore the country, interact with local people, and are motivated to use bumsters to provide authentic African experiences. However, this negative stereotype of package tourists is partly challenged by the findings from the tourist survey which showed that their motivations and typology vary (see 5.4 above).

5.5.3 Destination characteristics

Key informants were the main source for identifying characteristics of the destination, in particular Kololi and Kotu resort areas, which it was felt positively affect the nature of the interaction between tourists and bumsters. Firstly, key informants placed much emphasis on the hospitable Gambian culture as being a good foundation for positive interaction between tourists and bumsters and other local people. The tourist sample echoed these findings as they rated friendly people very highly (weighted average score of 4 out of 5) as a reason that motivated them to choose The Gambia for their holiday.

Secondly, some informants expressed the view that the historical origins of tourism with philanthropic Swedish tourists were positive since it resulted in mutually beneficial friendships with local people. On the other hand, it was felt that this has evolved into something more negative as it also prompted the development of the bumster phenomenon, and the mindset and expectations of many local people that tourists *should* help them.

Thirdly, the presence of the Tourism Security Unit and bumster legislation was viewed by most key informants and tourists as a destination characteristic which protects tourists from being constantly hassled by bumsters if they do not wish to interact.

Unsurprisingly, the bumsters did not show any trends in identifying a characteristic of the destination that they felt was conducive to positive encounters with tourists. This

is likely to reflect the impact of security measures and the competition from other tourism stakeholders.

4. *Characteristics of the encounter*

All three sample groups placed particular emphasis on the context or characteristics of the encounter as affecting the nature of the interaction between tourists and bumsters. To summarise these findings, a number of factors/variables were noted as contributing towards a positive encounter which are listed below:

- Polite, professional, friendly, culturally-sensitive approach whereby bumsters were not too pushy and “took no for an answer”
- “Proper conversation”
- Clarity with regards to the nature of services on offer
- Bumsters respecting tourists’ personal space
- Bumsters not always asking for money
- Good quality of services provided by bumsters
- Activities which taught tourists about life in The Gambia and provided authentic experiences
- Activities based on common interests
- Bumsters assist in managing the interaction with local people
- Small group size allowing one to one attention, and freedom for tourists to “do their own thing”
- A fixed pricing system
- When tourists initiate contact with bumsters e.g. following a recommendation
- When bumsters have a means to communicate a respectable identity e.g. have a “reason” to talk to tourists
- Friendship or incidences where mutually beneficial relationships developed such as a bumster providing tourists with enjoyable, African experiences in exchange for some sort of payment or sponsorship
- 13% of bumsters identified romance as a positive type of interaction with tourists which contrasts with the tourist sample who complained of unwanted sexual approaches by bumsters (see 5.6.4).

5.5.5 *Outside influences*

The main positive outside variable identified was the view that an increasing consumer demand for authentic “real” African experiences was resulting in an increase in tourists who are interested to interact with local people.

5.6 *Key research findings on factors which contribute towards a **negative** encounter*

5.6.1 *Tourist and bumster characteristics*

The tourist sample showed that a “dodgy”/Rasta/unkempt /intimidating/”flash” appearance of bumsters (19%) and selling/using drugs (14%) were felt to have a negative impact on the nature of interaction with tourists, in addition to a rude/aggressive personality (10%) and begging attitude (4%). However, 55% of the

tourists did not identify any specific personal characteristics of bumsters but rather expressed the view that *“it is what bumsters do, not who they are, that is a problem”*. In addition, key informants noted that insufficient knowledge/experience, poor communication skills, and negative motivations were other bumster characteristics which can contribute to negative interaction with tourists.

In terms of tourists’ personal characteristics, immodest dress, inappropriate/”closed-minded” personality, little experience of The Gambia, misconceptions about Africa, and negative motivations for visiting The Gambia such as for sex or drugs, were identified by all groups as factors negatively affecting the behaviour of tourists and the nature of their interaction with bumsters.

5.6.2 Type of tourism characteristics

There was a general consensus amongst all three sample groups that the nature of package tourism does little to actively encourage positive interaction between local people/bumsters and tourists for three main reasons. Firstly, that there is a tendency for package tourists to be motivated primarily to *“just lie on the beach and get a tan”* rather than explore Africa. Secondly, that a number of tourists arriving in The Gambia have *“very limited knowledge about the country, little time to learn, and unrealistic expectations”* which are all factors that can contribute to negative interactions between tourists and bumsters and other local people. Thirdly, 38% of tourists felt that package tourism has resulted in a concentration of package hotels which creates a “honey pot” of tourists which concentrates hassle in a few small areas and intensifies the problem.

5.6.3 Destination characteristics

A number of characteristics of the destination were felt to negatively affect tourist-bumster interaction. Firstly, all three sample groups identified the competitive environment between tourism stakeholders and bumsters as having a negative impact on tourist-bumster encounters. It was seen by key informants as perpetuating an aggressive approach by bumsters, whereas 35% of bumsters and 32% tourists complained that tour operators were not giving balanced information to tourists about the bumsters which was affecting tourists behaviour by making them cautious/afraid to interact with bumsters.

Secondly, a number of the informants were critical of the approach and efficacy of the policing of the bumsters which it was felt sometimes created a bad impression for tourists, and sometimes generated sympathy for bumsters when tourists saw or heard stories about bumsters being held by police. Similarly, 10% of bumsters complained of the negative impact on their relationship with tourists as a result of them having been searched by police during a trip.

Thirdly, reflecting their knowledge and experience of The Gambia, key informants identified a list of characteristics of the destination relating to the wider context which they felt caused and perpetuated the bumster phenomenon. The following issues were mentioned: poverty; lack of natural resources; decline of agriculture and the consequent rural-urban drift; lack of alternative employment opportunities; poor provision of education; and low wages of legitimate tourism workers.

5.6.4 Characteristics of encounter

Key informants, 58% of tourists, and 30% of bumsters identified a desperate and persistent hassling approach by bumsters as being the main factor that led to negative interaction between tourists and bumsters. In addition, to summarise, a number of other factors/variables were identified as contributing to negative interaction between tourists and bumsters which are listed below:

- Aggressive/intimidating approach
- Invasion of tourists' personal space
- Bumsters try to make tourists feel guilty
- Bumsters rip tourists off through a scam or through false information
- Argument/aggressive incident with a bumster
- Dissatisfaction with bumsters' service delivery e.g. when tourists expectations are not met, the trip or service is not well organised, or the tourist feels they have not got good value for money
- Arguments over pricing due to the absence of a fixed price
- Differences in power and race relations
- Differences in wealth/poverty of bumsters
- Cultural differences
- Language barriers
- Inappropriate behaviour of tourists e.g. excessive drinking, or excessive haggling
- Unwanted sexual/"*lethy*" approach used by bumsters was identified as having a negative impact on the nature of tourist-bumster interaction by 26% of the 96% of tourists who indicated that they had a negative experience with bumsters.

This list reminds us that some tourists are part of the bumster "problem".

5.6.5 Outside influences

Key informants felt that the main negative outside influence is the erosion of traditional values in Gambian society caused by the younger generation aspiring to a Western culture which is more focused on the individual and material possessions. It was generally felt that such changes were encouraging the youth to want relationships with tourists to get opportunities to travel or find wealth. It was felt that such a mindset perpetuates a negative mindset of bumsters towards tourists.

6. Lessons learnt for achieving responsible tourism in The Gambia

6.1 Responsible management of tourist-host encounters

The key significance of these findings is that they provide supporting evidence, from three different perspectives, that there are tangible factors or variables which could be managed in such a way as to create a more conducive environment for positive interaction between tourists and local people. Although many of these factors which affect the nature of tourist-host encounters in The Gambia may not come as a surprise,

the point is that they are still frequently not accommodated for in terms of the environment in which tourists and local people meet. This is an opportunity lost as an understanding and application of these factors and other theoretical lessons could be used to (1) reduce negative social impacts of tourism, and (2) inform the future responsible management of tourist-host encounters in a number of ways as summarised in *Figure 4* (page 14).

6.2 Addressing the bumster issue

This research in The Gambia and the recommendations from the three sample groups (see McCombes, 2007) demonstrated overall consensus and advocated for a holistic approach to securing change on the bumster issue, and at the same time provide an environment more conducive to positive interaction between tourists and local people. This is consistent with the view point that the bumster phenomenon is a complex issue which cannot be successfully addressed without responding to the wider context of poverty and unemployment. It is specifically advocated here that, in addition to a wide range of other measures, bumsters with the most potential and other Gambians should be properly trained, organised, and formalised to provide valuable new tourism products for The Gambia. For example, such new products could incorporate the unique products offered by members of the Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET), homestays/”a day in the life” of a farmer/fisherman/housewife etc, “personal shopper” service, programme of local events, West African regional tourism products, and a portfolio of other activities designed to increase positive tourist-host interaction.

These new enterprises could then compete with bumsters operating illegally, add diversity to The Gambian tourism product, provide “something new” for repeat visitors, as well as provide a means for more of the tourist revenue to benefit the local economy. As such there is a strong business case for investing in the development of new tourism products which have key USPs (Unique Selling Points) such as individual or very small groups (maximum 5 people), are tailor-made/flexible, owned by Gambians, provide unique, meaningful and positive interaction with local people, authentic experiences, are high quality, and meet responsible tourism Fair Trade standards. Although it is recognised that much of this idea is not new as it reflects much of the original concept behind the Official Tourist Guides (OTG) in The Gambia, the difference would lie in the way in which the concept is implemented in practice to avoid some of the difficulties encountered with the existing OTG scheme.

The holistic approach proposed, which is in line with the Gambia Tourism Development Master Plan and the Gambia Responsible Tourism Policy, incorporates the following 9 key elements and is summarised in *Figure 3* below (see McCombes 2007 for full details):

- **Awareness-raising activities** to change behaviour of **tourists** and reduce the uptake of unlicensed bumsters, and to inform and encourage positive interaction with local people.
- **Awareness-raising activities** about the negative impacts of bumsters to change behaviour of **local people** with regards to aspiring to work as a bumster, and improve their understanding of tourists’ culture and expectations.

- **Differentiating between “good” bumsters** with potential to contribute positively to the tourism industry **from those unwilling to change their behaviour or acting as criminals.**
- **Using market demand** for “authentic” African experiences to drive investment in the **development of new products** which formalise the services provided by bumsters, satisfy tourists, and make business sense.
- Use knowledge about the factors which contribute to positive and negative encounters between tourists and local people to inform the **design of new products and the improved management of the environments in which tourists and local people meet** (*see Figure 4*).
- **Investment** in the provision of revenue **earning/employment opportunities** for bumsters.
- **Investment** in the provision of **training/a tourist guide school** to improve the number and standard of professional local guides.
- **”Soft” policing** to reduce hassle, create bumster-free zones, and deter criminal behaviour of some “bad” bumsters
- **Partnership working and capacity building** of tourism stakeholders

Figure 3. Eight elements/”pieces of the jigsaw” of an holistic approach for securing change on the bumster issue

7. Lessons learnt for achieving the vision of the Cape Town Declaration

Three overall important conclusions can be drawn from this study. Firstly, the findings from the research in The Gambia proved to be consistent with the theoretical

factors/variables identified through the literature review. This substantiates the argument that the anthropology of tourism and its associated theoretical concepts can usefully inform the identification of tangible factors which affect the nature of tourist-host encounters and thus inform their practical management. It is evident that the bumster phenomenon and other tourist-host interactions need to be studied and viewed as a social-cultural reality, rather than simply as “a problem”. An analysis, in particular using a social anthropological approach, of “why” any tensions or positive outcomes exist between tourists and their host communities provides essential information for identifying appropriate management solutions.

Secondly, bearing in mind the significant numbers of tourists who used bumsters, the negative impact of bumsters on some tourists’ holiday experiences in The Gambia, and an increasing consumer demand for authentic African or other “exotic” experiences, there is a strong business case for investing in action to provide opportunities for positive tourist-host interaction.

Thirdly, both the literature review of the anthropology of tourism and the research from The Gambia implies that there are practical and tangible factors/variables in any tourist destination which, if managed responsibly, can create a more conducive environment for positive interaction between tourists and hosts. The lessons learnt can be applied to reduce negative social impacts of tourism by informing practical guidelines for the responsible management of tourist-host encounters as summarised below in *Figure 4*:

Figure 4. Application of lessons learnt for the responsible management of tourist-host encounters

To further substantiate this research, the next step would be to pilot some initiatives to test the efficacy of the action proposed here for the responsible management of tourist-host encounters.

Finally, the question as to whether and how tourist-host encounters should be managed is likely to become increasingly controversial as the tourism industry continues to expand into remote, “unspoilt” corners of the world to “meet local people”. Inevitably, this expansion will result in conflicting interests associated with the interaction between tourists and local people, as is the case with the bumster issue in The Gambia. In dealing with such conflicts, one can envisage concerns that there is a risk that if tourist-host encounters are overly controlled and managed then they could become contrived and perceived as inauthentic. However, in response to these concerns, it is argued here that responsible tourism management can be done in such a way that helps to facilitate much more positive, equitable, authentic, personal encounters based on mutual respect by providing appropriate opportunities for tourists to leave their “tourist bubble”.

However, to end on a cautionary note, another important concern should be that the tourist-host encounter occurs on the host’s terms, even if this does mean that in some instances tourists may have their movements restricted in order to minimise negative impacts and respect their host’s right to privacy. Such local ownership of the improved management of the interaction of local people with tourists, for example through addressing the bumster issue and designing new products, will require a participatory and responsible approach to development and considerable investment. Such investment would seem a small price to pay for safeguarding and enjoying the priceless reputation and smile of “The Smiling Coast”.



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