

Institution: University of Leicester		
Unit of Assessment: 17		
Title of case study: Making slum tourism work to alleviate poverty and increase visibility of communities		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012–2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Fabian Frenzel	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Associate Professor of Organisation Studies	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2012–2019
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013–Present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Each year, ~1million tourists worldwide visit a slum, township or favela. Many seek to better understand the conditions in which urban poverty manifests, experience inequality and further their understanding of other cultures. However, Slum Tourism remains controversial with critics declaring it exploitative, voyeuristic and intrusive.</p> <p>Since 2012, Dr Frenzel has undertaken world-leading research into how Slum Tourism operates, its benefits and pitfalls to local communities and the most effective ways for it to affect positive social change. His work has underpinned the training and operating practices of independent tourism operators globally, ranging from industry leaders in India, to small-scale local initiatives in South America; informed the development of novel touristic offerings; empowered underprivileged people; and reframed the international debate on Slum Tourism by demonstrating the substantial positive impacts it can generate.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Slum Tourism is not a modern phenomenon. Beginning with visits by wealthy Victorians to the deprived East End of London, via the consumption of underground music, illicit drugs and prohibited entertainments by Manhattan's elite in mid-twentieth century Harlem to Township Tourism in Apartheid South Africa, tourists have retained a fascination with experiencing poverty [R1]. Often derided as exploitative, voyeuristic and of limited benefit to underprivileged communities, Slum Tourism has remained a controversial concept.</p> <p>Since 2012, Dr Fabian Frenzel at the University of Leicester School of Business has conducted extensive, impact-driven research into tourism's agency as a means of poverty alleviation [G1, R1]. Utilising qualitative participatory research methods, Frenzel has demonstrated the positive impact of tourism promotion on impoverished neighbourhoods: notably in reputation enhancement for stigmatised areas and instilling pride (valorising) local communities. His work showed the effectiveness of tourism in improving visibility of deprived neighbourhoods, thereby encouraging more intense policy interaction [R1, R2].</p> <p>In 2014, Frenzel addressed the notion that Slum Tourism was exploitative. His research in South Africa showed that practices enabling Slum Tourism were widely adopted and driven by communities themselves as a way of delivering local regeneration and compensating for government failure to respond to poverty through urban policy [R5]. Frenzel's research showed the potential for Slum Tourism to maintain and enhance inclusive communication in disadvantaged communities enabling debate in which social justice, equity and distribution to</p>		

flourish is central. Slum Tourism could therefore be considered 'pro-poor' where it offers a place for such communication to thrive [R3].

Although the role of tourists in place making can be crucial in transforming reputation and fostering valorisation, not all activities result in equal outcomes. Frenzel identified that tourist excursions involving only brief visits to impoverished neighbourhoods were substantially less successful for communities, who tended to regard them as intrusive or voyeuristic [R1, R2, R4]. Furthermore, Frenzel's empirical research of tour guiding operations in Kibera and Dharavi (India) [R4] showed that whilst formal operations may provide the foundations for success, tourist demand would only be satiated through provision of informal, local-led tour operations offering more intimate experiences.

By demonstrating these discrepancies, Frenzel was able to describe the characteristics most important in a Slum Tourism experience with positive community impacts:

- Community involvement and control in touristic product development;
- Opportunity for active involvement of tourists in co-creation of products and marketing;
- Centrality of empowering narratives to enhance place reputation.

Frenzel's 2016 monograph, *Slumming It: The Tourist Valorisation of Urban Poverty* [R1] was the culmination of this extensive research and field experience. Described by Forbes magazine as "the definitive book on the topic", Frenzel set Slum Tourism in its historical context. *Slumming It* enabled a global reframing of the Slum Tourism debate with critics, academics and the public, highlighting its "revelatory narrative of the relationship between poverty and tourism, exploitation and political activism", which, as a "theoretically-informed advance on current scholarship" would "transform your assumptions about the politics of slumming it" [E13].

3. References to the research

R1. Frenzel, F. (2016). *Slumming it: The tourist valorisation of urban poverty*. London: Zed Books.

R2. Frenzel, F. (2017). Tourist agency as valorisation: Making Dharavi into a tourist attraction. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 66, 159–169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2017.07.017>

R3. Frenzel F. (2013). Slum Tourism in the Context of the Poverty (Relief) Debate in *Die Erde Die Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, 144 (2), pp. 117-128.

R4. Frenzel, F. and Blakeman, S. (2015). Making Slums Into Attractions: The Role of Tour Guiding in Slum Tourism Development in Kibera and Dharavi. *Tourism Review International*, 19(1-2), 87–100.

R5. Frenzel, F. (2014). Slum Tourism and Urban Regeneration: Touring Inner Johannesburg. *Urban Forum*, 25(4), 431–447.

G1. Frenzel, F., Principal Investigator. Qualitative Indicators of Poverty Alleviation in Slum Tourism, Marie Curie Intra European Fellowship, 2012–2014, GBP180,000.

4. Details of the impact

Frenzel's research defined the key characteristics that would ensure benefit to the community through Slum Tourism. His findings enabled improvements in existing community tourism projects in India and Brazil through targeted tour guide training and increased awareness of the potential of tourism in poverty alleviation.

The research was conducted using a participatory research methodology. This involved Frenzel ensuring that slum community members, slum tour guides and slum tourists were actively engaged in the research and its impact. Frenzel's research changed slum residents' views of tourism, from a voyeuristic imposition of the privileged to a method of life improvement in which their skills, voices and involvement are crucial. Local community members are now employed to deliver tours of the area providing unique knowledge and insight and enabling visitors to experience the reality of life in the slums. Each guide receives training based on Frenzel's research to maximise the positive impact on the neighbourhood.

Changing Practices of Tour Guides and Operators

Dharavi, Mumbai, is one of the world's largest slums with a population of ~1million. The area is frequently depicted negatively and associated with crime, disease and poverty [E11]. In 2014, Reality Tour Travel (RTT) contacted Frenzel, after independently finding his research, to request electronic copies of his work for use in training for the 20 tour guides on-boarded annually. RTT provide walking tours of Dharavi to 15,000–18,000 visitors each year, with 80% of all profits channelled to community improvement projects including education, training and empowerment programmes [E11]. All RTT tour guides now receive training based on Frenzel's research during their company induction [E3, E4].

In 2017, RTT evaluated the impact on the Dharavi community of their growing business. They found that 84% of respondents felt that slum tours made a positive impact on the community with many highlighting their increased pride, confidence, improved economic and educational opportunities and the community improvements enabled by RTT initiatives [E11]. In both 2016 and 2019, TripAdvisor named the Dharavi Slum Tours the most visited experience in India, beating the Taj Mahal and ranking among the top 10 tourist sites in Asia [E12].

Dr Frenzel's original research has also impacted the South American favelas (slums or shantytowns) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where an estimated 1,500,000 people live. Building on his work in India, in 2018 Frenzel organised a workshop with the Observatorio Favela Turismo at the University of Rio de Janeiro attended by 40 tourism operators and guides representing community-led tourism initiatives in eight favelas. The workshop enabled knowledge sharing to and between tour operators and development of tour formats primarily focused on strengthening local voices and improved coordination.

Workshop participants used Frenzel's expertise to develop new product offerings in addition to tours, including the creation of new attractions (local galleries, restaurants etc.). These developments enabled stronger, more adaptive feedback systems between operators and tourists and improved customer integration in experience production, thereby improving tour quality for the ~50,000 annual visitors [E5, E6, E14].

Raising Awareness of Slum Tourism Issues

With participation central to Frenzel's work, his results have facilitated substantially improved stakeholder awareness of the issues surrounding Slum Tourism.

In 2013, Frenzel organised a workshop with small-scale tour operators, sole traders and guides in Rio De Janeiro's Complexo Alemão favela aiming to improve coordination and cooperation to enable effective local valorisation. The event highlighted that tourism was partly pursued to provide community protection from state security forces through increased visibility and outside witnesses to any undue police aggression. This further illustrated the complexity of the issue and

the importance of amplifying local voices in Slum Tourism. The workshop report has provided important guidance for tourism practice and local business development in Complexo Alemão [E1].

In 2014, Frenzel was invited to present his research to a workshop of architects and planners in Mumbai. At the event, he encouraged attendees to consider their activities in the wider context of opening up slums to non-residents and outlined the benefits. His presentation significantly changed perspectives and understanding of attendees with one noting that Frenzel was *“seeing a potential in tourism for something more than simply ‘slumming’ it out-with people willing to experience a wider understanding of urban life. . . . Our latest project design comes as . . . an example of how our own conversations with you resulted in some very productive outcomes”* [E2].

Frenzel’s research has also informed the public debate on Slum Tourism worldwide, with example features in National Geographic (2018), Forbes (2016), Australian News Outlets (2016) and the Organisation for World Peace (2018) shaping the narrative to promote ethical Slum Tourism foregrounding the positive effects it can bring [E10].

The global media reporting led to Frenzel’s invitation to deliver training. In 2019, c.100 tour guides working for Eberhardt Travel (Germany) attended workshops designed by Frenzel to improve knowledge of Slum Tourism in response to poverty emerging as a theme in their tours. Eberhardt’s owner and the attendees all acknowledged the value of the training with many highlighting its usefulness, real-world applicability and solidification of their belief that *“tourism was well placed to transform tourists’ ideas and understandings about poverty”* [E9].

The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic saw effective cessation of tourism and suspended these local initiatives. In response, since March 2020 Frenzel has driven the development of virtual tourism products utilising the same principles as before. The ‘Lockdown Stories’ is a collaboration led by Frenzel involving the Observatorio Favela Turismo and several community tourism providers in Rio De Janeiro which enables community tour operators to generate content and income virtually while physical tourism is impossible.

‘Lockdown Stories’ has enabled the creation of a series of virtual tourism events and new training manuals containing several modules to facilitate project expansion to other community groups worldwide. These events have provided new avenues for revenue generation for the present and the future and have already received positive audience uptake whilst simultaneously opening new markets whilst the training courses have received excellent feedback from trainees [E6, E7].

‘Lockdown Stories’ is an ongoing project, but its success has not gone unnoticed within the industry as three tour operators have been invited to present their tours to academics and industrial stakeholders at a virtual conference in January 2021 [E8].

Frenzel’s research has provided real-world benefits to some of the most underprivileged, excluded and disenfranchised people globally, generating new income streams, civic pride and social improvement.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- E1.** Report of Workshop in Rio 2013.
- E2.** Email statement from Workshop Organisers in Mumbai 2014.
- E3.** Email confirming the use of my research for training tour guides from RTT Mumbai 2016.
- E4.** Documentation of workshops via flyer invite and photos from the Rio de Janeiro Workshop 2018.
- E5.** Feedback forms filled in during workshops in Rio de Janeiro 2018.
- E6.** Documentation of setting up of virtual tourism products in Rio, including website link. <http://lockdownstories.travel/>
- E7.** Training Manual Virtual Tourism for Community Groups, evidence of training sessions and feedback from guides.
- E8.** Documentation of user engagement with new virtual tours and resulting tour requests.
- E9.** Email statement by Eberhardt Travel with regards to the achieved impact during workshop in Dresden with 100 tour guides.
- E10.**
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/history-controversy-debate-slum-tourism>
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2016/07/16/slum-tourism-how-it-began-the-impact-it-has-and-why-its-become-so-popular/?sh=7b47e093297d>
<https://www.news.com.au/travel/destinations/the-rise-of-slum-tourism-an-inappropriate-new-travel-trend/news-story/c9b2934b198d885de9c0c0e64a1202d1>
<https://theowp.org/reports/the-moral-dilemma-of-poverty-tourism/>
- E11.** Reality Tours Evaluation Report 2017.
- E12.** TravelAsia '[Slumming it at Dharavi: What are our intentions with Slum Tourism?](#)', 2019.
- E1.3** Media Coverage of 'Slumming It'.
- E14.** PBS 'Who does slum tourism benefit?', 2015.