

Tourism and Poverty: The Effects of Rural Tourism on Homeless and Impoverished Communities on The Oregon Coast

Faculty Member:

Student: Bettyjo LaBare

Project Length: June 1st, 10 Weeks

Tourism as an industry has grown exponentially over the past several decades and has become increasingly intertwined with global societies as a consequence. There are very few, if any, aspects of life that tourism does not have at least a minor impact on (Stronza, 264). Some areas have found that tourism has an impact on their economic make up; these changes also affect the overall affluence of citizens. There has been debate on whether or not tourism can be a source of aid for impoverished people or a just source of income for outside businesses (Winters et al, 180). Unlike urban tourism, where economies are more diverse, less dependent upon tourism dollars and there are more centers and resources for people in need, development of tourism in rural areas provides fewer opportunities for those rely upon tourism. In many instances, given the lack of other opportunities, people in rural areas that rely upon tourism for survival and live in poverty, often face prospects of becoming homeless and displaced in their own communities. Facing double forms of stigmatization, being poor and now homeless, their capacity to overcome their circumstances becomes even more difficult.

One area of the United States where developments in tourism is leading to an increasingly problem of homelessness is in rural coastal communities in Oregon. Oregon coastal tourism specifically focuses a lot on pristine land and open space for outdoor activities as a main attraction, leaving most of the area uninhabitable. Having lived in Oregon all my life and annually visited these communities, I have encountered this problem first hand in observing life for the homeless along the coast as well as working with organizations in cities to aid in feeding and clothing the homeless.

Even though many researchers have looked at how impoverished people are situated and live near tourism, this is typically done in a more urban setting. Large cities like Los Angeles and New York City typically have larger homeless populations due to their size and ability to house the homeless. Many research done on tourism and poverty cite it as a benefit to relieving poverty because most research has been conducted only in places that depend on it (Blake et al, 109). The economies of these urban destinations are also quite diverse, thus offering other possibilities for the homeless to acquire some income. Moreover, homeless people are often not found in tourist areas, as they are gentrified or secured to the point where accessing those spaces becomes difficult for the homeless. Tourism can lead to higher land and housing prices which can leave many locals without stable shelter (Matarrita-Cascante, 107). In rural areas, however, where the focus of tourism is more on outdoor activities, in open spaces where movement is less restricted, the presence of homelessness becomes more pervasive in the everyday life of the local communities, which often have limited resources to address to support these individuals. In instances where rural coastal economies rely more upon tourism, the problem of homelessness become more acute and has a greater impact in survival of the community.

One of the most prominent examples of places where such developments have transformed the orientation of the local community is the rural coastal community of Newport, Oregon. Outdoor activities situated around fishing, water sports and beach tourism now dominate the development of Newport's economy today. However, according to the Census Bureau, currently 18.8% of Newport's population is at or below the poverty line ("Population").

This statistic is concerning because the town's population is fairly small, just over 10,000, so the percentage is unusually high. Despite this dramatic collapse of the local community, there has been no research done on how the development of tourism is impacting the rise in poverty and homelessness within the local community. This could be due to the fact that many impoverished people are displaced from the area because there are fewer shelters or other structures for them to inhabit. However, as the orientation of the local community undergoes this dramatic deterioration, there is an urgent need to research the significance of this development and address this pressing issue. Being geographically bound by the sparse area, those without shelter could struggle to migrate to an area with more adequate housing.

To look for the connection between tourism and poverty, we will be observing the quality of life and personal experiences of locals in relation to tourism in the area. The data collected will be focused on the living and social conditions for those experiencing poverty in the area; personal information of individuals who participate will remain confidential. I will be filling out an IRB exemption form because of the general nature of the data collected. In addition, we will be datamining from open and publically available sources to see what drives tourism in Newport and if it correlates with the state of those who are homeless or impoverished. I will also be doing background research through articles and other pieces of literature to have a solid understanding of the basics before the research begins. The work required for this project will be carried out primarily in Newport, Oregon and not on the Moravian campus. Being in Oregon will allow easier access to resources on welfare and government poverty relief that is specific to the area. Also, being on site makes talking directly to people about their experiences either with poverty, tourism, or both in the area more efficient.

This SOAR project will thus investigate the effects of rural and ecotourism on the rise of homelessness and the impoverishment of communities on the Oregon Coast. The project will be taking place on the Oregon coast in the city of Newport. Being one of the state's larger coastal towns, it is often a center of coastal and eco-tourism. The main goal of this study is to examine and analyze the relationship between tourism and poverty. The project will investigate the correlation between these two factors and analyze whether or not that correlation is positive or negative. The project is framed under the hypothesis that tourism as a whole will have a negative correlation with poverty in Newport due to a lack of stable employment opportunities and resources spent on tourism as opposed to poverty and homeless relief. As mentioned earlier, the percentage of people in poverty is abnormally high, so this project hopes to find if tourism is a contributing factor. This project will further support Dr. Keshodkar's own current research project in collaboration with Oregon State University on developing tools for community developments for rural coastal community to address the growing pressures of tourism. Dr. Keshodkar will be in Newport for the duration of the project, thus facilitating supervision for the project.

Works Cited

- Blake, A.; Saba Arbache, J.; Sinclair, M. T. and Teles, V. (2008) 'Tourism and Poverty Relief', *Annals of Tourism Research* 35(1): 107–26.
- Matarrita-Cascante, David. (2010). "Changing Communities, Community Satisfaction, and Quality of Life: A View of Multiple Perceived Indicators." *Social Indicators Research*, 98 (1): 105-27.
- "Population Estimates, July 1, 2016, (V2016)." *Newport City Oregon QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau*. U.S. Department of Commerce, 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2017.
- Stronza, Amanda. "Anthropology of Tourism: Forging New Ground for Ecotourism and Other Alternatives." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 30, 2001, pp. 261–283., www.jstor.org/stable/3069217.
- Winters, Paul, et al. "Assessing the Role of Tourism in Poverty Alleviation: A Research Agenda." *Development Policy Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, Mar. 2013, pp. 177-202. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1111/dpr.12002.

Project Timetable

- Weeks 1-2: Early to Mid-June
 - Research what tourist attractions that draw the largest amount of tourists to the area
 - Compiling academic research on coastal tourism and aspects of tourism most visibly prominent in Newport.
- Weeks 3-7: Mid June to Late July
 - Research homeless shelters and other means of poverty relief in the area
 - Datamine from open and public sources to find reviews and public opinion of the area
 - Look at Newport's spending and programs to see how much is invested in tourism
- Weeks 8-9: Early August to Mid-August
 - Analyze findings to look for a correlation between poverty and tourism
 - Create a presentation about these findings and the general conclusion
- Week 10: Late August
 - Present findings via a Skype call

Roles and Responsibilities

- Research and Collection:
 - Bettyjo will be responsible for collecting academic materials as well as researching the tourism industry of the town and surrounding area. Dr. Keshodkar will be responsible for aiding Bettyjo in research as well as helping her formulate questions to formulate research from, providing guidance and tools on how to carry out participant observation.
- Data Analysis
 - With assistance and guidance from Dr.Keshodkar, Bettyjo will interpret data collected and connect it to broader literature in order to see if there is a connection between poverty and tourism in the area.
- Data Presentation:
 - Bettyjo will create a presentation based on data collected and data analysis to present as a conclusion to the SOAR program.

Title: Tourism and Poverty: The Effects of Rural and Eco-Tourism on Homeless and Impoverished Communities on The Oregon Coast

Student/Major/Graduation Year: Bettyjo LaBare, Sociology, 2020

Faculty: Dr. Akbar Keshodkar

On-Campus Housing: Not requested

Student Statement of Purpose

When I was first approached about the opportunity to participate in the SOAR program, I was unsure whether or not I wanted to join in. I am from the west coast and do not get the chance to see my family often, so I was unsure about losing what little time I still have with them. My professor then informed me that the project would be taking place in Newport, Oregon which immediately changed my point of view. In addition, the topic being explored in the project relates to both my academic and career goals. This project is practical for my academic goals and is in line with my personal areas of interest.

One of the main reasons I chose this particular subject was my family's personal history with the homeless community in Oregon. Five years ago my father started a tradition where he loads projector equipment and food into his car and drives up to Portland. While there, he shows a movie in one of the cities multiple parks and provides a meal to anyone walking by who may need one. Through the work that he has done, I have seen the public's attitude towards impoverished communities in the state and am interested to see how tourism plays a part. Based on what I have seen through both my father's work in the city and my own vacations on the Oregon Coast, I hypothesize that the industry could be a factor in the displacement and general poor treatment of the homeless community. As a sociology major, I am fascinated by the relationships that developed societies keep with their impoverished communities and how resources that could be used to help these people are actually utilized. The policy aspect of this project, where I will be looking at policy changes that could improve conditions if they are unfavorable, is one that I am particularly interested in.

With my sociology major, I intend to go on after college to work for nonprofit organizations. This project will improve my researching skills that I am going to be developing over my college career. As a Freshman student, having this experience now will incredibly useful for my next three years of undergraduate school. It will also be beneficial to gain a better understanding of the homeless community since I would like to work with societal issues surrounding poverty in America throughout my academic and professional career.

Expense Proposal

Project Title: Tourism and Poverty: The Effects of Rural Tourism on Homeless and Impoverished Communities on The Oregon Coast

Faculty Member: Dr. Akbar Keshodkar

Applicant Name: Bettyjo LaBare

I am requesting an additional \$500 to cover travel and housing expenses. Because the project is taking place almost entirely in Oregon, I will be unable to take advantage of the on-campus housing, so I will need funds for an alternative housing option. In addition, the funds will be used to cover travel expenses to and from campus. Without these funds, it will be impossible for me to stay close to the city in which we will be conducting research. These funds will solve any issues with travel and housing accommodations that may arise.