

Title - Tourism Environment and Behaviour

Keywords - Sustainable Development

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School / Department - Faculty of Social Science and Business

Institution - University of Plymouth

Group - 1st year undergraduate students on BSc Tourism Management, BSc International Tourism Management, BSc Business and Tourism and BSc Ecotourism programmes

Activity - Module

Aim - This module is designed to introduce students to the two core elements of tourism studies; the environment and people, in order that they gain an understanding of the relationships between tourism, the environment and tourist behaviour.

Context / Background - This module was introduced to ensure that students have a sound understanding, at the beginning of their course, of the relationship between tourism and the environment and to provide them with context and foundational knowledge concerning the interplay between the relational constituents within tourism. Sustainability is therefore incorporated and embedded within this context.

Example

Taught elements

The course is divided and sequenced into three elements; tourism environments, tourism impacts and tourist behaviour.

Within the environment element, three types of environments are considered: towns and cities, the coast, and the countryside. Students are required to undertake an un-assessed, self-directed fieldwork visit to Plymouth to evaluate the tourism resources of the city. This enables students to gain an appreciation of the practical application of theoretical concepts to practical situations at an early stage within the course. As well as considering the potential impacts of tourism and how these may be ameliorated, they must consider the extent to which the needs of local residents are met, and the future of the city as a tourist destination.

The tourism impacts element considers the various potential effects of tourism and how these might be managed. The impacts considered are those on the destination's physical environment and economy; the destination's host community in terms of the host-guest relationship; contested space and indigenous communities, and issues surrounding

sustainability and ecotourism. In this manner, issues related to sustainability are embedded with the introductory context of tourism. These two themes then inform consideration of the final element - the tourist, their motivations, needs and typologies, and the social and cultural influences on their behaviour and decision making.

Assessment

The assessment for the module includes a group report (20%), an individual essay (30%) and an examination (50%).

The individual essay requires students to critically evaluate a journal article that relates to the module and students are encouraged to choose articles that contain data, particularly questionnaires, such as that which can be found in *Tourism Management*. This task enables students to begin the process of not simply accepting what they read in tourism books and journals, and encourages them to challenge existing academic research, drawing on their understanding and knowledge of sustainability issues and research of tourism impacts.

The group report requires students in groups of up to five to 'analyse the impacts of tourism that are being experienced by any one specific area in any country'. The case studies that students have chosen to investigate are varied and drawn from a wide international pool, ranging from the historic cities such as York, Exeter and Prague, to coastal destinations for example, Benidorm, Spain and Mauritius, to rural areas such as the New Forest. Therefore, sustainability will be considered as one of the impacts on the area.

Results / Feedback - This module is always received extremely well, as the students can easily identify with the issues that are examined and normally have strong views on the need to protect the environment. The case study work serves to provide the students with the opportunity to internationalise their studies, if they wish to do so, and to apply their conceptual understanding to a practical case study.

This is the first year that this assessment component has been introduced (in the past, coursework was assessed on the individual essay alone as this module was only worth 10 credits as opposed to 20 now and was taught in one term instead of over two), and this modification has been popular. This is perhaps because the group work allows students to integrate with each other and develop friendships, but also eases some of our less confident students into the rigours demanded by university assessments. The students enjoy the lectures, the practical tasks that are presented during the lectures and tutorials, and the use of much video and photographic material, particularly Wallace and Grommet's 'Grand Day Out'. The students find the individual essay challenging but recognise that important critical evaluation skills are being encouraged and developed.

This module has been evolving over the course of four years and other than keeping abreast with new developments, no further modifications are planned in the immediate future.

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