

# Chapter 30

## Investigations Into Slum Tourism: Exploring a Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

*This article aims at providing a deep understanding of various aspects of inquiry related to slum tourism or poverty tourism. The visit of favela or slum into a destination is a complex and challenging practice. Touring the poor is increasingly and variously organized by tour operators, local slum communities, and non-governmental organizations. The slum has joined the real of attractions, a sight to see. The research uses a qualitative approach to explore slum tourism in general as well as case study. The Web's effect on tourism is obviously rather important. Moreover, taking "Reality Tours and Travel" - a operator slum websites - as a case, this study attempts to explore issues of the quality of strategic choices on the web. Whilst academic discussion on the theme is evolving rapidly, slum tourism on the web is still a relatively young area of research.*

### INTRODUCTION

Poverty is everywhere and anywhere to a different degree but often does not arouse interest. Poverty is not defined in terms of low incomes but uses broader concepts of deprivation and insecurity (Hossain, 2005). Who are the poor? Although 'poor' may be a stable descriptive identity for people in some groups, for most, poverty is a situation, not an identity (Narayan, Pritchett, & Kapoor, 2009).

This leads to a number of questions: are poor people actually poor or are the contexts in which they live poor? Conversely, poverty actually creates curiosity because of difference in ways of life. It is a common phenomenon and is one of the top forms of tourism in some parts of the world (Delic, 2011). Examples are common throughout South and Central America as well as in Asian countries which have the same characteristics as the favela in Brazil, the townships in South Africa, or the slums in India,

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which have led to different definitions of favela, township and reality tourism: places where poverty is more concentrated in neighbourhoods.

In recent times, due to changing social conditions and the development of international tourism, so-called poverty or slum tourism has increasingly come into focus: organised tours of destinations in degradation and poverty, and in some cases also illegal places fully run by gangs. In the past there have been a lot of violent confrontations between these gangs and states (e.g. favela in Brazil, barrio in Colombia).

Tourism today is characterised by diversification and enrichment of the tourist product offered, where the tourist is satisfied not only by the contemplation of a landscape (authentic or romantic) but, intends to turn it into an experience to feel a real part of (Schmitt, 1999). Tourism creates links between people and places, connects different cultures and environments. Moreover, tourism is a major force for global change. Tourism is embedded in other global processes creating constraints and opportunities for its development and it creates political spaces to develop responses to the social question. Research of authentic and unexplored regions, places with forms of social tension and ethical issues, contrasts with the particularities that distinguish purely hedonistic and recreational, traditional tourism.

At the same time, with consumers playing a participatory role in the production and consumption process (Buhalis & Law, 2008), it has become dominant for businesses to use technology to engage consumers in a more individual way. The internet is rapidly becoming the number one information source for travel. In fact, the choices of the consumer are aided by the information picked up through the Internet, which is an ideal place to communicate, promote, and 'sell' destinations and where potential clients can undertake comparisons and choices more responsibly. There is plenty of evidence that tourism, helped by digital technologies, has dispersed into urban spaces/places which have not previously been associated much with the tourist gaze (Maitland & Newman, 2009). In this situation, even social inequality, and poverty as such, can become a tourist attraction and at times subject to commodification processes, as research on slum tourism has shown (Burgold et al., 2013, Freire-Medeiros, 2012, Frenzel et al., 2015, Frenzel, 2016, Whyte, 2017). The use of the Internet has become a key competitive tool and essential also for tourist destinations (Murphy et al., 2007) and offers great potential to influence consumers' perceived images. In addition, internet promotes the mass customization of tourism products as it supports the tourist operators to target niche markets in different geographical locations (Buhalis et al., 2005; 2011).

As tourists have gained more experience in tourism travel, they have also grown more critical of tour wholesalers and their products. Following this trend, tour operators have also been adapting their strategies for online travel retail (Dwyer et al., 2009). Wang and Fesenmaier (2006) argued that a successful web marketing strategy requires the integration and coordination of web-site features, promotion techniques and customer relationship management programmes. Thus, integrating technologies with relationship marketing could help tourism organizations and destinations to maintain competitiveness and improve the management of business relationships with customers (Álvarez et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important to study tour sites as sources of tourist information (i.e. the ways in which these are seen online). Web-site performance can be measured in various ways (Buhalis et al., 2011).

The goal of the current study is to find out how organisations can improve their websites and gain competitive advantage in the marketing of slum tourism. First assesses the current literature on slum tourism and importance of the web sites to influence the perceived image of destination as a virtual experience for the tourist. A recent research (Privitera, 2015) show that slum tour organisations on the web are at a relatively sophisticated stage of development, it presents as a viable tool for promotion of slum tourism and complementary information channels. Now we are focusing on a case study *Reality Tours and Travel*, a well know and large tourism operator in Mumbai (India) specialized in reality slum tour.

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