Book Review

Tourism and Poverty Reduction Pathway to Prosperity
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The title and inclusion of photos on the cover page attracts attention and the description of the book would benefit the readers. The main focus is on the economic effects of tourism on destinations with special reference to Africa and some examples from Asia and Latin America. The book is divided into three parts and consists of nine chapters. The first section covers the introduction to the issues examined, that is, poverty-reducing impacts of tourism on the poor. In the second section, evidence from past studies about the different pathways leading from tourism to the poor are covered. In Section three, a critical evaluation of the rich variety of techniques or tools that researchers have adopted to measure the impacts of tourism on poverty are highlighted. Chapter one is concerned with the introduction and clearly stated aims of the book to answer three basic questions on the impact of tourism in reducing poverty. These questions are: (1) What are the pathways by which tourism affects the poor? (2) What is the evidence of the effects of each of these pathways? (3) How can these pathways be measured?. Chapter two covers the three pathways to understand how tourism affects the poor. Chapters four, five and six explain these pathways in detail.

Chapter three focuses on the scale of flows to the poor. In other words, what is the percentage or share of the financial benefits of tourism enjoyed by the poor. As mentioned earlier, chapter four explains in detail the first pathway, that is, the direct effects of tourism on the poor – meaning direct earnings take place when the poor benefit financially from tourism activities. Chapter five addresses the second pathway, that is, the secondary effects of tourism on the poor. It is made up of indirect and induced effects. Indirect effect occurs when tourism expenditure impacts on the non-tourism business, while induced effect arises when workers in the tourism sector spend their earnings within the locality, thus generating additional income for poor households. Chapter six discusses the last pathway, that is, the dynamic effects on economic growth, which though less tangible, may reinforce or undermine the positive impacts of tourism on the poor. Chapter seven tackles the impacts of different types of tourism. It is evident that in most developing countries, less attention is paid to the segments of the market that they wish will attract tourists. Chapter eight covers methods of assessing the impacts of tourism on poverty and examines ten different approaches. Interestingly, no single method fully explores the impacts of tourism on poverty and the best way to assess how tourism has been able to reduce the level of poverty is to adopt a multi-methods approach. Lastly, chapter nine attempts to illustrate a different perspective on tourism and poverty.

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This book has adopted the extensive use of boxed commentaries with case studies for a better understanding from chapters one to five. Likewise, it illustrates in percentages the direct flow of tourism to reduce poverty in some developing countries. For example, in chapter seven, the book suggests that backpacker tourists can stimulate more significant multiplier effects that will benefit the poor because of their demand for locally made goods and services instead of imported goods. It also highlights the two schools of thought that is, protagonists who argue that tourism is inherently pro-poor because of its provision of job opportunities and linkages with other sectors. The critics meanwhile are of the view that the bulk of tourism spending is not retained in the local economy and has caused dislocation in the local community. However, despite these challenges, it appears as if tourism is not a solution for poverty alleviation in the developing countries, yet in some places, it has played an important role in the battle against poverty. For example, places like Namibia, KwawaZulu-Natal province in South Africa, Ethiopia, Gambia, Malawi and Maldives. Additionally, in chapter four, Mount Kilimanjaro in northern Tanzania, is a striking example of the pro-poor benefit flow to the poor. It is the most successful transfer of wealth from international tourists to poor people living around tourism destinations studied in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America. The book recommends that the policy makers should base their decisions on investment in poverty reduction and growth, including pro-poor growth and low carbon growth.

However, most of the case studies cited failed to incorporate the views of those who are really poor to ascertain if they actually benefited from tourism or to determine if tourism has benefitted them. Although the book is an exploration of the existing literature, yet the inclusion of the views of the poor people in one of the chapters would have made a difference to the readers. Moreover, I feel the book would benefit more if the number of beneficiaries can be made known based on the local population rather than the number of tourism jobs given to the poor in those listed in percentage form. This is because most poor people in Africa have multiple jobs. This was not taken into consideration by the book. Therefore, those people considered poor might not be actually poor, based on the United Nations’ definition of the poor. In addition some of the places mentioned are well known destinations where the high-end tourists may not necessarily transfer economic benefits to the poor.

In conclusion, this book provides valuable and unique insights for policy makers and practitioners on the phenomenon of tourism benefits for the poor. Likewise, it offers direction for researchers and doctoral students who are interested in conducting studies in rural tourism and how it can be used to alleviate poverty among the poor local residents and stimulate economic growth. All these certainly make it one of the most wide-ranging books on pro-poor tourism and poverty alleviation. Therefore, based on the aforementioned I strongly recommend the book to other interested readers.