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# Do US tour operators' brochures educate the tourist on culturally responsible behaviours? A case study for Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

**KEYWORDS:** tour operators, culturally responsible behaviours, USTOA, Kenya

This exploratory study examined the extent to which US tour operators promote culturally responsible behaviours to tourists who plan trips to Kenya. An examination of the travel brochures containing information on Kenya was performed to understand the role tour operators play in educating tourists. Brochures were examined for specific words, such as ethics, values, tolerance, respect, religion, moral beliefs, social and cultural traditions, responsible tourism, customs, rules and guidelines and education and training. Content analysis was used to analyse data. The results revealed that US tour operators do not effectively communicate culturally responsible behaviours to tourists. The implications of the results are discussed.



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## INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has been growing phenomenally with the movement of people to numerous destinations and regions, both in the USA and internationally. In addition to visitation to the traditional beach-based mass-tourism destinations, there has been a tremendous increase in travel to cultural and nature-based destinations. With the growing demand, destinations position themselves to capitalize on the influx of such visitors without much consideration to potential impacts on host cultures.<sup>1</sup> As such, with increased visitation, culturally sensitive communities and regions come under increasing pressure and are vulnerable to change.

Given the diverse encounters and interactions between hosts and guests within a destination, the impact of these encounters on the host culture is evident, as cultures are not static and susceptible to change. The argument that tourist visitation generates positive changes in the host culture,<sup>2</sup> increases understanding, tolerance and respect for new cultures,<sup>3</sup> contributes to cultural enrichment<sup>4</sup> and learning about others<sup>5</sup> and even leads to peace,<sup>6</sup> is questioned. Tourism also produces negative cultural impacts on the host culture, including the demonstration effect,<sup>7</sup> commodification of traditional cultures<sup>8</sup> and arts, changing family and social structures,<sup>9</sup> changing morals and values,<sup>10</sup> misunderstanding,<sup>11</sup> stereotyping<sup>12</sup> and ethnocentrism,<sup>13</sup> resentment<sup>14</sup> and communication problems,<sup>15</sup> frustration and stress<sup>16</sup> and loss of a sense of identity,<sup>17</sup> security<sup>18</sup> and emotional being.<sup>19</sup> Tourists impact hosts and hosts impact tourists.<sup>20</sup> The level of impact or the rate of cultural change in the host community is of great concern. Fragile indigenous and ethnic communities are most vulnerable, as the impact is more pronounced when there is greater cultural divergence between the host and the guest.<sup>21</sup>

It is evident that tourism has substantially increased globally, and this growth will continue. It is imperative for tourism destinations to be proactive in order to maximize tourism opportunities while at the same time sustaining the integrity of the host communities. A tool to ameliorate socio-cultural

impacts of tourism on host cultures has been codes of responsible conduct, largely formulated by host destinations and non-governmental organizations. Such codes have had a positive influence on visitors in generating awareness of their potential impact upon the tourism destination visited.<sup>22</sup> However, the process of awareness and education should also be a responsibility of tour operators, especially during the pre-trip planning phase. It seems that responsible visitor behaviour is a major step in minimizing socio-cultural impacts, as well as facilitating a more enjoyable tourist and host experience. Given the role of global tour operators, the objective of this research is to explore the content of promotional brochures provided to potential customers by US tour operators that organize trips to culturally sensitive destinations. More specifically, the objective is to examine whether the travel brochures provided by US tour operators contain information about codes of responsible tourism and, in particular, culturally responsible behaviour in Kenya. Kenya was chosen because it is a culturally sensitive and a very popular destination for international tourists. The Kenya Tourist Board figures showed 30 per cent growth in tourist arrivals by December 2004, in particular from the UK, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the USA.<sup>23</sup> There was also a further 30 per cent and 28 per cent increase in visitors from Oceania and Asia respectively. Many tourists who had planned to travel to the tsunami-ravaged regions are now making enquiries about coming to Kenya instead.<sup>24</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Responsible tourism

Responsible tourism implies a proactive approach by tourism industry partners to developing, marketing and managing the tourism industry in a responsible manner so as to create a competitive advantage. Responsible tourism is a management strategy that embraces planning, management, product development and marketing to bring about positive economic, social, cultural and environ-

onmental impacts.<sup>25</sup> This type of tourism promotes responsibility to the environment through its sustainable use, as well as involving local communities in the tourism industry. In addition, responsible tourism is focused on the safety and security of a visitor. These responsibilities are held by a combination of government agencies,<sup>26</sup> employees of the tourism industry, employees outside the tourism industry and members of local communities.<sup>27</sup>

Culturally responsible tourism is a component of responsible tourism that 'contributes to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies'.<sup>28</sup> Respect for the local culture is advocated, as well as respect for ethical values, diversity, religion, customs, moral beliefs and social traditions. Culturally responsible tourism requires culturally responsible behaviour that is referred to as being aware of and sensitive to cultural values, traditions and customs of a foreign society, and complying with the rules of behaviour and ways of life of the host society to match the host society's expectations. A culturally responsible tourist learns about cultural differences through verbal and non-verbal communication cues, food, dance, human interactions, religious beliefs, forms of address, manners, gestures or time orientations. Although these are cultural elements that have potential grounds for cultural misunderstanding and conflict between international tourists and locals,<sup>29</sup> some tourists may wish to experience them. Tourists may be motivated to travel by the cultural uniqueness of the foreign tourism product. A culturally responsible tourist also understands how his/her behaviour may influence the experiences and feelings of the host community. Destination marketers and tour operators can facilitate this process by educating tourists on the cultural aspects of the destination visited. It is believed that such education may create awareness among both groups (tourists and hosts) and provide an opportunity for further learning about each other's culture. It may be a starting point not only for improving holiday experiences but also for more fundamental changes to tourists' attitudes towards foreign cultures, which are an important base for promoting

knowledge and understanding, thereby leading to an international cooperation and cultural and economic sustainability.<sup>30</sup>

### **The influence of globalization on culture**

The tourism industry is increasingly experiencing globalization. The pervasive argument is that globalization leads to cultural homogenization<sup>31</sup> and the disappearance of cultural characteristics and uniqueness that represent a very attractive element of the tourism product. Robinson argues that 'trickle down economics' is at the base of this cultural homogenization.<sup>32</sup> The dominant cultures of those who are economically stable prevail over minority cultures of those less economically stable. As a result, the values, interests and attitudes of the dominant culture replace the values and interests of the minority culture.

Support for the above argument is seen through the globalization and standardization of consumer products around the world. Large companies have invested millions of dollars in products hoping that customers, regardless of their location, share common tastes and preferences and are similar to one another. Ritzer and Liska argue that homogenized products and global standards are attempts to imitate and assimilate patterns of social behaviour, language, dress and cuisine.<sup>33</sup> Tourism scholar Jafar Jafari argues that standardization of products around the world may blur cultural lines.<sup>34</sup> This blurring of cultural lines may result in cultural homogeneity and standardization of tourism destinations. In an attempt to avoid the negative effects of globalization in tourism, destinations would do well to use sustainable planning practices and recognize the need to preserve local cultures and environments. Given both the demand for culturally responsible tourism and the industry's interest in preserving local cultures, the development of rules and guidelines determining responsible behaviours is essential to limit homogenization of cultures and standardization of tourism products.

### **Rules and guidelines for tourism responsible behaviour**

Many countries have recognized the importance of developing guidelines for responsible tourism behaviours and have developed rules concerning how to act appropriately in culturally and environmentally sensitive regions. However, rules of behaviour are governed by the dominant cultural values of a society<sup>35</sup> and differ between cultures. For example, distinct cultures follow different rules of social interaction and distribution of rights and privileges, and create a distinct self-image through self-presentation and/or self-performance.<sup>36</sup> Although there are rules that are universally accepted,<sup>37</sup> the rules that are accepted in one culture may have quite different meanings in another. Hence, tourists often break the rules because of an unawareness of the cultural differences and their meanings. The lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity in rules of behaviour develops perceptions of tourists as ignorant and abusing, and with little respect for the host community.<sup>38</sup> Thus, learning and understanding the rules of the foreign culture are critical to ameliorating social, cultural and environmental conflict between those who are from different cultures. However, understanding the foreign rules of behaviour requires a broader knowledge of historical, political, economic, religious and education practices as well as the locals' values, beliefs and patterns. Without such broad knowledge it is impossible to make sense of behaviours of those who are culturally different and deal successfully with them. Educating tourists about the foreign culture is the responsibility of both the tourist-generating and the receiving country (e.g. governments, tour companies and guides, destination marketing organizations and local communities).

### **Code of ethics: An application of rules**

Recently, various voluntary rules of conduct have been created in order to generate awareness<sup>39</sup> and compliance of potential visitor behaviours.<sup>40</sup> Rules of conduct have been written by non-governmental organi-

zations and/or government agencies (e.g. South Africa). However, the best-known frame of reference for responsible and sustainable development of world tourism is the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism issued by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), a specialized agency of the United Nations and the leading international organization in the field of tourism; it serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and practical source of tourism know-how. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism outlines 10 articles which cover areas of economic, environmental, political, social and cultural responsibility for travellers, destinations, tour operators, governments, developers, travel agents and workers (Table 1).

Article 1 of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding and respect between people and societies (Table 2). It highlights the significant role of ethical values common to humanity, and an attitude of tolerance and respect. In addition, it focuses on cultural understanding, respect for diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, social customs, cultural traditions, laws and practices, lifestyles, tastes and expectations of the host community, safety and security of foreign tourists, protection of cultural and natural heritage and the responsibility of foreign tourists to educate themselves about the countries they plan to visit. The authors argue that this code should guide the behaviour of tourists when they travel to visit foreign cultures.

### **The role of tour operators in educating tourists on responsible behaviour**

In an effort to apply codes of responsible tourism behaviour, many tour operators communicate with tourists to educate them on culturally and environmentally appropriate behaviours. The implementation of specific codes of conduct by tour operators has grown in popularity in recent years. In 2003 three-quarters of tour operators surveyed noted they had or are planning to produce a responsible tourism policy designed to edu-



**Table 1: Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (WTO)**

Article no	Principles
1	Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies
2	Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment
3	Tourism, a factor of sustainable development
4	Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement
5	Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities
6	Obligations of stakeholders (governments, companies, local communities) in tourism development
7	Right to tourism
8	Liberty of tourist movements
9	Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry
10	Implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

**Table 2: Article 1: Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies**

1. The understanding and promotion of the ethical *values common to humanity*, with an attitude of tolerance and *respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs*, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism; stakeholders in tourism development and tourists themselves should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples, and recognize their worth.
2. Tourism activities should be *conducted in harmony with the attributes and traditions of the host regions and countries and in respect for their laws, practices and customs*.
3. The host communities, on the one hand, and local professionals, on the other, should acquaint themselves with and respect the tourists who visit them and find out about their *lifestyles, tastes and expectations*; the education and training imparted to professionals should contribute to a hospitable welcome.
4. It is the task of the public authorities to provide protection for tourists and visitors and their belongings; they must pay particular attention to the *safety of foreign tourists* owing to the particular vulnerability they may have; they should facilitate the introduction of specific means of information, prevention, *security*, insurance and assistance consistent with their needs; any attacks, assaults, kidnappings or threats against tourists or workers in the tourism industry, as well as the wilful destruction of tourism facilities or of elements of *cultural or natural heritage*, should be severely condemned and punished in accordance with their respective national laws.
5. When travelling, tourists and visitors should not commit any criminal act or any act considered criminal by the laws of the country visited and abstain from any conduct felt to be offensive or injurious by the local populations, or likely to damage the local environment; they should refrain from all trafficking in illicit drugs, arms, antiques, protected species and products and substances that are dangerous or prohibited by national regulations.
6. Tourists and visitors have the responsibility to *acquaint themselves, even before their departure, with the characteristics of the countries they are preparing to visit*; they must be aware of the health and security risks inherent in any travel outside their usual environment and behave in such a way as to minimize those risks.

Source: [www.world-tourism.org/frameset/code\\_ethics.html](http://www.world-tourism.org/frameset/code_ethics.html)

cate tourists and/or set operating principles.<sup>41</sup> Much of this growth can be attributed to a demand from consumers. However, the application of codes of conduct is also integral

to the underlying principles upon which the company is operated.

According to the International Centre for Responsible Tourism handbook,<sup>42</sup> tour op-

erators have a responsibility to be sensitive to potential impacts at the tourism destination. Some of these potential impacts are loss of privacy, prevention of access to culturally significant places, invasion of sacred sites or the demeaning of cultural ceremonies, all of which can result from tourist visitation. The tour operators' responsibility is to demonstrate respect to the host country by negotiating with host communities the conditions required for tourist visits. Some of these conditions are the recognition of acceptable activities, suitable group size and appropriate places for tourist visitation. Tour operators should treat cultural heritage of the host country with dignity and respect by informing tourists about local customs and traditions and appropriate behaviour. They should ensure that tourists ask permission to take photographs or to videotape local people, and do not damage or remove religious or cultural artefacts. The question is, however, whether tour operators are truly involved in promoting responsible tourist behaviours in their travel brochures and in what ways they are involved in educating the tourist?

### Travel brochures as a medium of communication

Among the most effective forms of communication and promotion used by tour operators are 'direct mail and glitzy brochures'.<sup>43</sup> Holloway and Plant note that the travel brochure is one of the most widely utilized information sources.<sup>44</sup> Wicks and Schuett argue that the brochure is an attractive information source for many vacation decision makers.<sup>45</sup> Yamamoto and Gill claim the travel brochure is the most important source of information for tourists planning overseas package tours.<sup>46</sup>

Travel brochures typically include information on prices, itineraries, company information and even testimonials. The objective of the travel brochure is to create attention, interest, desire and action. Potential tourists are influenced by promotional brochures in their travel decisions.<sup>47</sup> The role of travel

brochures in influencing responsible behaviours of the tourist is advocated by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO WorldWise).<sup>48</sup> Notwithstanding, Wicks and Schuett argue that agencies and destination marketers should improve the effectiveness of this promotional tool.<sup>49</sup> According to VSO WorldWise, a non-profit agency, the travel brochure should provide 'customers with more information about the people and the places they will be visiting, including advice on how they can visit locally owned facilities and resorts'.<sup>50</sup> VSO WorldWise also suggests that policies should be developed for businesses concerning ways in which the holiday could be of more benefit to people living in the travel destination.<sup>51</sup> To date, information on travel brochures which include such details and advice for tourists is not well documented.

Many argue that the more information the consumer has about responsible behaviours, the more responsible their actions will be.<sup>52</sup> More than half of American tourists surveyed (54 per cent) had better travel experiences when they learned about a destination's customs, geography and culture.<sup>53</sup> One in three American travellers was influenced by a travel company's efforts to preserve the environment, history or culture of the destinations it visits.<sup>54</sup> Recognition of the demand for and benefits of educational services provided by the travel industry has resulted in including responsible philosophies and practices in tour operators' marketing communications.

### KENYA

Kenya is located on the east coast of Africa, and is an attractive tourism destination. Although the growth of international tourist arrivals to Kenya showed signs of decline three years ago, the overall percentage change from 2001 to 2004 was healthy. In 2004 Kenya recorded an unprecedented growth in tourist arrivals (18 per cent) from January to August.<sup>55</sup> This growth was due to the country's diverse culture and natural attractions, effective marketing campaigns and the lack of terrorism threats.<sup>56</sup>

Kenya has been described as the 'old man

of nature tourism'.<sup>57</sup> The native habitat consists mostly of long grass savannas, dry open woodlands and widely spaced mountains and several active volcanoes.<sup>58</sup> The country's spectacular wildlife resources are characterized by big predators, high biodiversity and a significant number of endemic species. Kenya is known for its safaris. This is the country immortalized in books and memoirs by Ernest Hemingway and Theodore Roosevelt. It has long been known as the land of 'big game' – big cats and mammals roam free in their natural surroundings.

Kenya offers a wide and exciting range of tourism opportunities, including adventures and discovery – game viewing, bird watching, mountain climbing, hot-air ballooning, freshwater and deep-sea fishing, the open plains of the Masai Mara National Park, the diverse landscapes of the Great Rift Valley, the mountain ranges at Abedares and Mount Kenya (the country's highest peak, located in the central highlands), the lake regions of Nakuru, Naivasha, Baringo, Bogoria and Victoria (which is shared with Tanzania and Uganda), the arid regions in the Northern Territories and the beaches at Mombasa and the coastal islands.<sup>59</sup>

Kenya also offers the remnants of an untouched and unique culture. With a population of over 31 million, 97 per cent of whom are of African descent, Kenya is host to more than 70 tribal groups among the Africans.<sup>60</sup> Their culture still exists and can be experienced today by many visitors.

### Kenya and tourism impacts

Tourism is important to the Kenyan economy in both direct effects upon employment, incomes and the balance of payments, and indirect effects in terms of stimulating secondary demand on other sectors of the economy.<sup>61</sup> Tourism is the number-one foreign-exchange earner for Kenya, ahead of coffee and tea.<sup>62</sup> Although it appears Kenya is in a strong position in terms of tourism earnings, other countries, such as Mauritius and Tanzania, earn more from tourism.<sup>63</sup>

The Kenyan tourism industry suffers from the degradation and reduction of the quality

of the country's tourism product, congestion at the game parks and reserves, destruction of the ecosystem and conflicts with competing demand from other sectors of the economy or with community interests in general.<sup>64</sup> International tourism has also had some negative effects on the tribes of Kenya. Local communities are significantly vulnerable to the deleterious impacts of tourism development, particularly indigenous cultures as they directly experience the socio-cultural impacts of tourism.<sup>65</sup> According to Lonely Planet publishers, distinctions between many of the tribes are blurred and 'western cultural values are becoming more ingrained and traditional values are disintegrating'.<sup>66</sup> Tourism development in Kenya has resulted in disruption to established activity patterns, increased crime and overcrowding issues. These 'have a negative impact on local lifestyles and the quality of life of both indigenous and non-indigenous communities'.<sup>67</sup>

This brings into question the role of the industry in promoting the country's sustainable tourism development. The negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts, which have often been downplayed, show that Kenya's tourism industry might be incapable of promoting sustainable long-term development. Although the country puts major emphasis on the expansion of tourism, important socio-cultural and environmental issues do not receive enough attention in planning and policy responses.<sup>68</sup>

### Kenya and culturally responsible behaviour

As a result of the negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism in Kenya, local non-governmental organizations have worked together to develop responsible tourism practices. Such organizations as Kenya Ecotourism<sup>69</sup> and the Ecotourism Society of Kenya<sup>70</sup> have developed guidelines for responsible tourism which are communicated to both the industry (i.e. travel agents, tour operators) and tourists. These guidelines are presented in Table 3. An important consideration is whether these



**Table 3: Kenya Ecotourism culturally responsible tourism guidelines**

**Leave the world a better place.** Responsible tourism is about getting more out of your travel experiences by giving back to the environment and the people you meet. Those interested in travelling responsibly should do the following:

**Research alternatives.** Learn about the places you intend to visit, and support tourism that is not harmful to the environment or well-being of local people.

**Eliminate barriers** and make meaningful connections with local people. Walk or use public transport whenever feasible. Pack small gifts for new friends.

**Be culturally sensitive.** Respect the values, customs and beliefs of local people. Foster a greater understanding of their culture and their environmental issues.

**Generate economic benefits.** Buy locally produced goods, become a patron of locally owned businesses and enhance the well-being of host communities.

**Be environmentally friendly.** Conserve natural resources when travelling just as you do at home. Offset your carbon emissions from airline and land travel.

**Make positive contributions** to the conservation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage and to the maintenance of the world's biodiversity.

Source: [www.kenyaecotourism.com](http://www.kenyaecotourism.com)

guidelines are followed by the industry in promoting the country's sustainable tourism development.

### ENVIRONMENTAL MARKETING AS THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

'Social and environmental concerns have assumed a greater level of importance in customer's product choice and supplier selection.'<sup>71</sup> The sale of products and demand for experiences which are environmentally friendly have grown tremendously in the last decade.<sup>72</sup> As a result, demand for both environmental marketing and corporate social marketing activities has increased in importance.

The communication of environmental information is of vital importance to tourists because it provides them with details that enable them to act in a more environmentally responsible manner. The academic literature has found that the more information the consumer has about environmentally responsible behaviours, the more responsible their actions are.<sup>73</sup> However, Polonsky et al. argue that this relationship may depend on the product category and the impact the

product has on the environment.<sup>74</sup> They suggest 'the more the product's negative impact on the natural environment the more the consumer would rely on such information when making... choices' (p. 282). Similarly, one may argue that the communication of cultural information enables tourists to act in a culturally responsible way. The more information the tourist has about culturally responsible tourism behaviour (and the negative impacts of irresponsible behaviour), the more likely he/she is to behave in a responsible manner.

Further, corporate environmental advertising typically contains three elements.<sup>75</sup> First, the advertisement presents a general statement of the corporate concern for the environment. Second, the advertisement describes information about the company's involvement and thus demonstrates commitment to the environment. Third, the advertisement describes the outcomes of its engagement. These three elements are important to the provision of information linked to behavioural change. Behavioural change is more likely if all three elements are included in the advertisement. Likewise, corporate cultural advertising is expected to present a statement of the corporate concern for the culture, information on how the

company is involved and committed to the preservation of culture and explanations of outcomes of its engagement.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

A conceptual framework diagram for this study is presented in Figure 1. It begins with the premise that the role of a tour operator is to be a ‘culture broker’ who facilitates communication, understanding and action between hosts and tourists who differ culturally.<sup>76</sup> Culture brokers are mediators who control or manipulate local culture for the tourists’ purpose.<sup>77</sup> One of the responsibilities of the tour operator as a culture broker is educating the tourist on the culture of the destination visited.

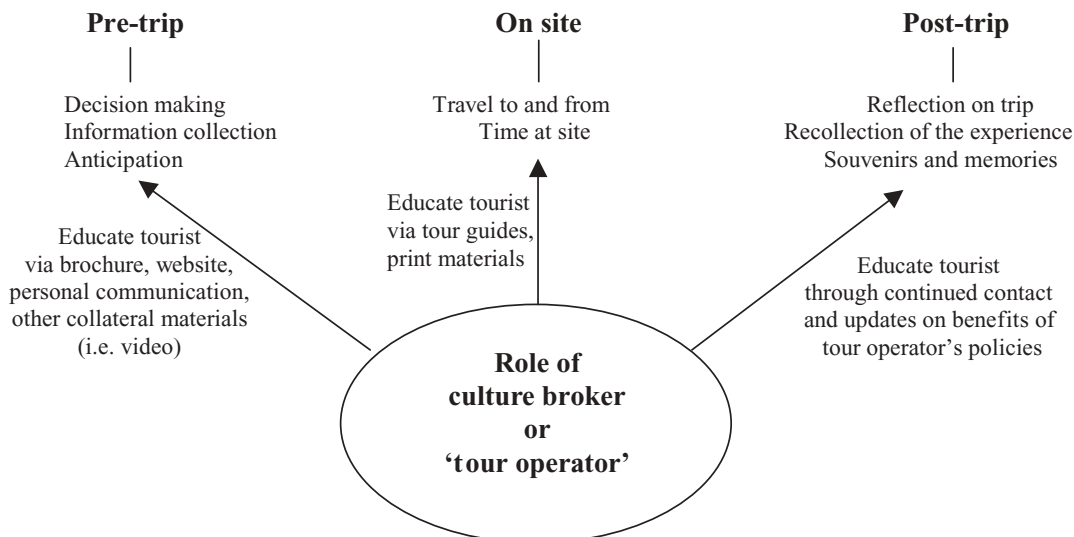
Education of a tourist occurs at three stages of the tourism experience: on site, pre-trip and post-trip. At each stage, the tourist develops knowledge via a variety of sources of information that prepare her/him for the experience s/he is about to embark on. In the pre-trip stage of the travel experience, high levels of interaction occur between a travel provider and tourists.<sup>78</sup> Tour operators supplement brochure information with broader knowledge about the destination being visited.<sup>79</sup> Usually, this pre-travel

stage involves the use of various methods of advertising and personal communication. Tour operators rely heavily on print materials such as promotional travel brochures and audiovisual material (e.g. videos) to aid in the decision-making process. The aim is to inform, persuade and remind tourists about the resources and opportunities available at the destination. Within advertising, the message goes through four stages: message generation, evaluation, execution and message social responsibility. The social responsibility stage has drawn particular attention in recent years. According to Kotler, ‘some companies have begun to build ad campaigns on a platform of social responsibility’.<sup>80</sup> In tourism, print materials have an opportunity to engage in the social responsibility of their message. The tour operator, in particular, has an opportunity to inform and educate the tourist on culturally responsible behaviours.

In the on-site stage of the tourism experience, information (for the tourist) is more likely to be communicated through a tour guide, who plays a vital role in educating the tourist about a foreign destination. In order to avoid a gap between information presented in the print material and that presented by the guide, tour operators and

*The total tourism experience*

*Figure 1*



guides need to consult each other as to what information needs to be provided in the brochure. This is particularly important when it comes to information related to socially and culturally responsible behaviours.

In the post-trip stage of the tourism experience, the tour operator's information is communicated through continued contact with the tourist and updates on benefits of the tour operator's policies. For example, if the tour operator has policies that reduce the cultural impacts of tourism, the outcomes of these policies can be communicated to tourists on an ongoing basis after returning home.

Because the initial contact of a tour operator with the tourist in the pre-trip stage of tourism experience is critical to generating tourist interest in travel and decision making, the purpose of this study is to examine travel brochures mailed to potential customers at the pre-trip stage of their travel experience. The other communication and advertising tools used in the on-site and post-trip stages require a separate study.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(1) The aims of this study are to examine whether US tour operators which organize trips to Kenya promote culturally responsible behaviours in their travel brochures, and (2) to investigate the ways in which the US tour operators educate the tourist on culturally responsible behaviours in Kenya.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Sampling frame

The US Tour Operators Association (USTOA) was chosen as sampling frame for this study. The list of members of the USTOA is posted on its website.<sup>81</sup> Only those tour operators which organize trips to Kenya were selected. Of the total membership of 118 tour operators in the USTOA, only 26 met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Of the 26 operators, eight admitted they no longer organized tours to Kenya and thus

they were eliminated from the study. The total number of tour operators that were sent information was 18.

The selected tour operators were all US companies (the USTOA has members from Canada, Europe and the USA). The final sample was relatively homogeneous; whereby all operators were large US-based companies, had multiple offices and conducted a multitude of trips around the globe. The final 18 tour operators in the sampling frame were located in the states of Alabama, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Washington.

### Data collection

The selected tour operators were personally contacted in August 2004 and asked to send their travel brochures with information on Kenya to researchers. The researchers probed for printed materials on culturally responsible behaviours by asking, 'I understand that Kenya is a culturally sensitive place. Do you have any materials that you provide to tourists which tell them how to behave while they are in the country? Can you send that in addition to your regular packet on Kenya?'

Of the 18 operators, two asked the researchers to visit their websites only. In addition, these two operators provided alternative sources of information: one operator suggested 'searching Amazon.com for any books which might help' and the other one referred the researchers to the Lonely Planet website. These operators were eliminated from the study due to the lack of brochures sent to the researchers. It was felt that the information provided on websites followed a different format than print material. In order to maintain consistency in the type of print material, only brochures were retained for analysis. In addition, one operator dealt with travel agents only and consequently was also eliminated. One tour operator did not respond at all. A total of 14 tour operators sent information packets back to the researchers. Thus the total response rate was 78 per cent

(14/18). As for the total number of brochures, of the 14 tour operators which sent brochures one operator sent three brochures, two operators sent two brochures each and 11 operators sent one piece of material each. Therefore, the total number of brochures was 18.

### Data analysis

The print materials were examined using a content analysis technique. Content analysis has been described as 'analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material (as a book or film) through a classification, tabulation and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probable effect'.<sup>82</sup> It is a research technique for the objective, quantitative and systematic study of communication content. It involves charting or counting the 'incidence, or co-incidence, or particular items belonging to a set of (usually) predetermined categories'.<sup>83</sup> Content analysis has been used for almost a century in many fields, including literature, history, political science, education, psychology and journalism. More specifically, content analysis has a rich potential for researching the nature of consumer-directed communications and their efforts.<sup>84</sup> Woodrum noted that content analysis has wide applicability for studying beliefs, attitudes of organizations, and human relations.<sup>85</sup> He also suggested that different kinds of content could impact the reader and have cognitive, affective and behavioural effects.

The analysis followed Neuendorf's flow-chart of the typical process of content analysis.<sup>86</sup> The language content of the travel brochures was analysed for responsible tourism practices guided by the principles of sustainable tourism. Numerous 'key' words identified in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (WTO, Article 1) were used to examine the content of brochures (Table 4). These words were also used to code and group the data into themes. Three coders examined the print materials for references to culturally responsible tourism (guided by the WTO). A total of 87 references were identified among the brochures. All refer-

**Table 4: Key words used to examine travel brochures**

<i>Key concepts</i>	
1	Ethical values
2	Tolerance
3	Respect for diversity
4	Religion
5	Philosophy
6	Moral beliefs
7	Local environment
8	Social and cultural traditions/norms
9	Social and cultural practices
10	Indigenous cultures
11	Harmony
12	Laws
13	Customs
14	Rules of behaviour or social and cultural behaviour
15	Expectations
16	Rules and guidelines
17	Safety and security
18	Cultural understanding
19	Education and training

ences to culturally responsible tourism were coded and entered into a file.

When examining the travel brochures it was noted that there were three sections in each brochure. These sections included first, an overview of the tour company philosophy and policy; second, a description of the destination, including travel itineraries; and third, information for the tourist, including visa requirements and prices of the tour packages. As a result, the decision was made to divide all collected information into three sections. The first section was called 'tour operator information', the second section was called 'destination information' and the third was called 'traveller information'. Three coders were used to identify distinct themes within each section and group them together.

### RESULTS

Ten themes emerged when examining the travel brochures: four from the tour operator information section, five from the destina-

tion information section and one theme from the traveller information section.

### **Section 1: Tour operator information**

In this section, tour operators described their philosophies, policies and mission statements. This section was also used to inform the tourist of the rules and regulations of the tour operator. Many operators used this section to discuss their sustainable tourism practices. Several brochures discussed the financial contributions of the operator to local communities and their cultures. Little information was provided on culturally responsible behaviour in tourism. In general, four themes emerged from this section. These were named 'tour guides', 'support for local culture', 'education' and 'local people'.

#### ***Theme 1: Tour guides***

References to tour guides were made seven times. Each tour operator used different names to refer to a tour guide, e.g. tour manager, tour planner, naturalist or driver. Most often information relating to tour guides dealt with how much the tour guide was trained or how experienced he/she was in the local culture. One brochure discussed the tour guide's educational background and included his picture. References to the tour guides included such comments as 'our personnel and guides are unsurpassed in their knowledge of... cultures'. In addition, some operators suggested that their guides would provide information on culturally responsible behaviours by 'relaying to you the history of the destination... helping you with the local customs'. This information implied that the tour operator might educate the tourist on responsible behaviours by relying on the services of the tour guide at the on-site stage of the tourist experience.

#### ***Theme 2: Support for local culture***

References supporting the local culture were made four times. Policies and philosophies that the tour operators adopted to support

culturally as well as environmentally responsible tourism were presented. Such words as conservation, preservation, sustainable tourism, responsible tourism and responsibility to protect and support community development were frequently used in the travel brochures. One operator stated, 'We strongly believe that it is our responsibility to protect the environment and local cultures of places we visit and to ensure that our travel programs have a positive impact in every way.' This operator also stated that the company 'supports worldwide projects, which help to give local people a personal economic interest in preserving the unique qualities of their habitats'. One brochure indicated specific support for Kenya. Another operator stated that it provides a 'trip to Masai villages where we support several community development projects' and 'a portion of the camp's revenue provides water to local wildlife and also powers all of its facilities with solar panels'.

#### ***Theme 3: Education***

The word education appeared eight times in relation to the trip to Kenya. Most brochures used words such as 'education' and 'learning' to emphasize the educational character of their trips. One operator stated, 'Our vacations are true journeys, in depth cultural experiences', 'We are committed to providing unique cultural experiences you won't find anywhere else' and 'Your family will return home with a wealth of education'. While tour operators wrote about education they did not give specific guidelines or instructions about appropriate behaviours when travelling to this culturally sensitive country.

#### ***Theme 4: Local people***

This theme related to the tour operator's attitudes toward local people. Four references included information on the importance of the local people in the tourist experience. The tour operators communicated the significance of respecting foreign local culture as a foundation for culturally



responsible behaviours. One operator commented that 'travelling to other lands gives you the opportunity to meet people who inhabit them and learn in an easy way about lives that may be very different than your own'. Another one stated that its employees 'take great care to provide you with a comfortable and pleasurable stay while exposing you to the astonishing cultural diversities that are the essence of any African travel experience'.

## Section 2: Destination information

The second section of the travel brochures dealt with information about the visited destination. This section was descriptive in nature, and its purpose was to present the travel itinerary and spark some anticipation for the trip. Only one tour operator provided information about culturally responsible behaviours. All other tour operators did not discuss appropriate tourist behaviours. The themes that emerged from this section were labelled 'local traditions', 'local people/cultural interaction', 'attractions', 'accommodation' and 'dos and don'ts'.

### Theme 1: Local traditions

This theme appeared 10 times in the travel brochures. Within this theme four sub-themes emerged, namely dance, food, language and handicrafts. Information was provided about local tribal traditions. Performances of African dances and 'dances performed by tea-pickers' were discussed. Opportunities for the tourist to participate in 'traditional dinners' in 'private homes' were mentioned by several tour companies. References to using a specific language were mentioned. Some operators taught the tourist how to pronounce 'Kenya'. They wrote: 'Do pronounce the name of the country *KEHN-yah* (*KEEN-yah*, which is the old British colonial pronunciation, may offend residents).' Three companies included information on how to say 'hello' and 'welcome' (*Jambo na Karibu*). In addition, two other operators drew attention to the importance of cultural respect for 'elaborate jewellery'

and 'colourful beadwork'. However, not a single tour operator provided specific directives for culturally responsible behaviours.

### Theme 2: People and cultural interaction

The largest theme that emerged was related to cultural interaction with local people. The opportunity to meet local people was mentioned 10 times. One operator stated, 'You will learn about... the harsh way of life for the Samburu people as you walk and interact with them.' Another operator noted, 'Samburu is the home of the proud Samburu tribe – traditionally pastoral nomads; the Samburu culture is a fascinating, mysterious and thrilling experience for any visitor lucky enough to witness it first hand.' One operator expressed the view that 'East Africa's people are exceptionally welcoming. You learn of the culture of the Masai, who have retained many of their traditional ways, and also how people have adapted to changing times and pressures of modernization.' One operator also wrote, 'Get to know the real Kenya – the friendly people...'. Most of the tour operators emphasized the importance of the 'unique lifestyles and traditions' of the African tribes. Unfortunately, no guidelines were provided on culturally appropriate interactions with local people and the role of the tourist in maintaining and preserving the traditional social customs.

### Theme 3: Attractions

The attractions theme was mentioned seven times. Many references were made to cultural and natural attractions. Cultural attractions typically included Nairobi and a visit to the suburb of Karen (named after Karen Blixen, the author of *Out of Africa*) to see her home. As some operators wrote, many of her 'personal mementos are on display' at the home of the 'pioneering coffee farmer'. As to natural attractions, several references were made to safaris, game viewing and adventure activities. Although much information was provided on specific attractions, no guide-

lines were provided on behaviour that is culturally and environmentally responsible at these attractions.

#### **Theme 4: Accommodation**

This theme dealt with accommodations that offer the tourist the opportunity to see local culture from a lodging perspective. References to large hotels were omitted and only smaller, locally owned and operated hotels were listed. Four references were made to locally owned and operated accommodation. One operator mentioned that the accommodation on offer 'blends the spirit of wild Africa with colonial elegance in six cottages, which house antique furniture'. This tour operator also referred to the 'Serena Lodge, which echoes the robust rhythms of river-front life in Samburu'. While one operator invited tourists to 'private homes... with African flavour and warm hospitality', another talked about 'bush homes which are small, privately owned properties in Kenya'.

#### **Theme 5: Dos and Don'ts**

The most socially and culturally responsible messages occurred in a theme called 'dos and don'ts'. This theme included references to how the tourist should behave when travelling in Kenya. Six references to dos and don'ts were identified. Interestingly, only one company included a truly effective culturally responsible directive. It wrote:

'Kenyans are fond of North American goods, and many tourists enjoy bringing token items to offer as gifts or use when bartering for souvenirs. Inexpensive items that the locals value include t-shirts, baseball caps, anything imprinted with professional sports logos, pens, pencils, cosmetics and toiletries. Although it has become common for American visitors to offer Kenyan children candy and gum, this practice is somewhat controversial because the availability of dental care of these children may be negligible. Instead of sweets, children's books in English are

enormously appreciated; small toys, games and crayons are also good gifts.'

Other references were made to photography. One operator wrote, 'Please note that it is forbidden to photograph the President, any uniformed member of the armed forces, state lodges, or the National flag. Local people can be photographed with their consent.' Another wrote, 'Don't photograph the people or their homes and livestock without asking permission first (don't be offended if you're asked to pay for the privilege – it's customary in some areas).'

Another company included the following statement in its brochure:

'Responsibilities of trip members: Cultural immersion is part of the travel experience. All members should be ready to enjoy travelling as part of a group, and... experience cultural differences with grace and sensitivity. Smoking and usage of cellular telephones is prohibited at group meals, on buses, and during other group activities. There will be ample stops for smoking and cellular telephone breaks. Participants who are disruptive or endanger the group or the travel experience, or break local laws may be removed from the travel program with no refund due and at their own expense.'

The above statement contains directives about how to behave. However, information on why a particular behaviour is required and/or how it might impact on local culture was lacking.

One operator provided information related to carrying US currency. The brochure included information on how much foreign currency the tourist could bring in or out of Kenya. However, the brochure did not explain the reasons behind the legal rules and consequences of breaking the rules. Another operator advised not to change money in the 'black' market. It wrote, 'Don't change money on the black market. The illegal money changers are often quick-change artists, and the police will arrest you if they even *suspect* you're changing money illicitly (to be safe, don't even hand money to a

friend in public). Also, it is illegal to export Kenyan currency, which, in any case, is difficult to exchange upon departure. We recommend only changing small amounts of money at a time.'

In addition, one operator included information about proper dress codes. The tourists' attention was drawn to the fact that 'no sneakers or blue jeans are allowed at dinners'. Finally, one operator provided information on safety and security measures that needed to be taken while travelling to Kenya, as well as environmentally responsible behaviours. This particular operator did not mention anything about culturally responsible behaviours.

### Section 3: Traveller information

The third and final section of the travel brochures dealt with general travel information for the tourist. This section included such information as passport and visa requirements, US and/or Kenyan customs, safety measures, clothing suggestions and product pricing policies.

#### Theme 1: Tipping

The only theme that distinguished itself in this section was related to tipping. Information on tipping behaviours was mentioned six times across all the examined brochures. The information on tipping included such comments as 'It is customary to show your appreciation to hotel personnel and to the guide and driver of your tour... [they] should be tipped as you would internationally, unless otherwise indicated.' One operator suggested, 'For a good performance it is customary to reward your guide and driver/game spotter with a gratuity of about US\$4 to US\$5 each per day and tour member.'

### DISCUSSION

The principal purpose of this study was to explore travel brochures of US tour operators for information on culturally responsible behaviour in Kenya. It was found that very few travel brochures of US tour operators

educated the tourist about culturally responsible behaviours. Several findings were noticeable.

First, it was noticed that the function of the brochure was primarily descriptive. A description of the local culture, geography and history of the area was given in all the brochures. However, very few brochures followed up with specific guidelines for behaviours that conform to the unique cultural norms of Kenya and the host expectations. Not even one brochure explained the reasons for and the importance of such guidelines. Although one may argue that it is not the tour operator's job to explain the rules of culturally appropriate behaviour in travel brochures, but the tourist guide's role on site, it is strongly believed that such written guidelines can significantly add to the educational aspects of the brochures and, most importantly, prepare the potential tourist for an overseas visit at the pre-trip stage of his/her travel experience.

Second, in the traveller information section, several operators described their business operating philosophies in terms of sustainable tourism practices. This was in accordance with Davis,<sup>87</sup> who argued that corporate advertising typically contains a general statement of the corporate concern for the environment. Unfortunately, very few operators discussed how they implemented these philosophies and followed sustainable practices. According to Davis,<sup>88</sup> the corporate advertisement should describe information on how the company is involved in and committed to the environment.

Third, in the destination information section the brochures rarely described appropriate behaviours for the tourist; rather, they described culturally sensitive elements of the destination. Only one tour operator provided meaningful information on how the tourist should behave. This operator indicated what items might be appropriate to bring to the host cultures, and highlighted controversies surrounding the act of giving candy and gum to children by tourists. This operator did not, however, explain why such practices are inappropriate. Explanations of how these practices might nega-

tively impact on the tribal cultures were necessary.

Next, the section on traveller information recognized only one theme – tipping. Similar to findings by Pennington-Gray and Thapa,<sup>89</sup> tipping was the most common issue communicated to the tourist by tour operators in relation to cultural sensitivity.

Further, most tour programmes were western-tourist-oriented and focused on the US residents' needs and preferences, even though the tour operator indicated its respect for the host culture and its preservation. This is not surprising given that the products were designed by US tour operators for the US travel market. However, one may argue the study results support the notion that the tour product has become standardized, and Ritzer and Liska's idea that homogenized products are attempts to imitate and assimilate patterns of social behaviour.<sup>90</sup> The tour companies have not recognized the demand for cultural sensitivity and responsibility to the local community. The promotional travel brochures did not respond to the cultural needs of Kenyan society.

Moreover, it was interesting to note that two operators did not even send travel brochures to their customers. These operators relied on a link to their websites. Since many segments of the tourist population prefer traditional methods of communication and promotion (e.g. brochures, magazines), it is suggested that a combination of print and web information should be provided to customers until there is more acceptance for electronic-only media.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, two operators relied on Amazon.com or the Lonely Planet for information. This may imply that these two operators did not consider themselves as culture brokers or mediators. Given that most of the tour operators emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity in their philosophical or mission statements, one would expect that they would be able to provide more information to the tourist on this topic in their brochures. Although some may find it honest on the part of operators to refer potential tourists to relevant readings such as guidebooks or magazines, it is also possible that

these two tour operators did not think that cultural education of the tourist was their responsibility. Consequently, this finding warrants further attention.

To sum up, the study revealed that US tour operators did not effectively communicate cultural issues to tourists. The findings support Pennington-Gray and Thapa, who previously examined 264 websites of various tourist destinations in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, Middle East, Central/South America, Oceania/South Pacific and North America for information on culturally responsible tourism, especially customs, protocols and habits.<sup>92</sup> They found that only 12 per cent of the sampled websites included cultural information important to tourists. Social customs and cultural respect issues were the least frequently communicated.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results suggest that the promotional brochures distributed by US tour operators to tourists who plan trips to Kenya need to contain more information on culturally responsible behaviour. Tour operators cannot refer to and rely on the services of the tour guide at the on-site stage of the tourist experience. Tourists travelling to Kenya need to be presented with specific guidelines or instructions about appropriate behaviour – in particular, rules that conform to the unique cultural norms of Kenyan society. The promotional brochures need to explain the importance of respecting foreign culture and give practical examples of how the tourist should behave when interacting with local people, participating in or observing local tribal traditions or African dances or when being invited for traditional dinners in private homes. Specific instructions need to be given as to how to address Kenyan people and say 'hello', 'thank you' or 'please'. Also, more guidelines need to be provided on the behavioural practices, habits and customs that are inappropriate and/or have negative effects on local culture and environment. This particularly refers to tourist behaviour when visiting game reserves and participating in safaris and adventure activities. In addi-

tion, tourists need to be informed about the specific facilities and services offered by the accommodation and catering sector. Moreover, they need to learn about local laws related to photography, smoking, tipping, shopping and pricing, currency exchange, safety measures and even proper dress code. The travel brochures need to respond to the cultural needs of Kenyan society. Finally, US tour operators would do well to highlight their corporate concerns for the socio-cultural and physical environment of Kenya and describe how their companies are involved in and committed to the preservation of this environment.

Clearly, this paper highlights the emerging trend for tourist education which is becoming an integral part of tourism activity. With the standardization of culture, it is becoming critically important for some destinations to maintain their cultural identities and heritage. The tour operator, as a culture broker, is a communicator of foreign culture to tourists. As destinations continue to create codes of responsible conduct, the role of the tour operator as a cultural communicator in conveying these codes to the tourist becomes even more important. Particularly important is the sustainability of the cultural aspects of the destination. In addition to providing information on appropriate tourism conduct while on site, the tour operator needs to use all print materials, including travel brochures, to educate the tourist. Every single tour operator would do well to follow the WTO international codes of responsible tourism behaviour and include the principles of such behaviour in its promotional materials. Without this, education will be the responsibility of the on-site tour guide only.

Tour operators and wholesalers need to develop educational travel brochures and offer educational travel programmes (e.g. destination familiarization presentations) that would provide examples of the specific foreign language and non-verbal behaviour codes, explain the preservation programmes for natural, historical and cultural resources in foreign countries, principles of conservation, different customs and foreign cultural policies, as well as the tour guide's training

and responsibilities, cultural assistance programmes, and coordination of cultural and social requirements. The travel brochures and programmes need to match the educational needs of specific segments of visitors with different educational backgrounds and interests.

Different forms of educational travel brochures and information on responsible tourism behaviours need to be provided to tourists based on the characteristics of tourists and their profiles, lifestyles or travel motivation. For example, for culturally motivated tourists there is a need to provide tourists with more detailed information on cultural heritage sites or availability of interpretation services. Explorers as opposed to mass tourists would require more distinct information. For instance, explorers might require more specific information about differences among rural communities, whereas the mass tourist might require information on communicating with locals in the city. Similarly, adult and seniors as opposed to younger tourist markets (e.g. children and teenagers) would require different types of information, depending on their capacity to absorb and understand the provided information. Currently, some tour operators in Europe use this strategy to market their products to clients.

Since cultural tourism and nature-based tourism represent two major types of tourism products, where education plays a very important role in achieving sustainable tourism development, it is highly recommended that tour operators include more information on responsible codes of conduct when promoting any type of cultural or nature-based product. For example, in the case of Kenya, teaching the tourist not to give gifts to every child s/he comes across, or is approached by, needs to be followed with information explaining that such behaviour sets up a sense of dependency and false expectancy for the child, and that it is possible that every time the child sees a Westerner s/he is going to expect something.

The proposed actions by tour operators represent an important step towards the development of culturally responsible tourism



behaviour. By using the WTO international codes of conduct the present study was able to demonstrate that culturally responsible behaviour is an important aspect of the tourist experience. However, this study has merely scratched the surface of culturally responsible behaviour, and the topic warrants greater attention than it has been given so far by researchers.

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