
Book Review

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Sex Tourism in Africa. Kenya's Booming Industry

by Wanjohi Kibicho

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This text is part of the series "New Directions in Tourism Analysis" under the direction of series editor Dimitri Ioannides. Other volumes in this series have topical foci (photography, cultural tourism), whereas this one is in the form of a very comprehensive case study, focusing on sex tourism in Kenya.

An interesting comparison is with the earlier volumes edited by Oppermann (1998), "Sex Tourism and Prostitution", and by Bauer and McKercher (2003), "Sex and Tourism". The subtitles of those texts were quite significant. The first was "Aspects of Leisure, Recreation and Work", connoting the more mundane aspects of what is, for some women, particularly in developed countries, just a job. The latter was subtitled "Journeys of Romance, Love, and Lust", which continued the theme, developed in the Oppermann volume, that one might differentiate *Sex Tourism* from *Romance Tourism*.

However, these volumes were edited works that ranged from serious and dark issues such as child prostitution and paedophilia, to almost frivolous chapters profiling sexual adventures between tour guides and customers and 'gentleman bars' featuring lap dances or clandestine prostitution. Kibicho finds the means to explore most of these dimensions within a single study, focused on Kenya, and is able to form a more complete and contextual treatise as a result.

Chris Ryan warns, in the foreword, that "the phenomenon will provide sufficient examples to reinforce any given prejudice" (p.xv), and argues that "good research will give a voice to the oppressed and the emancipated, recognising the legitimacy of both ends of the spectrum, and the confusions and complexities that lie betwixt and between" (p.xv). This is due, in part, to the reliance on personal interviews and other qualitative techniques whose validity is suspect when the respondents are performing illegal activities, suspicious of the motives of the researcher, and perhaps less than truthful. This can result in the filtering of sex workers' narratives through the reader's value system and questioning the research method if the results are contrary to expectations.

Even definition of terms can be problematic, so Kibicho starts with a conceptual background attempting to clarify terms and to provide some perspective on what

he terms a 'mega-industry'. As an example of the provocative nature of the text, he writes "Sex tourism can be variously voluntary or exploitative, confirming or negating a sense of integrity or self-worth ..." (p.18).

The second chapter provides an overview of the legal ambiguities regarding the sex trade, portraying an international dimension of patchwork regulations and laws that are often unenforced and perhaps reflect the underlying controversy between what Kibicho calls the 'abolitionist' vs. the 'regulationist' view. The former wants to abolish sex trade as an immoral activity. The latter wishes to recognise the reality of the sex trade (adult prostitution) by taxing it, regulating it and de-stigmatising what they regard to be an occupation of choice. To point out the rather extreme case, Kibicho reports the legal situation in Germany where an unemployed woman can be denied welfare benefits if she refuses to take an available job – even where the job is working in a brothel.

Chapter 3 discusses tourism development in Kenya, using typical macro-data and a life cycle approach. Interestingly, Kibicho's stages of development and graphical analysis show cyclical and non-linear relationships for the economy and the life cycle, but exponential and correlated relationships for the sex trade, poverty and unemployment (p.76).

Chapter 4 begins the specific treatment of sex tourism in Kenya. The reader learns that a distinguishing characteristic is the relatively low cost of sexual services, even in comparison with Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines (p.81). Another defining characteristic, although not unique to Kenya, involves the trans-racial nature of the relationship. Otherwise, the range of services is similar to other destinations with a mature sex industry, including sexual massage, topless dancing, escort services and so forth.

Chapter 5 discusses the manner in which tourism facilitates both romance and sex. Here, Kibicho makes extensive use of a relatively small sample ($N = 68$) of female tourists to generalise about their views. Ryan's warning must be kept in mind, as the anecdotal responses must be viewed within the complex cultural setting. Clients sometime appear delusional, confusing love and affection for what, in the words of the sex workers, is clearly just a business transaction. Statements are often contradictory, as 66% of the respondents expressed the intention of sexual promiscuity during their trip but none of them identified themselves as sex tourists (pp.101–103).

Some of this material is light-hearted, as the sex workers identify national stereotypes such as the "sexually starved" German women, or accounts from European men whose appearance or occupations prevent them from attracting women in their own countries. The men point out that, in Kenya, "...beautiful girls love me", or "I feel like a rock star" (p.100). However, some of the materials are tough to read, such as the legal struggles of Kenyan parents who 'traded' their six year-old daughter to a tourist for \$99 worth of cell phones only to find out later that the child was being used in pornographic movies. Kibicho also provides insights into the cultural conflicts faced by sex workers in Kenya. For example, young Kenyan men, employed as sex workers, find it necessary to consume copious amounts of alcohol to reduce their inhibitions to culturally unacceptable practices such as holding hands and expressing affection in public.

These issues are explored in more depth in Chapter 6, as Kibicho takes on issues such as the socio-economic drivers expanding the supply of sex workers and the complicated psychological issue of self-worth and self-actualisation related to the relatively high

income of sex workers. Here, Kibicho begins to articulate his prescriptive strategy to improve their lives. This could include some form of social security, empowerment and training programmes to tap into their existing entrepreneurial abilities, focusing on management and marketing skills so that they might develop small businesses that would allow them to transition out of sex work.

A more sober assessment, in Chapter 7, compares the relatively high pay and ability to earn a living with the serious risks of the sex worker. Chief among these are the likelihood of contracting AIDS/HIV and the danger of physical abuse by clients. The accounts in this chapter, by both sex workers and clients, show some of the brutality and disregard for human dignity demonstrated by clients. Kibicho again calls for programmes to transition workers into small businesses, citing the likelihood of high multiplier effects of this local spending. He does not, though, present data on the success rate of small businesses in the region, or the average profitability.

Chapter 8 covers male sex workers, a particularly volatile topic now in Africa, with the current repression of homosexuality in many regions. Kibicho reviews works that show provocative stereotypical tourism flows such as Scandinavian women soliciting Gambian men and American women seeking Jamaican beach boys. He finds similar stereotypes in the narratives of Kenyan male prostitutes, as they describe German women among the best, though 'sexually starved' (p.168); British women as the worst "too mechanical ... sexually cold"; and Italians as generous but prone to violence (p.168). While there are interesting insights in this treatment, Kibicho perhaps over-intellectualises the sex trade in a section defining male sex workers as entrepreneurs.

Chapter 9 is a case study of the Malindi area, which is used by Kibicho to explore the influence of tourism development on the lives of sex workers. He outlines a quite sophisticated organisation of almost 500 members, the "Malindi Welfare Association". The MWA establishes rules and regulations including classes of sex workers and zones of operation. Personal interviews portray the complexity of the relationships that can develop between tourists and sex workers, one account leading Kibicho to ask "who exploits whom". However, in trying to present a balanced view, he is perhaps over-generous, writing "Sex trade also creates good social values, as commercial sexual service providers interact with their customers". To be fair, he is discussing issues like learning about foreign cultures, improving languages skills, and this quote should not be viewed out of context. He goes on to point out the other view that "sex trade vitiates or destroys wholesome attitudes and undermines the social values of both those involved and the local people around where it is taking place" (p.193). Thus, he fulfils his opening promise to show both ends of the spectrum of opinion.

Kibicho argues that the book's readers are "senior undergraduate and postgraduate students of tourism" as well as "sociologists, psychologists, health practitioners, policymakers and politicians" (p.7). One might extend this to argue that all open-minded voting citizens of Kenya should be aware of this clandestine 'industry' so that they could intelligently guide the policymakers in the direction that best suits the general population. Academic use would most likely be productive in upper-division courses that stress analytical skills, as the issues are so complex and value-laden.

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Book Review

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Slow Travel and Tourism

by J. Dickson and L. Lumsdon

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This book comes at a time when it has become clear to most that tourism in its traditional form is harmful to the environment through its high use of fossil fuels, and that there is a need to change the current trend in behaviour that is long-haul, speedy travel towards more sustainable forms of leisure travel. Dickinson and Lumsdon offer a comprehensive overview of the development of slow travel in recent times, which still constitutes a relatively small movement on a global basis. Through 10 chapters, the reader is provided with the background and rationale for slow travel, an introduction to the elements of slow travel and a glimpse into the possible future of the phenomenon.

The book is written in an accessible language, which suits students, lecturers and practitioners alike. Relevant examples and figures from tourist destinations all over the world are used throughout the book. The aim is to define slow travel and present a case as to how this might provide a new form of sustainable tourism development in the future. The book can also serve as an inspiration for businesses or destinations wanting to develop in this direction, as the case studies give some insight on how this can be achieved. It should, however, be noted that these case studies are short, and as such the book cannot be used as a stepwise how-to guide for developing slow travel.

The first three chapters focus on the current situation, and critique the usage of the term sustainable tourism in the current economic environment. The authors argue that many discourses about sustainable tourism are in place, and the arguments for maintaining the present tourism system do not always hold true, as tourism is not always the panacea to economic problems in all regions of the world. Several problems in relation to the triple bottom line of sustainable tourism are outlined, including the failure to raise the status of destinations in developing countries, the negative effects of tourism on host environments, and in particular the negative effects that transport for tourism purposes has on the global environment. Although people may have views that support proenvironmental behaviours, they still often choose types of holidaying, which have a large carbon footprint. The social practices perspective is used to explain why, although people mostly are able to take lower impact holidays, they still choose to participate in conventional forms of tourism. The current structures in society are enabling and promoting high emissions tourism, and as long as people have the choice to go on

long-haul trips for a reasonable price, they will continue to do so. Ease of booking and low prices help maintain the conventional forms of tourism that are harmful to the environment. It is made clear that a continuation of the growth in long-haul tourism cannot be sustained by the planet, and therefore a growth in the development of low carbon tourism is needed. This sets the scene for slow travel as an initiative to reduce the negative impact of leisure travel on the environment.

The book offers a list of ingredients for slow travel and tourism. The authors define slow travel as

“a process which brings about a modal shift away from air and car travel; a behavioural shift to the rediscovery of travel for its own sake to facilitate slower, but more carbon efficient journeys that engender engagement with people encountered and places en route, as well as the destination; and an increasing expression of environmental concern by tourists conscious of a need to reduce their carbon footprint whilst maintaining the benefits of travel.”

This is a change from traditional forms of tourism, where the transport to and from the destination is often seen as a ‘necessary evil’, often reduced to a minimum to enjoy the sights and activities at the destination. In slow travel, the journey to and from the destination is also part of the experience, which is seen as enjoyable and is also to some extent shaped by the tourist’s involvement with the mode of travel or the travel companions. Some forms of travel that may be perceived as slow travel, such as cruise tourism and travel by car, are excluded owing to their relative high emissions per passenger kilometre, as low usage of fossil fuels is essential to the definition of slow travel.

In five chapters, the authors outline the current situation for the main travel modes associated with slow travel: trains, walking, cycling, bus/coach travel and water-based travel. For each chapter, the background of the mode is explained, followed by the potential for carbon savings. Also, the experience of the travel mode is explored, as this is important for the total tourism product in slow travel. It is shown how the tourist engages with the various transport modes in such a way that he or she is a co-creator of the experience; the way in which the tourist engages with the transport mode determines their experience of the total trip. At the end of each chapter, a case study serves as an example of organisations and businesses that have developed transport modes in a way consistent with the concept of slow travel, showing that there are opportunities for growth of this type of tourism within the frames of today’s society.

The final chapter ponders the future of slow travel. It suggests that slow tourism might become one of the few sustainable ways of travelling in the future, as the current situation in which people travel without regard for GHG emissions cannot be sustained. Several scenarios are offered to highlight the possible future of slow travel and tourism, which shows that policy on both national and international levels will be instrumental in changing current behaviours. A new paradigm of slow travel is proposed, in which speed, distance and unacceptable levels of environmental degradation are decoupled from the tourist experience.

This book needs to be read. It is important in that it shows us that it is not necessary to travel half way around the world to have an enjoyable holiday, and serves as an inspiration to innovation in tourism in a time where initiatives to lower carbon emissions are imperative.

Book Review

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Polar Tourism: An Environmental Perspective

by B. Stonehouse and J.M. Snyder

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Stonehouse and Snyder introduce their book by first questioning whether anyone visits these cold areas of the world, and if so why. They note that tens of hundreds of thousands of tourists actually do and this book, “is intended for readers with interest in how tourism develops in remote places, how the industry works in practice and how polar tourism is regulated and managed under the different political regimes that exist north and south” (p.viii). Further, Stonehouse and Snyder acknowledge that their book is centred on polar environments, but raises issues and arguments that apply worldwide.

It is important to realise that this text is published relatively shortly after Snyder and Stonehouse’s (2007) edited text, *Prospects for Polar Tourism*, with the International Polar Year (IPY) in the interim from 2007 to 2009. In recent years, there have also been a number of other polar tourism texts and special journal issues published (see Hall and Saarinen, 2010; Lück et al., 2010; Maher et al., 2011; *Polar Geography*, 2007; *Tourism in Marine Environments*, 2007). There have also been several networks formed around the topic, and numerous one-off conferences on the topic throughout the IPY (see Maher and Gelter, 2010 for an overview of these). Thus, there is a lot of material to compare this book to.

As an authored vs. an edited text, I began reading this book with the anticipation that it would be a concise read with well-connected components, something that typically is not the case when there are numerous authors under an editorial umbrella. Unfortunately, this was not the case. With only a two-page authors’ introduction there is no space for the authors to connect their thoughts, and thus the book manages to come across as a series of disjointed parts, many of which are not particularly useful and many that overlap with the content of Snyder and Stonehouse (2007).

Chapter one provides a descriptive overview of the Polar Regions and their environments. This chapter began my thinking that the book might be a bit too general and outdated; these thoughts would recur throughout the read. Chapters two and three provide Arctic and Antarctic specific discussions on tourism history and development. Both are interesting overviews of the historic context, but neither has great depth or focus. These chapters break tourism into sectors such as adventure, culture and eco, but such sector distinction is hardly useful, as tourists and industry tend to combine or

overlap sectors. The first three chapters serve as an introduction, much of which could be combined into a single concise chapter better introducing the context of the book and its content.

Chapter four is the first chapter looking to the future, and it is no surprise that it should focus on changing environments. Climate change and exploitation of natural resources are areas of focus, but the overall chapter is awkward. It starts very geology oriented, mentioning cosmic events and ices ages, before touching upon human-induced changes. Given the tremendous discussions of sovereignty and many recent texts on the subject, it is surprising that this topic only received four paragraphs of text, with no recent academic sources referenced.

Chapter five on wilderness tourism is another chapter that stirs up recurring issues. Its focus on the wilderness is not well-defined. The terminology that is used harkens from the US Wilderness Act, so it is very US-centric, and if many people 'thought' about the Polar Regions they could assume, incorrectly, that all polar tourism is wilderness tourism. While the chapter is a good overview, it is lacking in a number of areas. Firstly it examines terms, utilising mostly US examples, when it should examine agency mandates. Rather than using dictionary definitions of management, it could have discussed how agencies such as Parks Canada or the Governor of Svalbard are putting management into action and what the current state of Antarctic Specially Managed or Protected Areas (ASMAs and ASPAs) are. This chapter also refers to Appendix B, perhaps one of the more problematic pieces of the book, and one that is telling of a rushed process or weak authorship (a comment that is difficult to make given the stature of the authors). Appendix B, as it is titled, lists world heritage sites and national parks in the Polar Regions. Of those World Heritage Sites listed for Canada, the list I am most familiar with, only two are actually located in the Polar Regions – Nahanni and Wood Buffalo. The rest of the sites on the Canadian list lie far south of 60 degrees. Similarly, as I know the Canadian context best, it was shocking to see that there are apparently no national parks located in the Canadian Arctic (p.188 and 189), when in reality there are 13 that either lie north of 60 degrees or could be considered representative of polar landscapes.

Chapter six specifically examines the management of shipborne tourism, and while it is once again a good overview of the situation, it tends to be a bit broad and out of date. While the authors could not have been expected to cite the new empirical work found in Lück et al. (2010) it is surprising that there is no mention of Ross Klein's years of examination of the cruise industry. Chapter seven suffers from similar problems in that it is very general and lacks reference to the years of new research on the subject of culture and heritage tourism both in the Polar Regions and globally. Many excellent empirical sources are left out, but on the other hand, there are many Wikipedia and dictionary sources used to provide information. Table 7.1 (sourced from Wikipedia) is another example of a rushed process or inexperienced authorship. The table lists Arctic cities and towns, but gives no indications as to how these are determined. The problematic part is that cities such as Alta (Norway), Umeå (Sweden) Oulu (Finland), and Iqaluit (Nunavut) are missing for seemingly no particular reason.

Chapter eight is well developed, but appears a little too late. The topic is Southern Oceans and Antarctic Tourism, and at first glance this is confusing because earlier chapters were split apart based on sectors, where as this chapter is split based on geography. The Southern Ocean portion is a good overview of the happenings in tourism across the southern islands of New Zealand, France, Australia and such. Splitting this

chapter into one that focuses just on the sub-Antarctic would have been a good idea. The Antarctic tourism component of the chapter is what seems to be rather late. There is an excellent discussion of regulation and management, but why is a developed discussion of the Antarctic Treaty System, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators, and Environmental Impact Assessments found eight chapters into the book, given its initial purpose? Specific to the legal regulatory discussion, it is a matter of concern that the works of Kees Bastmeijer or Ricardo Roura have not been included at all. These two Dutch researchers have written extensively on the management/regulatory aspects of Antarctic tourism for more than 10 years.

After wading through eight chapters of little consequence, the best chapter in the book comes at the end. The concluding chapter (Chapter 9) brings together a good summary of what is occurring in the industry, and although the book is poorly referenced to updated empirical research throughout the first eight chapters, the introduction of Multiple Resource Management Planning is excellent. This planning model, based upon Snyder's earlier work, integrates five systematic phases and 16 facets that illustrate the true complexity of polar tourism.

As mentioned previously, the main weaknesses of the book are:

- its broad overview throughout
- its lack of updated empirical information and reliance on weak sources
- its lack of attention to detail in tables, appendices, and such.

It will disappoint the more knowledgeable reader. Stonehouse and Snyder have written a book that is readable, although sometimes poorly presented, but nonetheless is an accessible resource for a variety of readers. For those who require in-depth analysis, based on empirical research that goes beyond description, they will need to look further; perhaps to some of the other volumes recently published. The polar tourism industry has many challenges ahead – challenges brought about by humankind, the global economy and a changing environment. This text recognises that challenge and makes a contribution to explaining some of the issues ahead, but it does not keep up with the changes in research that need to connect to management if it should succeed in meeting them.

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