Plant-based Tourism

Global Diversity & Importance

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Outline

Two broad types of tourism

• NATURE-BASED vs. HUMAN-CONTEXT

• Conceptualising the use of plants within tourism

• Illustrating the diversity of plant-based tourism

• Use of plants throughout the selling process

• Economic benefits

• Impacts

• Conclusions & Questions
Introduction

Tourism is increasing ü multi-trillion dollar industry

Nature is a popular motivation for tourism

Two-broad use types...

Nature-based Tourism  Human-context Tourism

Important Economic Development Strategy

Especially in developing countries
Nature-based Tourism

Nature-based tourism - expanding in many regions

Bird-watching, mountaineering, rafting, hunting, photography, safaris, nature walking tours, camping, hiking, biking, plant collecting, volunteering...

Many to see ‘charismatic’ species/sights

Most trips are ‘in-nature’...

Often thought to be synonymous with animals...

However... plants are important too!
Human-context Tourism

Everything else!

Package beach holidays, cultural city trips, religious tourism, photography, historical site excursions, biking tours, clubbing holidays, landmark road-trips, food tourism, volunteering...

Some elements have cross-over with nature-based

Often involves far larger numbers

Often in human environments or ex-situ of ‘nature’
### Plant-based Tourism

Any form of tourism that involves plants as a principal or important component of the visitor experience.

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<th>Human-context</th>
<th>Nature-based</th>
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**Values**
- Inherent
- Associative
- Extractive
- In-situ/Ex-situ

**PLANTS = CORE ATTRACTION**
Plant-based Tourism

- Religious
- Culinary
- Literary
- Heritage
- Volunteer
- Drug
- Dark
- Warfare

- Mass
- Conference/Show
- Eco-tourism
- Curative
- Garden
- Agri-tourism
- Natural
- Adventure
- Ethno-botanical
- Voluntary
- Voyeuristic
- Cultural
Mass Tourism & Plants

A broad and wide-ranging phenomenon where large-scale rigid packages of standardised leisure services at often fixed value are sold to a mass clientele.

(Poon, 1993)

- Cherry Blossom Festival or Hanami, Japan
- 'Big Tree' tourism, USA
Heritage Tourism & Plants

“Travel to experience the places, artefacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present including cultural, historic and natural resources”

(National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2012)

- National Cherry Blossom Festival, Washington D.C.
- Trekking in the footsteps of famous plant-hunters, China, India, Bhutan
A broad spectrum of outdoor touristic activities, often commercialised and involving an interaction with the natural environment away from the participant’s home range and containing elements of risk; in which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting and management of the touristic experience.

- Tree-climbing competitions, Western Australia
- Kelp forest diving in Channel Islands National Park, USA
Eco-tourism & Plants

"A sustainable, non-invasive form of nature-based tourism that focuses primarily on learning about nature first-hand, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive and locally oriented. It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation of such areas" (Fennell, 2008)

• Baobab Alley, Madagascar
• Rafflesia-viewing with locals, Malaysia
Dark Tourism & Plants

Tourism involving travel to witness public enactments of death, sites of individual or mass deaths after they have occurred, memorials, symbolic representations of death and/or re-enactments and celebrations of death” (Stone, 2006)

• Poppies of Flanders Fields, Belgium
Selling of Tourism

As well as plants being a key focal point of visitor experience, they also play an important part in marketing (often prior to trip)...

Destination Advertising
Adverts for NatureTrek eco-tours use showy alpine

Transport
Thai Airlines, M.S. Orchid on the Nile

Destination Infrastructure
Plants used in hotel names, to decorate and in gardens

Souvenirs
Artefacts, photos, specimens, stamps... (often controversial)
Benefits of Plant-based Tourism

Conference tourism (esp. orchids) can generate up to $2 million/event

*Rafflesia*-viewing tours can generate up to 8000 ringgit a year (US$3,200) - 32 times more than rice-farming income (Malaysia)

National Gardens Scheme, UK - £2.5 million/year donated to charities

Washington D.C. Cherry Blossom Festival generates $126 million/year

Phou Khao Khouay National Protected Area (Laos) + Vientiane Orchids Ltd. - conserve 50% of national orchid species through tourism $$$

Madagascar Action Plan conserving Baobab Alley NM
Impacts of tourism on plants

Increase tourism (use) = increased impacts

Impact ‘spike’ upon first entry of tourists

Impacts caused \( f \) of resistance, season of use, activity, abiotic conditions, spatial patterns

Impacts more severe in natural (in-situ) settings

**Direct Impacts**
- Trampling
- Erosion
- Littering

**Indirect Impacts**
- Climate change
- Weed spread
- Pathogen spread
- Fragmentation

**Physical damage**

**Urbanisation of sites**
Conclusions

Plants play an important and widespread role in tourism

An under-recognised example of global tourist travel - more research needed (both academic and market opportunity)

Examples range from mass tourism to niche-market ventures, covering many species, habitats, landscapes and values

Many benefits...

But impacts need to be mitigated (both in terms of the plant resource and beneficiaries)
References


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Thank you!

Any questions?