The Moralisation of Tourism
Sun, sand . . . and saving the world?

Jim Butcher
For Mum, Dad, Jo and the boys
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Introduction

I feel rather daunted writing a book about tourism, as it seems that one of the qualifications for writing on the subject is that one must have travelled widely, and become an experienced traveller. I cannot in most cases write from the perspective of 'being there'. My only defence in answer to this criticism is to invoke a well-known saying attributed to the Roman dramatist Terence: 'nothing human is foreign to me'. However, I have never concurred with the critics of tourism who strive to make us feel slightly guilty about our fortnight of fun through their advocacy of 'ethical' alternatives. Theirs is a moralistic agenda of dubious merit to the tourists or their hosts.

Critics of tourism are as old as tourism itself. One hundred and fifty years ago, Thomas Cook was accused of devaluing travel by opening it up to those perceived incapable of cultured behaviour. Whilst the newly ascendant industrial classes looked down worriedly on the drinking and wild behaviour of their workers on holiday, the factory owners themselves were criticised as devaluing the great European cultural capitals as they tried to ape the aristocratic tourists – those considered the masses, and those considered cultured, or individual, has historically been fluid.

Today Mass Tourism is under renewed assault, this time from the advocates of a plethora of types of holiday only united by their antipathy to package tourists. Ecotourism, sustainable tourism, green tourism, alternative tourism and most recently community tourism have been presented as morally superior alternatives to the package holiday. The package holiday revolution, celebrated by some, is increasingly condemned as destructive by a host of campaigner, academics and commentators.

But what is deemed to be so wrong with package tourism? Critics accuse it of environmental degradation. Jonathan Croall’s Preserve or Destroy: Tourism and the Environment poses the issue in stark terms – either we preserve the environment by reducing the numbers of tourists and adopting ecotourism, or we destroy it.¹ The option of developing the environment around needs and wants rarely features in the views of the critics.

Mass package travel is held up as being destructive to culture, too. From the Spanish Costas to the nomadic Masai in Kenya, tourism is held to have
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destroyed age-old cultures and degraded communities. The tourist is condemned as a harbinger of globalisation, sweeping away diversity in his wake.

In response to the many concerns, tourism has become the subject of a discussion resembling a moral minefield. Where to go, how to act and even whether to go at all, have become subject to a mountain of well-meant advice from self-appointed campaigners, concerned columnists, angst-ridden academics and even marketing gurus eager to amend their products to meet the mood of caution.

Yet the celebrated alternatives, most notably ecotourism, are subject to their own critique. Does it blaze a trail for the masses? Does it expose ever more remote parts of the earth to the threat of tourism? Is it self-defeating – if you are motivated by a belief that tourism is prone to damage cultures and environments, wouldn’t you be better off at home? (a conclusion that some have arrived at). Those who do travel are advised to ‘travel well’ – to seek out and revere the culture of your hosts … but not to get too close, for fear of offending cultural sensibilities.

This book sets out to describe and critique a moralistic etiquette surrounding modern leisure travel. The first chapter sets out the moralisation of tourism as a contemporary phenomenon and begins to explore some of its characteristics. I argue that leisure travel has been portrayed as essentially environmentally and culturally destructive by a range of people and organisations. Whilst there may not be clear agreement on precisely what is and is not ethical, there is a shared criticism of Mass Tourism, and mass tourists, as exemplary of the destructive nature of economic development. A New Moral Tourism is increasingly in evidence, characterised by its advocacy of more ‘sensitive’ behaviour with regard to environments and cultures. This new school of tourism has acquired a certain sense of moral superiority in relation to its packaged counterpart.

Chapter 2 considers what is really new about the criticisms levelled at package tourists today, given that tourists have had their vocal critics ever since Thomas Cook developed commercial leisure travel for the Victorian working class. I argue that whilst there is some continuity in the low regard for the humble tourist, the way in which they are criticised by advocates of the New Moral Tourism is very different from the past.

Chapter 3 looks critically at the conception of environment that is implicit, and sometimes explicit, in the moralisation of tourism. I argue that there is an assumption that environment and people exist in an antagonistic relationship to one another, and hence environmental change is routinely interpreted in a one-sided fashion, as destruction. The creative side of development is overlooked.

Chapter 4 addresses the personal freedom long associated with tourism. It is this freedom – the freedom to please oneself – that is questioned by many of tourism’s critics. The growth of codes of conduct for travellers and tourists is exemplary of this wariness of personal freedom. I argue that the assumption that cultural encounters are fraught affairs, evidenced in the
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codes and central to the moralisation of tourism, diminishes the very qualities that make tourism worthwhile in the first place.

In chapter 5 I contend that the moralisation of tourism is a product of disillusionment with modern societies, manifested in a search for the elements New Moral Tourists deem to be missing from their lives. These elements – community, a sense of spirituality and closeness to nature – are located in tourist destinations, most often those interpreted as unmodern, commonly in the Third World. Yet whilst New Moral Tourism is roundly critical of western culture, and both celebratory and precious about the diversity to be found whilst travelling, its own ‘enlightened’ reading of culture carries conservative assumptions about the societies visited.

In chapter 6 I argue that there is a pervasive sense that tourism contributes to a common global culture, one that is essentially destructive of the societies hosting tourists. Mass Tourism is generally held to be the culprit here. New Moral Tourism, on the other hand, is presented as ethical consumption – an attempt to make a difference to issues held dear through what and where one buys. A range of ethical holidays claim to be ‘putting something back’, be it through assisting in the conservation of the natural world, or through supporting the way of life of one’s hosts. The chapter argues that ethical consumption ends up moralising about exaggerated problems between people, hosts and tourists, and moreover, neglects an assessment of the social inequalities that characterise relationships between nations.

Following on from this, chapter 7 looks at how the moralisation of tourism has important implications for the way development itself is viewed in the Third World. The chapter notes the way that many conservation-oriented non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have adopted ethical brands such as ecotourism as a way to achieve their conservation agenda in the Third World, whilst at the same time claiming to offer innovative development opportunities from nature-based niche markets. I argue that the promotion of such nature-based tourism as an exemplary form of sustainable development reflects profoundly low horizons with regard to the potential to address poverty and inequality. In fact, in basing local economies around becoming guardians of the natural environment, it eschews the transformative economic development that could make a substantial difference to Third World societies.

I offer some closing comments in the postscript.

Having discussed the themes in this book widely over a couple of years, I have found that some people are keen to identify with criticisms of the notion of ethical tourism, but with what I would describe as a fashionable cynicism. ‘Gap year travellers just want to mix with the poor, feign concern, and go back home to mummy.’ ‘Benidorm is more ethical than eco-travel because the resorts help to control the impacts of the tourists by keeping them in one place.’ Both of these are comments made to me recently. The book does not go along with the cynicism that sees altruism as ‘middle class concern’, or holiday resorts as a means of moderating people’s effect on the environment. This is not a critique of morality or tourism, but of the moralisation of tourism.
Tourists and a Nepalese boy in the Himalayas. The boy is carrying a traditional basket used to carry agricultural produce; it is also used by Sherpas assisting trekkers.
(Photo: Karen Thomas)
1 Mass Tourism and the New Moral Tourist

New: ‘Markedly different from what was before
Changed, especially for the better
Up-to-date; fashionable’¹
Moral: ‘Concerned with goodness or badness of character’²
Mass: ‘an aggregate in which individuality is lost’³

This chapter identifies and outlines a New Moral Tourism – tourism that is justified less in terms of the desires of the consumer and more from the perspective of its perceived benign influence on the natural world and on the culture of the host. This ‘tourism with a mission’ is explored and contextualised. The chapter gives an overview of the moralisation of tourism, and identifies the main themes of the succeeding chapters.

Mass Tourism – the problem

Modern tourism could be said to have emerged with modern industrial society in the nineteenth century. In this century, industrialisation both spawned the means to travel – initially the railways – and created a growing market amongst the new industrial and professional classes, and amongst the working class, the masses, too. Thomas Cook pioneered leisure travel amongst the middle and working classes in this century. He and his son, John Mason Cook (whose initials JMC are now a brand of Thomas Cook tour operations), took an increasingly broad spectrum of the population to ever more distant destinations. Over the last century and a half the achievement of the industry has been nothing less than the democratisation of leisure travel, from the few deemed worthy, and wealthy enough to partake, to an everyday activity for the majority in developed societies.

The growth of the tourism industry has been driven by economic development. Greater affluence has opened up the possibility to travel for leisure to greater numbers of people. Technical progress – notably the car and air travel – has consistently enabled greater speed, comfort and scope for leisure travellers. Whereas even as recently as forty years ago back-to-back charters
were a new innovation, initially confusing to hoteliers and customers, today they are the staple of the big tour operators. The UK’s ‘big four’, Thomas Cook, Airtours, First Choice and Thomson (now part of TUI, the first European-wide package holiday brand, owned by German conglomerate Pressaug) dominate a market that takes annually some thirty-five million British tourists abroad for their holidays. By supplying en masse, such companies have lowered the real cost of holidays, and alongside growing incomes, this has contributed to what Vladimir Raitz, founder of Horizon holidays (the first post-war package holiday company to develop charter flight-based packages) refers to as the package holiday revolution. This growth has been mirrored worldwide, with today some 700 million travelling internationally per year for no other reason than leisure. It is estimated that by 2020, there will be some 1.6 billion international tourists.

Flight to the Sun, written by Raitz, and co-authored by travel expert Roger Bray, reflects on the optimism of the post-war boom in tourism. For travel pioneer Raitz, Wordsworth’s often quoted lines captured the mood:

Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive
But to be young was very heaven.4

This optimism was shared by the growing number of customers, for whom a shrinking world represented the opportunity to enjoy snow-capped mountains and sun-soaked beaches.

Tourism has become big business – by some measures the biggest. It employs 74 million people directly, with tourism-related activities estimated to provide some 200 million jobs. It provides the largest source of export earnings for countries as diverse as Spain and Barbados. By 2020 it is predicted that tourism expenditure will top US$ 2 trillion, or US$ 5 billion per day. The industry’s contribution to global wealth, measured from Gross National Products, is estimated to be 4 per cent directly and 11 per cent including indirect effects.5 It has also enjoyed consistent growth in recent decades, decades in which some countries have experienced relative decline in some of their traditional industries. Indeed, attracting tourists has increasingly become a preoccupation of politicians and development planners, evidenced by the rise of ‘place marketing’ and the intense competition to attract sporting and cultural events, World Heritage Status, City of Culture status and a host of other events and designations that can assist in improving a country’s share of international tourism receipts.

In economic terms, then, Mass Tourism seems self-evidently vitally important. However, it is increasingly discussed less as an economic phenomenon linked to the creation of jobs and investment, or indeed simply as enjoyment, adventure and innocent fun. Rather tourism has increasingly become discussed as a cultural and environmental phenomenon, and more often than not as fraught and destructive. In this respect the figures for tourism’s growth are more likely to be raised in the context of an angst-ridden discussion of
its harmful effects than in the celebratory tones characteristic of Thomas Cook 150 years ago, or Vladimir Raitz forty years ago. Wariness rather than celebration typically accompanies accounts of the growth of travel for leisure. It is this emphasis on tourism as a cultural and environmental problem that informs the moralisation of tourism.

This in turn is manifested in a constant denigration of mass package tourism and mass package tourists amongst those for whom such things are deemed unethical. For some, post-war tourism is like Frankenstein’s (or perhaps Thomas Cook’s) monster, having seemingly run out of control, with dire consequences. The optimism of Raitz, and the association of tourism with innocence, fun and adventure, have been challenged by a mood of pessimism and a sense that moral regulation of pleasure-seeking is necessary in order to preserve environmental and cultural diversity.

The moralisation of tourism involves two mutually reinforcing notions. First, Mass Tourism is deemed to have wrought damage to the environment and to the cultures exposed to it, and hence new types of tourism are proposed that are deemed benign to the environment and benevolent towards other cultures. Second, this ethical tourism is deemed to be better for tourists, too – more enlightening, encouraging respect for other ways of life and a critical reflection on the tourist’s own developed society. There are a plethora of terms that academics and those in the industry have applied to this more moral tourism such as ethical tourism, alternative tourism, ecotourism and responsible tourism. Perhaps the term that covers them all, and helps to identify what is distinctive about them taken together, is that coined by industry specialist Aihuwalia Poon – ‘New Tourism’. She argues that New Tourism is both an appeal to a certain sense of enlightenment about one’s effect on others, and an environmental imperative.

New Tourism – the solution

Poon outlined the marketing aspects of New Tourism thus: the holiday must be flexible and must be able to be purchased at prices that are competitive with mass-produced holidays; holidays are not simply aiming at economies of scale, but will be tailored to individual wants; unlike Mass Tourism, production will be driven by the wants of consumers; mass-marketing is no longer the dominant ethos – holidays will be marketed differentially to different needs, incomes, time constraints and travel interests; the holiday is consumed on a large scale by more experienced travellers, more educated, more destination oriented, more independent, more flexible and more green; consumers of New Tourism consider the environment and culture of the destinations they visit to be a key part of the holiday experience.

Poon clearly considers the New Tourist to be the ‘thinking tourist’ – more educated, independent of mind and aware. Also, from this definition New Tourism could be regarded as post-fordist tourism – tourism that moves away from a standard, mass-produced product towards a flexible,
individually tailored one, led by individual demands rather than a homoge-
 nous mass market.

Poon's identification of post-Fordist production in holidays has resonance. She quotes the marketing director of British Airways who claims we are seeing 'the end of mass-marketing in the travel business...we are going to be much more sophisticated in the way we segment our market.' Large
tour operators have adapted accordingly. The big four have bought smaller,
niche operators to tap into the new markets. In addition, despite the squeeze
on so many medium sized tour operators, there has been a large growth in
small, specialised operators, claiming to cater for the specific needs of their
target market. These operators are often keen to identify with a more moral
notion of tourism in their marketing and advertising.

But for Poon, and for many other advocates of New Tourism, it is far
more than dry marketing for 'thinking tourists' – it is an ethical imperative;
it is ethical tourism. As such it is not simply suggested as an option for
prospective tourists, but is advocated as a solution to problems caused by
Mass Tourism. Advocacy, by NGOs, campaigns and New Tourism oriented
tour operators, is a key feature of New Tourism.

For Poon: 'The tourism industry is in crisis [...] a crisis of mass tourism
that has brought social, cultural, economic and environmental havoc in its
wake, and it is mass tourism practices that must be radically changed to
bring in the new.' The charge that Mass Tourism has had a generally
destructive impact on host societies is widely asserted in the context of this
advocacy. However, advocates of New Tourism argue that there is a growing
market of more ethical tourists who are rejecting mass-produced, homoge-
nous tourism products in favour of tailored holidays that are kinder to the
environment and benign to the host culture. These people perhaps consti-
tute a new school of 'ethical' tourism – the *New Moral Tourism.* The key
features of their moralised conception of leisure travel are a search for enlight-
enment in other places, and a desire to preserve these places in the name of
cultural diversity and environmental conservation.

**New Moral Tourism – a pervasive agenda**

New Moral Tourism is evidenced and expressed in a number of different
types of organisation: governments; companies; and a variety of non-govern-
mental organisations. It is also influential within both popular and academic
discussions of contemporary tourism. As such, it is a pervasive agenda.

The commitment of global government to reforming the tourism industry,
and the tourist, was formalised through the documents that came out of
the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio. Agenda 21 documentation
for the tourism industry asserts that, 'the travel and tourism industry has a
vested interest in protecting the natural and cultural resources which are the
core of its business.' Elsewhere, the document argues that: 'Travel and
Tourism should assist people in leading healthy and productive lives in
harmony with nature’, the industry should ‘contribute to the conservation, protection and restoration of the earth’s ecosystem’, ‘environmental protection should constitute an integral part of the tourism development process’ and ‘tourism development should recognise and support the identity, culture and interests of indigenous peoples’. ¹¹ Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry also reflects an impulse for education of tourists. It suggests that publicity for the tourist should promote education for ethical tourism, including in-flight videos, magazine articles, and advice on sick bags.

Whilst the efficacy of Agenda 21 is much debated by grass roots environmentalists, this perspective on tourism has been widely taken up by governments and NGOs. Aid agencies around the world have increasingly financed NGOs engaged in ethical tourism development, seeking to generate a rural development sensitive to the natural environment and culture of recipient communities. In the UK the Department for International Development pioneer ‘pro-poor’ tourism as a means of relieving rural poverty in the Third World. They also support schemes to enlighten prospective tourists, for example, through a recent schools video that portrays package tourists in the most unflattering light. ¹² USAID, the aid arm of the United States government, also back up the ethical claims of ecotourism by funding it as a means of generating limited development through ecotourism revenues alongside conservation of the natural environment in the Third World. Promoting an appreciation of the value of conservation for the prospective tourist and their hosts are key aims too.

A host of other quasi-governmental organisations concerned with the environment have also developed a commitment to ‘sensitive’, sustainable tourism development over the last ten to fifteen years. Their definitions of sustainable tourism are general, but often suggest a preservationist emphasis with regard to the environment and culture. For example, the Federation of Nature and National Parks in Europe, in their influential publication Loving Them to Death, define sustainable tourism as an activity which ‘maintains the environmental, social and economic integrity and well-being of natural, built and cultural resources in perpetuity’ (my italics). ¹³ This begs the question, central to this critique of tourism’s critics, that if they propose to protect nature from the excesses of development, how do they address the poverty and inequality arising from a dearth of development in many parts of the world? Maintaining a society’s relationship to its natural environment ‘in perpetuity’ is hardly likely to tackle this.

Opposition to the perceived excesses of Mass Tourism has been evident in recent years, too, amongst religious and cultural organisations. One event often considered to mark the advent of the global critique of tourism was a conference held in Manila in 1980, convened by a group of religious leaders from developing countries worried about the impact of tourism on local cultures. The ‘Manila Statement’ boldly asserted that, ‘tourism does more harm than good to people and societies in the third world’. ¹⁴ The conference also founded the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism,
which has remained highly critical of the tourism industry. A former executive director of the coalition, Koson Srisang, argues that tourism:

does not benefit the majority of people. Instead it exploits them, pollutes the environment, destroys the ecosystem, bastardises the culture, robs people of their traditional values and ways of life and subjugates women and children in the abject slavery of prostitution . . . [It] epitomises the present unjust world economic order where the few who control wealth and power dictate the terms.\textsuperscript{15}

Ecumenical antipathy towards tourism has long been a common theme. The clergy in Britain were vocal in their criticism of the wanton behaviour of early package tourists in the mid-nineteenth century. The Catholic church in Franco’s Spain worried about the influence of decadent tourists on Spaniards. Even the Pope recently condemned tourism as ‘a kind of subculture that degrades both the tourists and the host community’.\textsuperscript{16} However, the criticisms of modern tourism that hold sway are not those seen as conservative and religious, but rather those presented as radical and secular; they are criticisms expressed through a defence of culture and nature. Hence rather than religious organisations, it tends to be conservation NGOs, campaigns, radical academics and journalists who are in the forefront of criticising Mass Tourism and proposing new, ‘ethical’ alternatives.

There is a diverse range of NGOs involved in the promotion of what they perceive to be ethical tourism. Global conservation NGOs such as the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF), the Audubon Society and Conservation International increasingly view ecotourism as a means of winning support, both amongst local populations and more widely, for conservation aims. Ecotourism is at the cutting edge of conservation initiatives as it seems to proffer opportunities for people to benefit from preserving their natural environments rather than changing them. Its ethical credentials, then, reside in its ability to combine conservation with limited development goals. More traditional forms of tourism are regarded as less ethical as although they generally yield more in the way of economic development they are deemed to be environmentally destructive and culturally problematic.

More specific projects aimed at particular destinations or types of tourism include Alg Action, the Proyecto Ambiental Tenerife, the Save Goa Campaign and numerous others. In general they highlight the impacts of tourism and lobby against developments they perceive as unethical. The range of goals of these organisations makes any categorisation problematic. However, they often express a disdain for package tourists. For example, the Proyecto Ambiental Tenerife, a project seeking to sustain rural traditions and traditional agriculture on this Spanish island, make the following comment on Mass Tourism:
Mass Tourism was introduced to the island of Tenerife in the 1960s. It made a few local people and many foreigners very rich. It also devastated the rural communities resulting in abandoned terraced farms; beautiful but dilapidated buildings; an age-old culture on the edge of extinction; youth unemployment of 43 per cent.  

So whilst the Tenerife and Spanish economies have benefited greatly from tourism, this NGO dams the developments as destructive of tradition. This reverence for tradition over change is characteristic of the moralisation of tourism.

British-based Tourism Concern is prominent amongst the campaigning NGOs. They engage in a wide variety of campaigning activities including lobbying the Gambian government to limit all-inclusive resort developments, lobbying travel companies to pull out of Burma due to human rights abuses there and producing educational materials and codes of conduct encouraging young people to be wary of their impact on the places and peoples they may visit.

In Germany, Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung (Students for Tourism and Responsibility) operate their prestigious ‘To Do!’ awards. The winners are almost invariably small scale, locally oriented and green. This organisation, typical of others throughout Europe, state in their aims and objectives that they support forms of tourism which contribute to intercultural encounter, which allow for joint learning processes, mutual respect as well as respect for cultural diversity and the sustainable use of natural resources.

In North America, and internationally, The International Ecotourism Society is influential in marketing and promoting the ethical credentials of green holidays. Their role is not just to network with like-minded tourists with a love of the natural world, but to advocate the superiority of eco holidays for both parties concerned: tourists and hosts. The society claim that, ‘Ecotravel offers an alternative to many of the negative effects of mass tourism by helping conserve fragile ecosystems, support endangered species and habitats, preserve indigenous cultures and develop sustainable local economies.’

They encourage prospective tourists to ‘travel with a purpose – a personal purpose and a global one’.

The International Ecotourism Society also work with various development agencies, such as the InterAmerican Development Bank, to advocate ecotourism as an environmentally benign development option. This trajectory looks likely to develop further – it is an aim of the society to develop this, and it also fits in with the ‘greening of aid’ through nature-based tourism examined in chapter 7.

These and other organisations see raising awareness as a priority. In recent years initiatives with names such as ‘Our Holidays, Their Homes’, ‘Worldwise’ and ‘Travelling in the Dark’ have sought to educate tourists in the UK as to their potential role in environmental and cultural degradation.
Whilst their interest is not restricted to this, there is an emphasis on changing the consumption patterns and the behaviour of holidaymakers in favour of holidays that are deemed benign to the environment and benevolent to the culture of the host. Such organisations have produced ethical codes of conduct, which amount to attempts at a moral regulation of the holidaymaker (examined in chapter 4).

Other NGOs include Kitemark organisations such as the Campaign for Environmentally Responsible Tourism and Green Globe. The former awards their Kitemark to tour operators in the UK they deem to be ethical. Green Globe emerged from the Rio discussions on sustainable development and encourages firms large and small to adapt to the concern over environmental impacts caused by tourists.

Calls for ethical tourism feature ever more prominently in the media, too. Journalist Libby Purves argues that ‘Tourists should not travel light on morals’, and paints a grim picture of the effects of the industry. The *Guardian* newspaper environment editor, in an article entitled ‘Tourism is bad for our health’, asserts that Mass Tourism, ‘wreak[s] havoc on the environment’ and that despite attempts to clean up the industry, ‘tourism is essentially and inescapably, environmentally destructive’. Green campaigner and journalist George Monbiot sums up the dim view taken of tourism by media advocates of ethical tourism when he asserts: ‘Tourism is, by and large, an unethical activity, which allows us to have fun at everyone else’s expense.’

New Moral Tourism is talked up not only as environmentally and culturally benign, as an antidote to Mass Tourism, but also as an ‘add-on’ to the holiday experience. For example, a new lottery-funded magazine, *Being There*, has recently been launched by British-based campaign Tourism Concern and The Body Shop, aiming to reach ‘funky, adventurous, interested and interesting women who want to put something back into the local communities and destinations they visit on holiday’. For the magazine’s supporters, travel is a life-changing experience. Anita Roddick argues that the place you visit ‘literally goes from being a holiday destination to a place where you can share, learn and grow’. These sentiments are echoed in the websites of campaigns and the brochures of many nature-based tour operators.

On television, holiday programmes have come in for criticism over their supposed lack of ethical credentials. A recent report castigates British channel ITV’s *Wish You Were Here* for not taking sufficient care to encourage thoughtful behaviour on the part of prospective tourists. The compiler of the report argues: ‘Editorial content that meets the growing thirst for a rounded insight into a destination will enable viewers to understand the impact their visit may have on the host country.’ In this vein, it is not simply tourism itself that is subject to the critical eye of the New Moral Tourism, but also representations of places. These are deemed to appeal to our hedonistic streak, which may preclude ethical consideration. Similar
Holiday snaps – 'The Responsible Traveller', from Let's Go guidebooks

'Of course, Let's Go readers aren't stereotypical tourists – the purpose of guidebooks like Let's Go is to take you off the beaten track and into those places no coach tour would ever dare venture. Unfortunately, where a backpacker leads, the masses are never very far behind. The past decade has seen one hardcore destination such as Thailand “open up” to tourism – and subsequently lose much of their [sic] appeal. And even in places so remote that they are unlikely to ever become major stops on the global trail, insensitive travellers can still have deleterious effects, from the polluting trail of empty coke cans left behind them to offending local people by their unthinking profligacy and disrespect for local customs. Ironically, perhaps, tourists who fly into a resort and don't leave it for the duration of their stay do the least damage – at least the damage has already been done.

'We're not suggesting that you forget a six month trek in the Andes you've been dreaming of for two weeks in Cancun and Marbella – but [there] are some precautions you can take to make sure that your vacation does the least damage to the environment and the indigenous culture as possible.'

points are frequently made with regard to tourist brochures, and even travel guides have been castigated for failing to present what ethical tourism campaigners consider to be an enlightened view. Lonely Planet guidebooks, for example, have recently been subject to a campaign to boycott their Burma guide, on the basis that it encourages travellers to travel to a regime that has used coerced child labour to build up its infrastructure. In fact the guide itself is critical of the regime, too, but takes the view that travellers should decide the ethical issue for themselves. Lonely Planet are also criticised for 'making or breaking' local businesses, depending on whether they are listed in the guides.

These examples are illustrative of the New Moral Tourism. The holiday is re-presented as an arena for ethical behaviour to the benefit of other peoples and the environment, leading to a holiday experience deemed to be far superior. Many of the above assertions present tourists simply as environmental footprints and cultural impositions. That development has a creative, as well as destructive, side is rarely alluded to. Indeed, some of the characterisations of modern tourism seem typically to, as one author points out in relation to a different case, modern travel writing, 'attach the word hideous to man-made things, but never to nature'.

Advocacy of New Moral Tourism is also evident in the commercial sector. A host of companies, spurning the four Ss (Sun, Sea, Sand and Sex) in favour of the three Ts (Travelling, Trekking and Trucking) have set out to appeal to the New Moral Tourist. Their advocacy of ethical tourism is often met
with scepticism by the NGOs and campaigns, who question whether their concern to be ethical is genuine or merely a marketing ploy. Nonetheless, many such companies echo the criticisms of package tourism made by the NGOs and express a similar commitment to the environment and the host’s culture. They also display a similar disdain for package tourists. Explore, a trekking holiday company, have advertised their holidays as being for ‘people who want more out of their holiday than buckets of cheap wine and a suntan’. Dragoman view their trucking holidays as visiting places that have been ‘shunned by the masses who prefer resorts and beaches’. Other brochures set out the important role of their clientele in relation to supporting the culture and environment of their hosts in the Third World. Encounter Overland regard their customers as ‘today’s custodians of the ancient relationship between traveller and the native which throughout the world has been the historic basis for peaceful contact’. 27

Preserving the environment is an important motif of most tours of this type – most donate a small portion of the price paid to organisations engaged in wildlife and environmental preservation. Indeed, the dividing line between private tour operator and conservationist NGO can be a fine one. Discovery Initiatives, for example, works with a number of conservation charities including the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF), whose Director, Julian Matthews, argues that ‘tourism should guarantee that things which draw us now should be the same in 100 years’. 28 Discovery Initiatives donate money to help fund wardens and other resources to help bring about this vision. In similar vein Friends of the Earth have tried to encourage agro-tourism in Cyprus as a counter to the coastal Mass Tourism developments there. Conservation International, a wealthy and influential international conservation NGO, utilises ecotourism as a way to win over local stakeholders to the cause of conservation. They operate their own ecotours to this end. In north-west Bolivia, ecotourists pay large sums to canoe down the Rio Tuichi to stay in stilted cabins on the edge of a lake in the rainforest. Revenue helps to train local inhabitants as guides, cooks and lodge managers, and contributes to Conservation International’s goal of rainforest preservation. Such projects clearly involve an orientation towards the eco-consumer, and hence marketing of ecotourism-for-conservation projects is a growing issue for NGOs.

Another example of the link between the conservation NGOs and the commercial world of marketing is a recent venture on the part of Harold Goodwin, well-known British academic and conservation consultant, who founded responsibletourism.com as a means of generating markets for ethical, conservation-based tourism products. Many other organisations, such as The International Ecotourism Society and Tourism Concern, operate similar marketing schemes, helping to bridge the gap between conservation organisations and an eco-conscious clientele.

The growing gap year phenomenon is also influenced by the ethical travel imperative. Gap year travel is growing – in 2000, 22,000 British
students deferred their university places, and at the time of writing it is estimated that around 40,000 will take a gap year in 2002 (although many do not carry through their gap year plans). Travel visas for Australia – a favourite for gappers – have more than doubled in the last five years. Taking time out to travel is, of course, not new and need not represent anything more than the desire to see a bit of the world. However, the gap year, and young people’s travels generally, are increasingly linked to being ethical – doing good for other cultures and for the environment – and a growing number of Gap Year Companies have emerged to provide just this for young (and not so young) idealistic gappers. Gap year travel is increasingly discussed as a passport to a sort of global citizenship and to better career prospects. In this vein the World Expeditions Challenge gap year company quote the Chief Executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service:

Whatever you might choose to do in your year out, you can be sure you’ll not only develop a range of valuable skills, but also have a personally enriching experience, the benefits of which are now widely recognised by universities and colleges.

Another gap year company, Trekforce, organise ‘adventure with a purpose’ for prospective customers. The projects are focussed on conservation in the Third World, such as rainforest conservation, the construction of a jaguar research centre, work preserving coral reefs in Belize and orang-utan conservation in Borneo. Raleigh International made the news in the UK in 2000 when Prince William took part in a project, which included helping in the building of a wooden cabin in rural Peru.

The much-publicised gap year taken by Prince William and the experience of many others suggest that gap years can be exciting and unique experiences for those inclined to such work. However, the claims to be contributing to these poor societies may be more circumspect. Projects based around preserving the environment are, in truth, unlikely to help in liberating people from poverty. Their ethical credentials seem to come from the personal (but very limited) role an individual can play in development, and from a sense of personal mission accompanying such pursuits.

What all the pronouncements from this variety of organisations and individuals point towards is a profoundly negative view of the development of Mass Tourism, and also an appeal, implicit or explicit, for tourists to change their lifestyle and regard their holidays in a different way. It is held that host communities – their environment and culture – and indeed the tourists too, will be the losers if this does not happen. It is suggested that the tourist also benefits from the New Moral Tourism approach by being engaged in something more meaningful and more enlightening than typical package holidays. The influence of these sentiments constitute the moralisation of tourism.
Moral message

Some people have questioned the importance of New Tourism, observing that package holidays remain popular in spite of the assault on their ethical credentials. The extent to which Poon and others identify a sea change in the tourism industry is debatable. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO), picking up on Poon’s terminology, estimate that New Tourism will remain below 10 per cent of total tourism for the foreseeable future. In both the developed and developing worlds, New Tourism is peripheral. Also, independent travel and tailor-made tours have always been an option for those who did not want to travel with the package holiday companies (provided, of course, that they could afford it). New Moral Tourism is perhaps not really all that new.

There is, however, evidence of a growth in market segments that we might associate with the moralisation of tourism. According to the World Resources Institute, whilst tourism grew by 4 per cent in the early 1990s, ‘nature travel’ grew at a rate of 10–30 per cent. World Tourism Organisation estimates show global spending on the more narrowly defined ecotourism market increasing at a rate of 20 per cent per year, about five times the rate for tourism generally.

However, leaving aside the newness of New Moral Tourism in terms of practice, it is evident that there is much that is new and changing in terms of the debates around tourism. Whilst we may not all be New Moral Tourists, the moralisation of tourism profoundly colours the debates about the future of the industry, and how tourists see themselves. The rise in codes of conduct critical guides promoting ethical tourism (titles such as The Good Tourist, The Green Travel Guide, Community Tourism Guide etc.) and the increase in campaign and NGO activity around the issues illustrates that the New Moral Tourism is a prominent moral agenda. The weight given to ecotourism in the burgeoning number of college and university courses featuring tourism, and the talking up of ethical tourism in the media, also points in the same direction.

**Holiday snaps – from The Good Tourist**

'We all joke about going to a Costa, meeting the neighbours, eating fish and chips and drinking English beer, and as this concept becomes more pronounced and the Costas lose their appeal, a new breed of traveller is emerging. Going independent, travelling further in to the interior, choosing somewhere “unspoilt”, and demanding more: more ethnic experiences, more genuine culture, more understanding of the people they meet. And they don't want to harm the environment they travel to.'
Even large companies have sought to identify themselves with the environmental and cultural critique of Mass Tourism. For example, British Airways sponsored a recent publication, *The Green Travel Guide*, which was explicitly critical of the growth of tourism – ironically, a growth facilitated by BA, Europe’s largest airline.37 Their advertisement in the guide warns us that, ‘It’s no use being the world’s favourite airline if there’s nowhere left worth visiting.’ Green campaigners writing in the same publication would undoubtedly blame BA themselves for this state of affairs! STA Travel, a large travel agency catering for the much maltreated backpacker and other young travellers, has sponsored a ‘Code for Young Travellers’ put together by campaigners from Tourism Concern. That a commercial company should be advising their potential customers on what to consume and how to behave is ironic given the dictum ‘the customer is always right’ – this perhaps should be replaced by ‘*our* customers are always right’ for the purveyors of ethical advice. Both of the examples given here, along with the adoption of ethical environment friendly Kitemarks, and numerous other initiatives, reflect an impulse within the industry to be self-critical and engage with the ethical agenda.

The breadth of deference to the ethical agenda has resulted in an air of moral authority for the New Moral Tourism – it is often simply assumed we must all agree. For example, in *The Green Travel Guide*, Greg Neale, the *Sunday Telegraph* environment correspondent, informs us that:

Surely we know the damage that modern day mass transport and tourism does: polluted beachlines, once undisturbed hillsides now scarred by the paths of numberless walkers, package holiday jet planes churning out more pollution into the atmosphere, formerly tranquil fishing villages now concrete canyons that reverberate every summer’s evening to the beery brayings of tee-shirted tourists.38

Presumably, resorts such as Torremolinos come into this category – a place that fifty years ago was a poor, dusty fishing village (‘picturesque’) and now is a fun-lovers’, sun-seekers’ mecca (‘a monstrosity’ in the words of this guide).

A key aspect of New Moral Tourism, then, is *advocacy* – new forms of tourist behaviour (or ‘tourism practice’) are advocated by a range of public, civil society and commercial organisations with growing influence on the agenda. The advocates have taken the moral high ground. Hence whilst much tourism continues as before, there is a certain etiquette that many are prepared to buy in to – the assumptions implicit in New Moral Tourism are rarely challenged.

**Cultural assumptions**

Amongst these assumptions is the question of individualism. Poon clearly regards her New Tourist as more ‘individual’ – less simply ‘following the crowd’, a view shared by other advocates of New Moral Tourism. Mass
Tourism has long been caricatured as lacking in individualism. The title of one influential book, *The Golden Hordes*, captures the pejorative depiction of package tourists.\(^5\) Another author argues that the growth of alternative tourism is based on a ‘search for spontaneity, enhanced interpersonal relations, creativity, authenticity, solidarity and social and ecological harmony’, with Mass Tourism seen as running counter to these worthy aims.\(^6\) Poon, who coined the term ‘New Tourism’, sees Mass Tourism as being ‘consumed en masse in a similar, robot-like and routine manner, with a lack of consideration for the norms, culture and environment of the host country visited’.\(^7\) These characterisations present holidaymakers as people clearly lacking in the ability to be discerning in what they buy and what they do. New Tourists on the other hand go for more tailored holidays, suited to their own individual needs.

But because many people like a similar environment for their holidays does not make them any less individual, any more than an adventure tourist travelling to a remote Pacific Island becomes a unique individual. New Moral Tourism makes a rather condescending value judgement of how other people choose to spend their money and their leisure time.

New Moral Tourists are presented as being ‘people-centred’ – interested in the people and the cultures they encounter on their travels. By implication, and often explicitly, Mass Tourists are less people-centred – they are, instead, regarded as ‘self-centred’, living in a ‘tourist bubble’. In this vein prominent Green activist and journalist George Monbiot argues that tourists ‘remain firmly behind barriers – be they windows of a coach, the walls of a hotel or the lens of a camera’\(^8\). Whilst holidays are fleeting visits, and the context of a cash relationship is not always conducive to friendships, one suspects that many tourists who have made friends and mixed easily on holiday would question this.

Compared to the Mass Tourists in their ‘tourist bubble’, New Moral Tourism is seen as an ‘add-on’ to the tourist experience. One author says that alternative tourism is tourism that ‘sets out to be consistent with natural, social and community values and which allows both host and guest to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences’.\(^9\) Again, the implication here is that mainstream package holidays are none of these things. The author suggests guided nature walks, bicycle tours, camel safaris, bird safaris and an increase in domestic tourism as worthy alternatives to package tours.

The most well-known marketing typology developed specifically in relation to tourism shares this outlook. Plogg’s typology, named after its marketing consultant author, Stanley Plogg, sees tourists as existing along a spectrum, with ‘allocentrics’ at one end and ‘psychocentrics’ at the other.\(^10\) Allocentrics are outward-oriented people – interested in people and places. Psychocentrics are concerned with self-gratification – comfort, safety and convenience. It is no surprise that New Moral Tourists are usually seen as Plogg’s allocentrics, whilst package tourists are perceived to be psychocentrics.
Whilst Plogg’s typology may or may not be a useful device for establishing target markets and selling holidays, his broader assumptions about people are unconvincing. One could argue that New Moral Tourism can reflect a distinct disillusionment with ‘people’ – family, people at work, people in the neighbourhood and perhaps humanity. After all, is not ecotourism (often at the ‘very moral’ end of the spectrum) all about eschewing people in favour of a natural high? The New Moral Tourist may be alienated from modern life, seeking respite from ‘people’ by immersing themselves in nature, or communing with people whose existence is viewed as ‘at one with nature’. This response to the pressures of modern life could be regarded as introspective in that it can be accompanied by a self-conscious search for selfhood. The other cultures and environments avidly sought out by ‘allocentric’ eco-travellers may comprise a stage for this working out of this modern angst. The Mass Tourist, on the other hand, enjoys conviviality, crowds . . . people.

So which of the two are ‘people-centred’? In fact it is possible to reverse some of Plogg’s assumptions and arrive at a typology that is at least as convincing as Plogg’s own. Whilst the New Moral Tourist may be self-consciously allocentric, perhaps it is the mass package tourist who can lay claim to being more ‘people-centred’. The New Moral Tourist, on the other hand, subscribes to the Romantic notion that the self is to be found not in society but in solitudinous contemplation of nature.

Also New Moral Tourists are ‘thinking tourists’, concerned with the culture and environment of their hosts. Their ‘mass’ counterparts are caricatured as unthinking and blind to both the damage they do and the better time they could be having if only they would adopt more ethical practices.

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**Holiday snaps – what we did on our holidays**

For my honeymoon in 1997 we stayed in a flat on Mijas Costa on the Costa del Sol for a fortnight. We had a wonderful time, dividing our holiday between the coastal resorts and towns and villages inland. On returning, a workmate asked me where we had been. ‘Southern Spain’ I replied. The Costa del Sol sounded a bit common. Whilst Costa del Sol evokes ‘crude mass tourism’, Southern Spain evokes ‘culture’. ‘Oh, whereabouts? Did you go to Granada?’ Horrified at my lack of cultural capital, I searched for an answer that would keep me in the camp of traveller, and out of that of Mass Tourist. ‘Well, we stayed in Mijas – beautiful little place set back from the coast. Lots of tourists, but even more character.’ ‘Oh how lovely – we’ve been there, too.’ Phew, I thought. My credibility teetered on a knife edge, but I’d come through it. ‘We even went to a bullfight . . . errr . . .’ I floundered as I realised that for the ‘thinking’ tourist, bullfights are not ‘culture’ but barbarism.
One author refers to the way tourists are typically referred to in the third person, and commonly regarded as ‘lemmings’. ‘We do not know why mass tourists move, but we do know that, at certain times of the year, they all start moving — and we have a fair idea of the destination.’ It is in this fashion that the advocates of ethical tourism regard their ‘unethical’ counterparts — acting as an unthinking mass. But because some people do not engage with the moral tourism agenda, and are not preoccupied with ethical issues related to their consumption of leisure travel, does not make them any less ‘thinking’. It may be that they do not consider a holiday as a vehicle for doing good (or bad for that matter).

Whether New Moral Tourism makes us think is debatable anyway. One author suggests that the interpretation of eco-sites should ‘seek(s) to reveal meaning and stimulate a cognitive and emotional response. This response should impel people into reconsidering their value base and behaviour.’ Eco-holidays and various other niches focussed on ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ explicitly share this educative aim. However, the meaning we are to have revealed to us is simply assumed to be the overriding value of the natural environment and the richness of cultural diversity. It is simply assumed that our ‘value base’ needs shifting in the direction of reverence for our host’s way of life. UN advisor Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, often credited as the originator of the term ‘ecotourism’, echoes this preachy character of New Moral Tourism: ‘The person who practices ecotourism will eventually acquire a consciousness that will convert him into someone keenly interested in conservation issues.’

If education is the aim, the focus on the culture of the host society may actually create a barrier. A typical view is that of the Managing Director of travel company Concerning India: ‘I do not claim to understand India, only to enjoy and respect its many virtues ...’ ‘Respect’ is often invoked in the advocacy of New Moral Tourism to indicate a deference to the culture of the host community. ‘They’ are deemed so different to ‘us’ that we cannot know them or make judgements about their society; we can only respect the differences that define us. What we actually learn through this deference is questionable — presumably to claim to be able to understand the history or culture of places visited would run the risk of being accused of cultural arrogance or a lack of ‘respect’.

The barrier to education is strengthened by the implicit message of New Moral Tourism to consider one’s insignificance in the face of the vast expanse of nature, or the fascinating but bewildering experience of cultures different from one’s own. We are encouraged to contemplate the limits of rationality and progress in favour of a celebration of nature and contemplation of spirituality — this is central to the philosophy of ecotourism, the principal moralised brand of leisure travel. There is little room here for critical insight. Even in its own terms of reference — the need to be more informed on our travels about people and places — New Moral Tourism is a stifling etiquette that presents a barrier to discovery.
Holiday snaps – are good causes hijacking holidays?

Two dozen British tourists paid £250 each to take part in Explore Worldwide’s Nile Clean-Up Trip in Egypt, picking up dirty toilet paper. Explore Worldwide brochures promise ‘the opportunity to meet ethnic or tribal peoples’ (Explore Worldwide).

Discover the World suggests travel can be ‘tainted with unease’ and it promises packages that can be ‘enjoyed with a clear conscience’. (Discover the World).

The stated purpose of the Earthwatch Institute’s Amazonian Cultural Traditions volunteering holiday is to record the rich oral traditions of the people of Pirabas ‘threatened by the cannonade of modern culture, namely television’ (Earthwatch Institute).

Moral or mass?

Many of the cultural assumptions of New Moral Tourism, then, are expressed through distancing these new forms of tourism from mass, package tourism. Responsible tourism, ethical tourism and new tourism – these labels, whilst broad, clearly suggest the previous existence of irresponsible tourism, unethical tourism and old tourism (Mass Tourism), and are attempts to counter these with more moral products. In fact, it may be more useful to consider New Moral Tourism in terms of what it is not, rather than trying to pin down what it is. New Moral Tourism is defined against Mass Tourism – according to one author it originated in ‘a worldwide reaction against mass tourism’. A slightly less categorical assertion, although expressing a similar sentiment, comes from two prominent authors in the field: ‘By the 1990s, there is a sense that the public has become “tired” of the crowds, weary of jetlag, awakened to the evidences of pollution, and in search of something new.

The stereotypical associations of tourism in its mass form – crude, homogenous, insensitive to hosts, involving resorts that alter the landscape, crowded, frivolous – are railed against by the advocates of a New Moral Tourism.

Hence New Moral Tourism and Mass Tourism can be seen as a series of oppositions. For the New Moral Tourist, Mass Tourism is characterised by:

1. Sameness: It does not involve experiencing cultural differences, being based around a mass-marketed and consumed product in resort complexes, purpose-built for tourists.
3. Destructive: Mass Tourism is deemed to be destructive in two senses. It is seen as paying scant regard to the environmental consequences of
mass tourism and the new moral tourist

tourism. It is also held to involve the imposition of the tourist's culture on to the host, as the former has little interest in the latter. They are there as self-seeking/pleasure-seeking subjects.

In contrast to this New Moral Tourists associate themselves with:

1 Difference: The New Moral Tourist wants to experience cultural and environmental difference and to encourage and sustain that difference. This is done for altruistic motives – Mass Tourism is seen as being bad for the host – but also through a certain deference to the host culture which is held in esteem.

2 Cultural sophistication: The New Moral Tourist takes the trouble to learn about the host's culture and language. Aware of the importance of cultural difference in the host-tourist encounter, the New Moral Tourist adopts a cautious approach, and is sensitive with regard to their behaviour.

3 Constructive: The New Moral Tourist, where possible, will try to be constructive with regard to local cultures and environments. This will involve, for example, buying craft goods from local traders rather than souvenirs (possibly mass-produced, using imported materials) as such goods encourage the preservation of the local culture rather than support a western one. New Moral Tourists may themselves get involved with activities to preserve and sustain a particular way of life, through work on projects, although such assistance may also be in the form of financial support for NGOs and charities, which is sometimes included in the tour cost.

We have, then, two tourism types, the latter opposed to the former:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mass Tourism</th>
<th>New Moral Tourism</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sameness</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crude</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destructive</td>
<td>Constructive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Critical of modern ‘progress’</td>
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These oppositions may be schematic, in that tourism could rarely be characterised as either one or the other. Nevertheless they are the ideological parameters within which tourism discourse, and the self-understanding of the New Moral Tourist, lies. This 'ideal' New Moral Tourist is not a straw man. He encapsulates an important trend that has come to influence how we understand tourism.

The New Moral Tourism defines itself against its Other, Mass Tourism. Here, Mass Tourism is more than a reference to numbers of tourists – it is also, and more crucially, about a type of tourist, and a particular type of person. The use of the term 'mass' in the context of Mass Tourism, when
not used in a purely descriptive sense, tends to carry pejorative connotations. Mass Tourism is an exemplar of mass consumption in modern, industrial, mass society, and mass consumption is eschewed by the New Moral Tourist.

It is instructive to consider briefly the usage of the term ‘mass’ in this broader context. Ideas of mass society developed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. They reflected the reality of industrialisation, large conglomerations of people in cities and an attendant fear of the masses – especially when they were organised and politicised. Uses of the term ‘masses’ at this time carried negative connotations. Generally, the term was used to describe the multitude of ‘common’ people, perceived as lacking in education, cleanliness and civility. A further association was with disorder – the mass could easily become the rioting mob, acting without recourse to rationality. Finally there was a paternal element to elite conceptions of the masses – they lacked civility, and were therefore in need of civilisation and culture.

These ideas were reflected in the view of early package tourists in Britain and elsewhere. Thomas Cook’s first tours were temperance trips, promoting the virtues of abstinence and Godliness. Cook himself held a paternal view of his customers, and he was quite prepared to comment on what he considered their uncouth behaviour. In turn, Cook’s critics castigated him for enabling the ‘uncultured’ masses to partake of leisure travel.

The association of mass with a new type of social form, mass society, was first made by Herbert Blumer in the 1930s. For Blumer, mass society was the object, not the subject of society. The ability of the masses to think critically and act rationally came a poor second to the sense that they were acted upon. Mass culture makes us, rather than the other way round, is the logic of this conceptualisation. The masses lack individuality – they are not the rulers of their own destiny, but dupes of voracious advertising. Blumer’s
view of mass society, whilst it is contested, is important in shaping the post
Second World War conception of mass consumerism, and it is a strong
undercurrent in the criticisms of modern Mass Tourism.

New Moral Tourism is, then, a crusade against a particular characterisa-
tion of Mass Tourism, and the Mass Tourist. Raymond Williams’ comment
that ‘There are no such things as masses, only ways of seeing people as
masses’ is pertinent.\textsuperscript{54} The mass can also be considered the many with a
common goal – either threatening or worthy of championing. In the past
negative conceptions of the masses would have been contested by political
movements and trades unions that stood for the masses, or tempered by a
sense that growing affluence for the masses was a sign of progress. Cook
himself defended his tours from the critics on this latter basis. However,
today, in the absence of a common goal, and without the sense that more
opportunities for people to travel is part of human progress, they can be
presented as a homogenous, unthinking mass, patronised and talked down
to by the self-appointed spokespersons of new, ethical tourism.

\textbf{Anti-modern morals}

As well as a slight on tourists, New Moral Tourism also stands against moder-
nity and transformative economic development. In the view of the New
Moral Tourism advocate, for ‘transformative’, read ‘destructive’. The places
most often characterised as having been destroyed by Mass Tourism are the
Spanish Costas – especially the Costa del Sol. From the Monty Python
comedy sketch featuring ‘Brits’ abroad drinking Watneys Red Barrel and
singing ‘Torremolinos’ to the predictable disparagement from Rough Guide
and Lonely Planet guidebook authors, the Costa del Sol has long been
stereotypical Mass Tourism.

One author asserts an unequivocal view of Mass Tourism developments
such as those in the popular Mediterranean resorts:

\textit{The building of high-rise hotels on beach frontages is an environmental
impact of tourism that achieves headline status. This kind of obvious
environmental rape is now less common than it was during the rapid
growth periods of the 1960s and 1970s.}\textsuperscript{55}

The high-rise represents mass society – catering for many people, a common
standard of accommodation, and the beach front represents a natural
encounter between the land and the sea.\textsuperscript{56} The latter is sacrosanct for the
critics. It is worthy of note that this characterisation of high-rise hotels con-
veniently located for the beach as ‘rape’ is not the assertion of environmental
campaign literature, but appears in the most widely read textbook on the
tourism industry.

Another commentator on the tourism industry makes a similar point in
relation to the development of tourism in the Algarve in Portugal:
This frenzied activity is how it must have been in the South Wales valleys at the start of the industrial revolution: endless digging, building and labouring. In those days the commodities were coal, iron and steel. In the Algarve today they labour for tourism. But the results are similar. Clifftop by clifftop, beach by beach, valley by valley – the natural beauty of the countryside is being eroded. No dark satanic mills or slag heaps, perhaps, but the landscape here is being disfigured just as badly by tower blocks of hotels and apartments.57

Not only does this author bemoan ‘disfigurement’ (like ‘rape’, implying that nature has human characteristics) of the environment, without any sense that something may be gained, too, from this, but he distances himself from industrial development per se on the grounds that it erodes natural beauty. Such emotive assertions, made without qualification, reflect the ‘pro-environment–anti-people’ character of the critique of ‘old’ Mass Tourism. And whilst the Costas are iconic of Mass Tourism, package holidays generally are criticised for their effects on the environments and cultures of the destinations.

The critique of modern society implicit in New Moral Tourism is also evident in the idea of a ‘post-modern tourist, or ‘post-tourist’, invoked by John Urry and Maxine Feiffer. The post-tourist reacts against modernism, central to which is ‘the view of the public as a homogenous mass’.58 Urry argues that the weakness of the working class and the growth of the middle class heighten this ‘anti-mass’ sentiment. One could go further. Regardless of the size of the various social classes, however one might define them, it is the decline of collectivity, embodied in political projects of Left and Right, trades unions, church and community that may reinforce the type of individualism exercised by the post-tourist. Moreover, post-modernism’s rejection of the idea of progress stands against modernity, and mass consumption in the form of Mass Tourism is exemplary of modernity.59

An example of the anti-modern emphasis of New Moral Tourism is the UnTourist network, which appeared in Australia in the 1990s. UnTourists are explicitly seeking out the antithesis of the modern societies:

we sought out all the most discerning, untouristy people we knew – the insiders, the writers, the foodies, the fishermen, the sailors, the farmers, the culture buffs, the historians and the savvy locals – they helped to hunt out the best of everything the destination could offer in things to do, see, eat, buy, and in places to stay.60

This self-conscious search for the ‘backstage regions’61 – those hidden from the less discerning tourist – is characteristic of the New Moral Tourism.

And this is not simply a question of lifestyle – UnTourism is also linked to ‘giving something back’ to the hosts:
Mass tourism is about infrastructure (big hotels, souvenir shops, garish promotions and the fast buck) whereas Untourism is about caring for people, maintaining unspoiled environments, authenticity and value for money... If untourists won’t go to places created solely to soak up the tourist dollar, preferring to see and do what the locals do... there will be less room to spoil what is natural, authentic and/or special about a place.62

So for this type of tourist, whom sociologist Peter Corrigan argues are becoming more commonplace, taking a stand against modern values (and Mass Tourism) through leisure travel is good for the environment, the communities visited, and, as a more moral form of activity, good for the tourist too.

Sustainable tourism

Much of the scepticism of previous forms of Mass Tourism development is couched in terms of its lack of ‘sustainability’. As with so many other phenomena – housing, communities, economy, architecture etc. – tourism has acquired the prefix ‘sustainable’. Broadly speaking, certain types of tourism have become strongly associated with being sustainable, and others unsustainable. Typically, ecotourism, nature tourism, green tourism, alternative tourism etc., whilst critically regarded, are placed under the rubric ‘sustainable’, whilst the package holidays that dominate the market are rarely associated with sustainability. Of course some would argue that Mass Tourism can be sustainable too, and that to focus upon a relatively small section of the tourism market – New Tourism – is to miss the point. But a glance at academic literature, brochures and the literature from relevant NGOs shows that there is a casual association between sustainability and New Moral Tourism brands such as ecotourism that is rarely challenged. This suggests a congruence between the two, at least in the way the term is used.

Sustainable tourism’s parental concept, sustainable development, is the aim, apparently, of all manner of organisations, in the commercial world, the public sector and also amongst NGOs. But whilst it is an agenda that is widely bought into, there is relatively little agreement about precisely what it is. The most common, underpinning, definition of sustainable development is that established in the UN report Our Common Future in 1987, and popularised at the UN Earth Summit in Rio in 1992: ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. It is generally seen as a response to previous and current forms of growth, deemed to have put the ability of future generations to meet their needs in jeopardy. Development, it is held, has proceeded apace with scant regard for the environment or for its effect on the cultures of the world. There are, it is considered, increasingly pressing environmental and cultural limits to growth.
The association of New Moral Tourism with sustainable tourism, or the ‘moralisation’ of sustainable tourism, is not surprising. The breadth of usage of its parental concept, sustainable development, seems to have obscured any coherence – the term can be moulded to fit one’s preference. Sustainability has always lacked conceptual clarity, and been interpreted in different ways, and may even be seen as inherently contradictory. Its contradictory nature comes out of its attempt to reconcile development and the environment, which for some expresses the problem itself, rather than a solution to a problem. Such a view holds that ‘sustainability’, at least in the way it is interpreted in the advocacy of New Moral Tourism, and ‘development’ are in fact mutually contradictory concepts.

One definition of sustainable tourism suggests that the nature–growth contradiction at the heart of sustainable development has been resolved here in terms of nature. The definition given by the Federation of Nature and National Parks in Europe is activity that ‘maintains the environmental, social and economic integrity and well-being of natural, built and cultural resources in perpetuity’ (my italics). Clearly such assertions reflect a preservationist emphasis not just with regard to the natural environment but also to culture. It is an emphasis characteristic of New Moral Tourism.

Indeed, rarely can a term have been so overused as the mantra ‘sustainable development’ – one source notes that over seventy definitions have been proposed. One definition of sustainable development is that it involves the ‘management of air, water, soil, minerals and living species including man, so as to achieve the highest sustainable quality of life’. This amounts to saying that that which is sustainable is, . . . sustainable. It leaves unresolved the question of how we judge this, what our priorities are with regard to the environment and the extent to which we are critical or celebratory about previous patterns of development. Hence without irony, institutions and individuals as diverse as George Bush, the International Monetary Fund, Friends of the Earth and Prince Charles have invoked sustainable development.

From this, it should be no surprise that definitions of sustainable tourism have become numerous, too. It also remains a vague term, one that can be used in a variety of circumstances by a variety of people to convey a variety of meanings. It is a term that can easily be moralised, especially in a climate of cultural uncertainty and environmental angst.

But despite the lack of coherence, it is common to discuss the strength of sustainable tourism as being in its assumption that man is indivisible from the environment. It is viewed as a progressive approach, countering perceived arrogance on the part of humanity in its approach to the natural world. However, this seemingly holistic approach, that views humanity as a part of nature, ignores the reality that all human development has involved a greater ability to harness the natural world for human ends. Upholding this as progressive does not imply ignoring environmental problems, or seeing the environment in purely instrumental terms, but involves a
recognition that humanity is a distinctive and dominant part of nature, with
the capacity to organise and transform the natural world around human
ends.

It is also notable that sustainable tourism has tended to develop increas-
ingly as a *socio-environmental* category, with an emphasis on *people* as well
as the effect of development on *ecological processes*. Hence sustainable
tourism has developed a profound sensitivity towards cultural change, change
in how communities relate to their environments. In the context of tourism,
Third World communities are often viewed as guardians of precious envi-
ronments, and their cultures deemed sustainable on this basis. As I argue in
chapter 7, this view has profound implications for how we view the potential
to develop poor societies, whose poverty is defined by a reliance on their
immediate natural environment.

**Ecotourism – an example of New Moral Tourism**

As one might expect, given the morally loaded nature of the debate, there
is little agreement about precisely what constitutes any of the New Moral
Tourism brands. There are many different types of tourism that shelter
under the ‘ethical’ umbrella. Green tourism, ecotourism, alternative tourism,
sustainable tourism and community tourism are just a few of these. The
plethora of categories confirms that, in reality, there is confusion as to what
is and is not new and ethical – what is ethical to one advocate of New Moral
Tourism may not be to another.

Ecotourism is strongly associated with being a more ethical form of
tourism and is more often than not at the forefront of the moralisation
of tourism. The term itself is less than fifteen years old, and since its inven-
tion few can agree on a precise definition. For some it is simply tourism
to relatively undisturbed areas to appreciate the scenery and wildlife.
However, others argue that ecotourism should involve assisting in environ-
mental preservation and developing an environmental conscience – it has
a purpose well beyond satisfying the desires of the consumer. A recent
dispute over whether fishing could be categorised as ecotourism, revolving
around whether it is ‘consumptive’ or not (the argument was initially around
whether the fish should be thrown back, and subsequently over whether
they feel pain) is indicative of the nit-picking principles of some zealous
ecotourism advocates. More vitally, the originator of the term, Hector
Ceballos-Lascucarain, saw ecotourism as a means of developing eco-conscious-
ness. It is hence a market segment with a mission – to educate tourists
and hosts to lead better lives, more in harmony with nature.

In their 1989 video ‘The Environmental Tourist’, the Audubon Society,
America’s foremost environmental advocates, describe ecotourism not as a
particularly set of practices but as a ‘travel ethic’. This chimes with the notion
of tourism as having a higher moral purpose, rooted in what is essentially
an aspect of lifestyle. This drawing together of lifestyle, and a certain morality
linked to the elevation of a certain sense of culture and nature, is central to the moralisation of tourism. It is the common feature that unites the various niches that feature in the search for a new, ethical tourism. They are united in their trepidation at tourism’s (and potentially their own) effect on cultural diversity and on the natural environment, and see what we buy and how we behave as a means of exercising more ethical, moral judgement.

One academic paper on the subject of ecotourism to the Ladakh Farms Project in India argues that, for ecotourists,

travel can mean a lot more than a leisure activity. It might form part of a broader philosophical reflection relating to the self and nature. It might involve trying to find answers to many of the problems experienced when living in a westernised, industrialised country.\textsuperscript{74}

The authors quote the following personal communication to illustrate this:

Many people who have spent time in this ancient culture have found it a life-changing experience. They have come away with a recognition that a life closer to nature is not necessarily one of back-breaking toil. They have been inspired by a new faith in human nature and have often left Ladakh with renewed optimism about the possibility for change in western society.\textsuperscript{75}

Visitors to the project, run by the International Society for Ecology and Culture, are encouraged to work and raise the status of subsistence agriculture. According to its advocates, visitors

have an important role in demystifying the image of the luxury and leisure filled lives that people experience in so-called ‘developed’ countries. Visitors are expected to educate themselves to educate their hosts through reading \textit{Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh} by Helen Norberg Haydn.\textsuperscript{76}

Whilst this is perhaps an extreme example of New Moral Tourism, it nonetheless illustrates a number of its important features. First, the rejection of ‘western’ development and the moral elevation of rural, subsistence, ‘sustainable’ lifestyles is a common factor. New Moral Tourism is in this sense part of a broader critique of modern society that morally elevates tradition above development as a response to the perceived destructive nature of the latter. However, an irony in the Ladakh Project is that, as the project admits, the crisis arises in part because many younger members of Ladakh society are heading for the towns and cities, presumably less impressed with the benefits of a rural, ‘sustainable’ life than their western advocates.

Second, the ecotourist seeks enlightenment from the experience. The learning of profound truths, absent in developed societies that are considered
superficial, makes ecotourism enriching for the tourist in the view of New Moral Tourism. Whether enlightenment equates to education is doubtful. It would seem that the reverence and ‘respect’ for tradition provide an obstacle to a critical examination of the grinding poverty of the people of Ladakh.

Third, the Project hopes to enlighten others as to the benefits of a life closer to nature. In this case this applies not only to other prospective tourists, but also to the local people themselves, including those voting with their feet and leaving for the cities. New Moral Tourism, then, is not simply another choice for prospective tourists, but is advocated as a more moral form of behaviour for all of us.

Conclusion

Tourism is becoming increasingly moralised. On the one hand, certain types of tourism, and tourist, are considered unethical, as they fail to recognise a particular notion of environmental and cultural risk. On the other, the new, ethical alternatives are seen as not only better from the perspective of the host societies, but also better for the tourists themselves. Consumer choices over what kind of holiday one prefers are transformed into moral choices, seen as having significant consequences for one’s host, and also for oneself.

Whilst it is the case that distinct ‘new tourism’ markets remain relatively small, the moralisation of tourism is a pervasive, fluid agenda, colouring the way we see contemporary leisure travel. It casts a shadow over the growth of leisure travel, a growth that one may have assumed would be viewed in more upbeat fashion. It also questions the notion of innocent fun, traditionally associated with holidays. Simply pleasing oneself has become moral terrain.