

Responsible Tourism and the Market

Harold Goodwin 2001

In the UK, Tourism Concern, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and Tearfund have run a series of campaigns with ethical and responsible tourismⁱ themes. The campaigns have emphasised the potential negative social and environmental impacts of tourism and more recently the potential positive economic impacts that tourism can have on host communities. Tourism Concern's *Our holidays, their homes* campaign has raised many of the issues currently debated in relation to ecotourism. VSO's *WorldWise* and *Travelling in the Dark* campaigns were instrumental in encouraging the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) to adopt and promote Responsible Tourism and Tearfund has picked up the issue of Responsible Tourism in a series of campaigning initiatives since 2000.ⁱⁱ

Government in the UK has moved from funding research on Tourism, Conservation and Sustainable Development (1994-1997)ⁱⁱⁱ to a far more focused series of initiatives using tourism to assist in achieving its poverty targets. The Department for International Development has funded policy work that began in preparation for the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999^{iv} and has continued with policy studies of pro-poor tourism projects and a series of initiatives funded through the Tourism Challenge Fund.^v.

In November 1999 Tearfund^{vi} commissioned a survey of consumer attitudes towards ethical issues in tourism amongst a nationally and regionally representative sample of adults (15+). 27% of the respondents had never been on an overseas holiday.

	Importance rating %				Index
	High	Mid	Low	None	
Affordable cost	82	12	3	3	3.7
Good weather	78	14	5	3	3.7
Guaranteed a good hotel with facilities	71	15	8	4	3.5
Good information is available on the social, economic and political situation of the country and local area to be visited	42	30	23	3	3.1
There is a significant opportunity for interaction with the local people	37	37	23	3	3.1
Trip has been specifically designed to cause as little damage as possible to the environment	32	34	27	5	2.9
Company has ethical policies	27	34	30	7	2.8
Used the company before	26	30	38	5	2.8

Table 1 For the last overseas holiday that you booked (whether via a tour company or independently), how important were the following criteria in determining your choice? (%)^{vii}

45% of respondents said that they would be more likely to book a holiday with a company "if they had a written code to guarantee good working conditions, protect the environment and support local charities in the tourist destination".

Tearfund argued that

“Taken with the fact that there is little loyalty shown by tourists to tour operators, this shows that a company could gain a competitive advantage by adopting ethical policies.”^{viii}

Tearfund asked some specific questions about the willingness of travellers – package and independent travellers alike – to pay more money if they were guaranteed as part of the holiday. 59% of respondents said that they would be willing to pay more for their holiday if money went to guarantee good wages and working conditions for workers in the destination, to preserve the environment and reverse some negative environmental effects or directly to a local charity. This means that 41% would not be prepared to pay more for any of these reasons.

Money goes towards preservation of the local environment and reversal of some of the negative environmental effects associated with tourism	35%
Workers in the destination are guaranteed good wages and working conditions	29%
Money goes to support a local charity	21%
None of these	41%

Table 2 Which of the following activities would you be willing to pay more money for if they were guaranteed as part of your holiday? You may tick as few or as many as you like.

2%	Which would be £10 on a holiday of £500	22%
5%	Which would be £25 on a holiday of £500	21%
10%	Which would be £50 on a holiday of £500	10%
20%	Which would be £100 on a holiday of £500	1%
nothing		45%

Table 3 How much more money would package holidaymakers be prepared to pay?

63% of respondents reported that they wanted information about at least one ethical issue, nearly half wanted information about local customs and appropriate dress and behaviour for tourists. Respondents identified “tour operators including tour guides” (54%) and travel agents (52%) as primarily responsible for providing this information.

Local customs and appropriate dress and behaviour for tourists	46%
Ways for tourists to support the local economy and meet the local people	26%
Political background to the country and specific region	26%
Local religious beliefs	23%
Sheet with ten tips for ethically responsible travellers	20%
How to protect the local environment and reduce waste whilst overseas.	18%
The wages and working conditions of local people working in tourism	16%
None of these	37%

Table 4 If you were on an overseas holiday, what type of information would you want to have concerning your holiday? Respondents were permitted to tick as many or as few as they liked.^{ix}

The ABTA September 2000 survey of package holidaymakers asked a series of questions about tourism and the environment.^x This provides firm evidence that environmental issues are important to many package holidaymakers when they choose or recommend particular destinations. More than half the respondents said that the

issue of food or water shortages for local residents mattered a great deal to them in choosing or recommending destinations.

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not a lot	Not at all	Don't know
Dirty beach	83	14	2	1	*
Polluted sea	83	14	1	2	1
Crime	74	21	3	1	1
Local illness	62	28	5	2	3
Food or water shortages for local residents	51	34	9	3	3
Too much noise	48	31	14	6	1
Air pollution	45	39	8	5	1
Litter in public places	43	45	8	3	2
Hotels and other buildings out of character with the local environment	24	40	25	8	3

Table 5 To what extent would each of the following factors influence your choice about going to or recommending a particular destination? (%)

ABTA also asked about the importance of a range of factors in determining the respondent's choice of Holiday Company. 78% of package holiday respondents said that the provision of social and environmental information in tour operators' brochures is important; 70% said that the reputation of the holiday company on environmental issues is either very or fairly important in affecting their choice of holiday company.

	Very important	Fairly important	Combined
the quality of accommodation in the hotel/apartment	73	24	97
the reputation of the holiday company to resolve your problems overseas	71	23	94
the quality of the reps in resort	45	36	81
Provision of social and environmental information in tour operator's brochures	33	45	78
the reputation of the holiday company on environmental issues	29	41	70

Table 6 Importance of range of factors in choice of Holiday Company

Asked "How important is it to you that your holiday should...." 68% of the sample said that it was either very important (27%) or fairly important (44%) to them that their holiday benefited the people of the destination they are travelling to through creating jobs and business opportunities. 85% said that it was important to them that their holiday did not damage the environment and 77% said that they wanted their holiday to include visits to experience local culture and foods.

	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not at all important	Don't know
...benefit the people of the destination you are travelling to (for example, through jobs and business opportunities)	27	44	21	6	2
...not damage the environment	40	45	10	3	2
...include visits to experience local culture and foods	36	41	18	4	1

Table 7 How important is it to you that your holiday should.... (%)ⁱ

Through MORI, ABTA then asked whether the respondents would be prepared to pay more money for various social and environmental elements to be guaranteed as part of the package holiday. 53% said that they were prepared to pay more for their package holiday in order that workers in the destination could be guaranteed good wages and working conditions. 45% were prepared to pay more to assist in preserving the local environment and reversing some negative environmental effects of tourism.

	%
Workers in the destination are guaranteed good wages and working conditions	53
Money goes towards preservation of the local environment and reversing some negative environmental effects of tourism	45
Hotels serve food produced locally	31
Money goes to support a local charity	21
None/Don't know	19

Table 8 Declared willingness to pay more money to guarantee environmental and socio-economic benefits (%)

ABTA then went on to ask how much extra package holiday travellers would be willing to pay for the guarantees each respondent had identified. The Tearfund results are based on package holiday and independent travellers, the ABTA survey covered only package holidaymakers; and the ABTA survey did not offer a 1% option. However, it is noticeable that for the 2%, 5% and 10% categories a larger proportion of the ABTA respondents, 10 months later, were prepared to pay more for the guaranteed ethical content of their holidays. There is of course a significant difference between what is said in response to a survey question and a decision to book a particular holiday at a particular price.

	Tearfund	ABTA	ABTA Cumulative %
1% (which would be £5 on a holiday of £500)	18%	94%	
2% (which would be £10 on a holiday of £500)	22%	31%	77%
5% (which would be £25 on a holiday of £500)	21%	33%	46%
10% (which would be £50 on a holiday of £500)	10%	12%	13%
More than that	01%	1%	1%
Nothing/Less than that/ Don't know	45%	6%	

Table 9 How much extra would you be willing to pay for the guarantees you chose in the previous question?

ABTA also asked about what respondents had done on their last package holiday overseas to minimise their environmental or social impact.

	%
Ensure you did not leave any litter	84
Visit a local site of natural beauty	63
Observe local dress codes (for example, when visiting religious sites)	41
Deliberately save water by having a shower rather than a bath	36
Switch off air conditioning to save energy	18
Decide not to have your hotel towels washed too often for environmental reasons	17
Don't know/can't remember	7
None	1

Table 10 On your last package holiday overseas which if any of these things did you do? (%)

52% of respondents said that they were interested in finding out more about local social and environmental issues in the resort before booking a holiday.^{xii}

UK Tour Operators are beginning to respond to these campaigns and to changing consumer attitudes. Tearfund conducted research into the responsible tourism policies of UK tour operators late in 2000.^{xiii} They surveyed 65 UK tour operators looking for examples of good practice and their sample was skewed towards those companies thought most likely to be adopting responsible practices.

In Tearfund's survey the medium sized companies (carrying between 5,000 and 100,000 holidaymakers per year) estimated that about 35% of the costs of their trips remained in the local economy (excluding the cost of the flight). The smaller more specialist operators estimated the equivalent figure at 70% - the larger mass operators were not able to estimate.

Tearfund identified 46 tour operating companies (71% of its survey) who gave money to charities, 33 gave money directly to charities in the destination, half gave money to UK charities working overseas and six operators (mainly the larger ones) gave money to charities working in the UK.

32 of the operators Tearfund surveyed looking for good practice said that they had a responsible tourism policy, and over half of the remainder were planning to develop a policy. Figure 1 is taken from Tearfund's *Tourism putting ethics into practice*. The commercial motivation is reported as the fifth most important, although it is identified as a reaction against mainstream (mass) tourism.

Q17 – Why did you produce your policy?

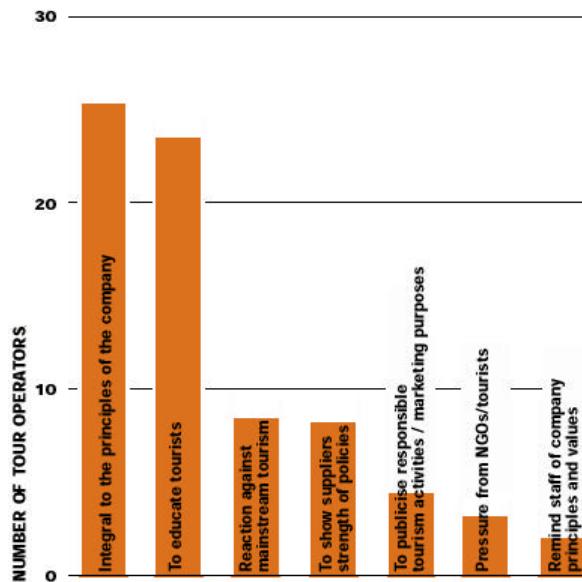


Figure 1 Tearfund data on why operators chose to develop responsible tourism policies

Only about 30% of Tearfund's good practice review respondents said that clients were asking more about some of the social, environmental and economic issues in tourism. As we shall see in the next section there is evidence, from recent surveys by ABTA and Tearfund and from questions included in the ABTA survey at the behest of WTO for this report, that there is increasing interest in the ethical or responsible agenda from holidaymakers.

There are a number of current initiatives in the UK which are designed to move this agenda forward. Tourism Concern and Tearfund have ongoing campaigns around the ethical agenda. The 160 member Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) has adopted a Responsible Tourism Policy.

AITO Responsible Tourism Policy

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM GUIDELINES



As members of AITO we recognise that in carrying out our work as Tour Operators we have a responsibility to respect other people's places and ways of life. We acknowledge that wherever a Tour Operator does business or sends clients it has a potential to do both good and harm, and we are aware that all too often in the past the harm has outweighed the good.

All tourism potentially has an **Environmental, Social** and **Economic** impact on the destination involved. We accept, therefore, that we as Tour Operators should aim to be responsible in all our dealings on each of these three levels. To help us to do so we have proposed a set of guidelines intended to help companies, customers and local suppliers recognise their common responsibilities to:

- ***Protect the Environment – its flora, fauna and landscapes***
- ***Respect local cultures – traditions, religions and built heritage***
- ***Benefit local communities – both economically and socially***
- ***Conserve natural resources – from office to destination***
- ***Minimise pollution – through noise, waste disposal and congestion***

We are an Association of individual, independent companies, each with our own distinctive style and field of operation. As such, we each have our own ways of fulfilling the details of these responsibilities by:

- ***Establishing our own policies and involving our staff***
- ***Informing our clients about Responsible Tourism and, where appropriate,***
- ***Encouraging them to participate***
- ***Working with our suppliers and partners to achieve responsible goals and practices***
- ***Publicising good practice to encourage and spread Responsible Tourism***

Ten actions that tour operators can take now!

Not everything can be done at once, but all operators can start to look at their own operations and determine priority areas for change. Here is a suggested ten-point checklist towards becoming a responsible tourism company.

- 1 Establish a clear policy for responsible tourism** and ensure that it covers operations both in the UK and in overseas destinations, right through the supply chain. Ensure that any charitable giving is integrated into the business process and is focused on improving the situation in the destinations.
- 2 Appoint a responsible tourism staff member** who will oversee the development and integration of these issues throughout the organisation. Ensure that there is also support for this at board level.
- 3 Commit funds to becoming a more responsible operator** in the areas of charitable giving, developing local business partnerships, training and giving advice to clients.
- 4 Write down best practice and seek to learn from it**, publicise it to clients and share it with others.
- 5 Produce and disseminate a code for tourists** to help them travel in a more informed and responsible way. Include advice on how they can support local charities.
- 6 Take time to research destinations** and speak to local development and environment groups and tourism associations, not just to the hotels. Find out which local businesses you could possibly use, and with whom you may be able to develop a partnership. This will enable you to provide better-quality holidays.
- 7 Work throughout your supply chain** to develop and implement policies that use local labour, local foods and local crafts. Make your policies available to your suppliers.
- 8 Build on health and safety guidelines for hotels** to include social and environmental issues such as labour standards, minimum wage levels and good recycling and waste disposal systems.
- 9 Set clear targets for year-on-year improvement** in terms of building partnerships, using local suppliers and improving social and environmental conditions in hotels. Evaluate your activities regularly so that you can learn from them.
- 10 Use your annual report** to publicise what you have been doing to promote responsible tourism, and to gain support from your key stakeholders.



CHRISTIAN ACTION WITH THE WORLD'S POOR

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Further information

The World Tourism Organisation has produced a series of reports on originating markets and the demand for ecotourism in Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the USA. This **Ecotourism Market Study Series** is available from <http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE/WTO-Publications-Documents-Ecotourism.htm>

www.cbi.nl

CBI is the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries, an agency of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Search using “tourism” for useful reports on the Dutch market.

Responsibletravel.com Ltd

A market place for responsible tour operators, www.responsibletravel.com

Tearfund Campaign for Responsible Tourism

For details of the Tearfund Campaign see their website

<http://www.tearfund.org/homepage/index.asp>

ⁱ Responsible Tourism is a general term meaning that economic, environmental and social impacts are considered and minimised by the tourism industry and tourists themselves. Responsibility for the impacts of tourism is accepted by those involved and efforts are made to minimise negative impacts and maximise benefits to local people and the environment.

ⁱⁱ Tearfund Reports *Tourism – an Ethical Issue* (January 2000) and *Tourism – don’t forget your ethics* (June 2000) and *Tourism – putting ethics into practice* (January 2001).

ⁱⁱⁱ Goodwin, H J, Kent, I J, Parker K T, Walpole M J four reports on *Tourism, Conservation and Sustainable Development*. Department for International Development, London (April 1997) and

Goodwin H with River Path Associates *Changing the Nature of Tourism: Developing an agenda for action* Department for International Development <http://www.riverpath.com>

^{iv} Goodwin H (October 1998) Sustainable Tourism and Poverty Elimination, A Discussion Paper for the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Department for International Development

^v See www.propoortourism.org.uk and The Tourism Challenge Fund www.challengefunds.org

^{vi} An evangelical Christian relief and development agency working through local partners to bring help and hope to communities in need around the world.

^{vii} Tearfund January 2000 *Tourism an Ethical Issue, Market Research Report*

^{viii} Tearfund January 2000 *Tourism an Ethical Issue, Market Research Report* 42% said that it would make no difference; 13% said no.

^{ix} Tearfund January 2000 *Tourism an Ethical Issue, Market Research Report*

^x MORI *Package Holidays 2000 Research Study Conducted for ABTA* September 2000

^{xi} MORI *Package Holidays 2000 Research Study Conducted for ABTA* September 2000

^{xii} To what extent would you be interested in finding out more about local issues (environmental and social) in your chosen resort, before you book a holiday? A great deal 12%; a fair amount 40%, not at all 16%

^{xiii} Tearfund January 2001 *Tourism putting ethics into practice*.