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"But we were here first:" Mass tourism development and contestation over space in coastal Jamaica

Abstract

Tourism is celebrated as an economic fortress in many countries of the Global South. In Jamaica is one such country and also one in which tourism spaces have been growing rapidly along coastline. Yet, little heed is being given to the displacements that the industry has brought to the fisherfolk and residents who depend on the coastline for their livelihoods and recreational activities. Tourism spaces and activities are concentrated especially along the north coast of island which has been the site of the mushrooming of mega hotels and cruise piers over the past two decades. Using the host communities of the largest cruise pier development and the largest hotel as case studies- Falmouth and Lucea- I explain how mass tourism triggers contestation over marine spaces. The discussion is centered on the ways in which the decision-making behind tourism development favours private interests vis-à-vis the public's, yielding such conflicts. This study is part of a larger study and was done within a qualitative framework involving interviews, observations and photography as the primary methods of data collection. Detailed understanding of the sudden onset of large-scale tourism on small, coastal towns, has serious implications for tourism planning and policy-making within destinations of the Global South.

Key words: contestation; space; mass tourism; decision-making; development; Jamaica

Introduction

Overview

Tourism is one of the world's largest economic sectors, and for many countries it is a leading source of employment, foreign investment, and foreign exchange earnings (Kovacevic, 2013). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2016), both global tourism arrivals and revenues are increasing, despite occasional shocks from natural disasters and political instability. In the Global South, tourism is widely celebrated as economically significant, having the potential to create opportunities for environmental conservation, beautification and the preservation of historical buildings. However, mass tourism oftentimes consumes resources and creates waste and burdens for host environments as well as resulting in the dislocation of host residents from coastal spaces (Beladi, Chao, Hazari & Laffargue, 2009).

Travel and tourism is one of the most significant industries in the Caribbean, receiving earnings of over US\$34 billion per year and creating over 2 million jobs in the region according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, WTTC (2018). Jamaica is home to more all-inclusive hotels than any other Caribbean nation, which have been overwhelmingly concentrated along the country's north coast in major clusters in and around Montego Bay, Negril, and Ocho Rios. The all-inclusive model has been praised for helping Jamaica and the wider Caribbean to carve out a niche in the international tourism market (Stupart & Shipely, 2012) but simultaneously, it the control of all-inclusives is dominated by powerful Multi-nationals who have been criticized for having little regard for the host community's broad needs, including poor economic and social linkages to the host communities. Amidst these

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challenges, Jamaica now receives more than 20 times the number of tourists as it did in the 1950s, and one clear indication of the economic importance of the sector can be seen in the fact that total visitor expenditure in 2013 was US\$2.25 billion in an island of 3 million people (see Table 1). In this paper, the broad focus is on the ways in which decision-making produces unequal access to coastal spaces and spatial conflicts.

Table 1
Growth in visitor arrivals and visitor expenditure in Jamaica (1998-2016)

Year	Total stopover arrivals	Total cruise arrivals	Total visitor arrivals	Total visitor expenditure (US\$)
1998	1,225,287	673,690	1,898,977	1,197,140
2002	1,266,366	865,419	2,131,785	1,209,484
2006	1,678,905	1,336,994	3,015,899	1,870,560
2010	1,921,670	909,619	2,831,289	2,001,244
2014	2,080,181	1,423,797	3,503,978	2,247,834
2015	2,123,042	1,568,702	3,691,744	2,400,000
2016	2,181,684	1,656,151	3,837,835	2,609,000

Source of Statistics: Jamaica Tourist Board (2017).

Background on tourism development Falmouth and Lucea

Falmouth and Lucea are two small coastal towns located on the north coast of Jamaica. Both were once sleepy fishing villages but have been dramatically transformed by the largest tourism developments the island of Jamaica has ever seen. In 2011, the Falmouth Cruise Pier, a multi-million was opened by the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line (RCCL) in collaboration with the Government of Jamaica. It is the only Pier on the island that is large enough to berth two mega-ships such as the *Oasis of the Seas* (see Figure 1) at a time, containing around 10,000 in total and it is therefore not surprising that it is locally referred to as "Little Miami". This figure exceeds the town's local population of around 9,000.

Lucea, which is sandwiched between the major resort towns of Montego Bay and Negril, has a population of around 7,000 local people. Like Falmouth, fishing as a traditional economic activity has given way to large-scale tourism development in the form of the Grand Palladium and Lady Hamilton Resort. The *Grand Palladium Lady Hamilton Resort and Spa* in Lucea was a project of the *Palladium Hotel Group*, a Spanish-based transnational corporation which has nearly 50 hotels in other countries globally. As noted, it has the biggest capacity of any resort in Jamaica with a 1000-room capacity, and there are plans to soon add another 900 rooms and an 18-hole championship golf course.

Figure 1
The Oasis of the Seas at Falmouth pier



Source: Author's fieldwork

Mass tourism in the Global South

Some researchers argue that the nature of mass tourism in the Global South reflects a neocolonial continuation of a master-servant relationship, which amounts to "a way of retaining the subordination of the Third World to the First World" (Mowforth & Munt, 2003, p. 52). There are three broad economic critiques of mass tourism that pervade much of the critical research on the subject. The first is that the 'multiplier effect' promised by champions of mass tourism has consistently failed to translate to major, widely dispersed benefits to 'host' communities (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). Second, critics argue that mass tourism development routinely fails to alleviate poverty in the communities in which it occurs, and instead tends to reinforce and exacerbate socio-economic disparities. This is because the spaces of mass tourism primarily generate low-wage, low-skill jobs and fail to complement or enhance other livelihoods, or else serve to displace them altogether (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). Third, critics claim that mass tourism tends to perpetuate dependency on transnational corporations based in the Global North for expertise, high-waged personnel, technology, and a range of imports, as well as on wealthy citizens of the North for tourist expenditures. Because of this recurring failure to generate sufficient and widely-dispersed benefits for host communities, critical scholars have stressed that mass tourism is regularly associated with social tensions and dissatisfied local residents (Scheyvens, 2011).

There is no consensus on precisely how mass tourism is defined. While some studies do not see the need for thorough or detailed conceptual parameters (Andergassen & Candela, 2013; Spenceley and Myer, 2012), others have tried (sometimes in fragmented ways) to describe its main features, which include: mass consumption of a place by people (Shaw & Williams, 2002); the construction of highly segregated spaces sometimes referred to as 'environmental bubbles' (Cohen, 1972); and, in cases in the Global South, neo-colonial power relations in terms of high degrees of foreign control and race and class hierarchies (Kingsbury, 2011). Yet while conceptions of mass tourism might vary to some degree (Vainikka, 2014), most accept that one of its dominant forms is packaged holidays with cruise lines and all-inclusive hotels, where all or most guest services (e.g. airport transfers, meals, drinks, entertainment) along with taxes and gratuities are included in one prepaid package price (Cabezas, 2008).

Various experiences of residents have been documented across destinations in the Global South, including cases in Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and other parts of the Caribbean. In their study on mass tourism development in three Mexican communities (Cancun, Zihutanejo and Litibu), Monterrubio, Osario and Benitez (2017) identify job creation and an overall improvement in the standard of living in the communities as the main benefits highlighted by the local residents, and set these against the major negative impacts identified by local people, including local exclusion from tourist enclaves, displacement of traditional economic activities like fishing and farming by tourism, and increases in the prices of goods and services. In a study of enclave tourism growth in Akumal, Mexico, Buzinde and Manuel-Navarrete (2013) found that the expansion of the industry resulted in the exclusion of local residents from purchasing properties close to the Spanish-owned Bahia Principe Residential and Golf Resorts, as well as from property ownership near the desirable beachfront. They also showed how restrictions were established so as not to disrupt "the imagined pristine touristic space" (Buzinde & Manuel-Navarrete, 2013, p. 487) that was being advertised overseas to prospective tourists.

Research methods

This study was part of a doctoral study. The empirical basis of this dissertation centres on qualitative interviews with local residents, owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and fisher-folk, which were focused on understanding their perceptions of new environmental opportunities, problems,

and challenges, their sense of the planning process, and their responses to the changes that have ensued. Data was collected between 2013 and 2014. In this research, I adopted purposive sampling to select participants among residents, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME) owners, fisherfolk, and employees who were interviewed until the saturation was reached. I was not seeking to draw upon any particular expertise, but rather was concerned with learning from a range of experiences and perspectives held by people from these different vantages.

Most respondents were approached at various locations in each study site, such as the fishing villages, town centres and in the vicinity of the community clinics in both towns, in the hope of increasing the diversity of perspectives. But SME operators were approached and interviewed in their places of work. I employed three main strategies to enhance the credibility of my research: triangulation, member checking, and thick description (Denzin, 1970). The key advantage of triangulation is that it looks at the same research questions or phenomenon from more than one data source (Decrop, 1999), and sometimes more than one investigator. As a result, it can reduce methodological and personal biases, and in turn raise the reliability, validity and generalizability of the study. The number of respondents is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
An overview of research participants in the two study sites

Research methods	Falmouth	Lucea	Total sample (n)
In-depth interview (fisherfolk, and owners of small and medium enterprises).	10	10	20
In-depth interview (with local residents).	10	10	20
Semi-structured interview (with key informants in tourism planning agencies).	3	2	5
Community observation, photography and note-taking (Falmouth and Lucea).	-	-	-

Results and discussion

Asymmetrical decision-making in environmental planning

Empirical studies on the feelings and attitudes of local residents towards enclavic tourism development in the Global South have increased in recent years (Meidmand, 2017; Figueroa & Rotarou, 2016), but the experiences of residents in sites of newly emerging enclaves such as Falmouth and Lucea remain largely unexplored. Also, some attempts have been made to examine the level of trust residents of mass tourism spaces have for political actors (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016), however little is yet known about how local people feel about their involvement, or lack thereof, in the environmental planning process for mass tourism.

Tourism is highly dependent on the natural environment, including resorts, whose economic success is dependent on the attractiveness of beaches. It is therefore inevitable for mass tourism development to trigger environmental change, broadly understood as what happens when human actions such as the creation of mega-hotels produce a plethora of dynamics in the environment (Redman, 2012). Environments that are considered paradisaical such as Jamaica's, are usually filled with conflicts over spatial use between neoliberal dogmas and local interests although the tourists themselves are usually oblivious to such conflicts (Kothari & Arnall, 2017).

It must be understood that environmental change does not occur in isolation from social power but when the two come together, they can even exacerbate environmental challenges (Cole, 2014). The domination of decision-making by the more powerful players in mass tourism influences the regulations and actions that result in environmental changes. In turn, these changes have influenced the perceptions and attitudes of the local population towards mass tourism development. When asked specifically about their involvement in the environmental planning process, residents of both Falmouth and Lucea expressed feeling largely excluded. This issue is not unique to the Global South, as found by Amore, Hall and Jenkins (2017, p. 32) who state that urban planning in Christchurch, New Zealand "was characterized by a highly hierarchical decision-making process that largely ignored the wants, needs and expectations of the affected community."

Participatory planning is considered an equitable approach to environmental decision-making but the planning agencies in Jamaica, like many other countries of the Caribbean, have largely "achieved [their planning objectives] through a top-down development process" (Dodman, 2008, p. 30). The key players in the decision-making process oftentimes make decisions to suit their own economic interests, ascribing to the argument of Thomas-Hope (1996) that private tourism interests generally see Caribbean lands as new frontiers to be 'conquered' and 'developed'.

Residents in Lucea were disgruntled that their feedback was not properly sought before the Parish Council gave permission for the construction of the Grand Palladium Hotel. This claim is contrary to that of the Hanover Parish Council (HPC) who asserted that the HPC gives public notice that is erected on the respective premises 14 days before construction. It was not clear as to whether there were any objections or how they were handled. But overall, this signage did not seem like an effective way of involving the local people in the decision-making process. Fieldwork evidence suggests that some residents did not take note of it or did not feel that their objection would have made a difference in the plans for the development. For instance, a female resident of Lucea was clear that her community was never seriously sensitized, nor did she notice the sign on property: "No. We only heard that a hotel was going to be built. Another resident of the community echoed, "expressing your concern is one thing, they doing something about it is another. Little people like me don't have a voice, it's only the big money people."

In opposition to the views of the residents, government stakeholders interviewed, explained that a number of stakeholder meetings were advertised and held within Falmouth prior to the establishment and at the start of the Pier construction. One representative maintained that "a lot of sensitization took place with the business community and the residents... meetings were held on a regular basis and they were informed as to what would have happened."

While some participants did express an appreciation that these meetings were held in their towns, most were critical about the degree of participation and dialogue these involved, and many inferred that they were mainly a mere medium of informing the people of the decisions for development that had already been taken. In the words of one male Falmouth resident, "they [major decision-makers] did not really incorporate anyone and that's what is destroying this country – the bigger heads go and make plans by themselves." Further, although these meetings were usually advertised in the local newspapers and via community notice boards, tourism planners suggested that many residents were either not effectively reached via these outlets or they disregarded the information, and that only a few people actually turned up to the many meetings that were convened.

Loss of access foreshore and marine spaces

Loss of access to beaches

In the broadest sense, community disempowerment occurs when "a disadvantaged group is less able than others to access essential resources" (Han, Wu, Huang & Yang, 2014, p. 718). One recurring way that participants in both study areas described feeling disempowered and dispossessed related to their lost access to certain spaces, which is a common phenomenon in destinations of the Global South when large areas of land get devoted to mass tourism projects. Oftentimes, there are conflicts between powerful private interests, planning authorities, and local people who occupy or access the spaces sought for tourism development.

As Agnew (2005) suggests, place is not only about a physical location but rather refers to how physical settings are shaped by social relationships and individual experiences, which often involves strong emotional attachments. Some scholars argue that privatized beaches are not mere physical spaces but should be understood as landscapes of power; instead of being conceived as national treasures which local people have free access to, they get dominated by wealthy foreigners and local elites (Carlisle & Jones, 2012). This reflects how local residents are regularly alienated from some of the most beautiful areas of their countries through the process of mass tourism development (Snyder, Crooks, Johnston, Adams & Whitmore, 2015). This was clearly evident in Lucea, where many participants complained that they have been displaced from their best and most conveniently-located beach, Bamboo Beach, since the construction of the Grand Palladium.

In Jamaica, beaches play a significant role in the recreational lives of the local people. By and large, there was free access to almost all beaches prior to tourism development, however, since the emergence of mega-hotels along the north coast of the island, many of the island's beaches have been sold out to foreigners or local elites who own and operate hotels and guest houses (Miller, 2006). There are 275 beaches associated with such guest houses and 60 bathing beaches with hotels while there are only 87 recreational beaches available to the public for bathing. Put differently, only 25% of all beaches on the island are available for public use. Beach access has become quite a controversial and complex issue and is inconsistent with the Ministry of Land and Environment's original intention of allowing the island's "beaches to be enjoyed by all" (Minister of Land and Environment November, 2002, p. vii).

More than 60 years after the first Commission of Inquiry was conducted into the issue of beach access, "many Jamaicans have [still] been effectively excluded from the island's best beaches" (Miller, 2006, p. 39). The main challenge to be considered here is that Jamaica has had a history of economic and political dominance by more economically advanced countries of the Global North and today they are manifesting through elite dominance in tourism ownership. Moreover, there is the issue of a lax approach to environmental regulations to protect the public's interests and needs.

It was evident during the interviews that in both Falmouth and Lucea, the local residents' access to coastal areas has become limited over time. In an addendum to the EIA done by the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) before the start of the hotel, the Grand Palladium explicitly promised that one of the beaches on property would be made available for the public's use:

The beach on the eastern property line will be open to the public at all times. Access to this beach will be from the main road and will offer clear and unobstructed access to the sea (stated by Grand Palladium in ESTECH, 2004, p. 8).

However, more than a decade since this promise was made, there is nothing to indicate that the hotel is willing to allow local access to its beaches, as the representative of the Palladium hotel acknowledged: "With the beach, there isn't much access to the locals." To date, the local residents expressed that there has been little to no opportunity to jog, swim, play or socialize at beaches. For instance, one female respondent from Lucea identified a challenge that mass tourism has created for her and her family: "when I was younger I used to go over there...there used to be turtles laying eggs in the sand but it's probably destroyed by now. You know, the hotel is now constructed [so] you cannot go over there again." This respondent also recounted the days when she and her friends and family were able to socialize at the Bamboo Beach but the construction of the Grand Palladium Hotel has now made the area inaccessible to residents. Currently, signs have been implemented in turtle nesting areas in order to sensitize the users of the beach about the presence of the turtles and their eggs, along with regular educational campaigns amongst the members of staff. The Grand Palladium representative highlighted their efforts in this regard:

We do have an environmental programme here... we educate the various departments, primarily those in maintenance because they work on the ground and would likely be the first in contact with the turtles... we educate them on what can be done to prevent harm to the turtles and also why they come to our beaches to nest.

Lucea participants consistently lamented that there is now only one beach in the entire town that is available for the local people to use, as the others are either privatized or are run-down. Interviewees also indicated that there is another one located in a nearby community called Hopewell which some Lucea residents also use. But some find it inconvenient to travel much further to use a public beach which is sometimes overcrowded, a matter explained by a female resident: "Now the residents have nowhere to go or find some cramped, little beaches. There is a little beach at the Watson Taylor Park but when you go there you can't find any space!"

Another female resident of Lucea similarly expressed disappointment that mass tourism development has interrupted use of the Bamboo Beach, as she reflected:

People used to go there and camp and cook. It was deserted, but there was a little road before the highway was built. It's the area where the Fiesta hotel [Grand Palladium] is now. Fiesta takes up a lot of space... we [her community members] used to do [overnight] camping there. It used to be good because we used to cook and run races there.

Fishermen contesting marine spaces

The marine space does not only play a significant role in income generation through tourism, but also in sustaining the livelihoods of fishermen. But one of the common consequences of mass tourism that these fisherfolk contend with involves the forceful removal of local people from occupied spaces either through official orders or redevelopment projects in local areas (Cohen, 2011). In interviews, the fishermen I spoke with described their clear sense that mass tourism development has damaged the environments they depend on. Many residents indicated that since the start of mass tourism, they and the respective Parish Councils have been at loggerheads over boundary demarcation, marine access and the consequences of these challenges for their livelihoods. For example, one Falmouth fisherman explained the unfair treatment he and his peers received from the Parish Council: "The way the people [Parish Council] attacked us was not the right and proper way! Our places were demolished – even concrete structures and we haven't gotten anything [compensation], anything at all!"

The fishermen in Falmouth were not only disgruntled that they were relocated to an undesired location in the coastal zone along Rodney Street but also that they were told by the local authorities to stay at least a mile from the Pier waters. Specifically, the fishermen were told that their fish pots or boats would be ceased or destroyed if they are found within a mile of the Pier waters. A fisherman who has been fishing for over 30 years in Falmouth, summarized the struggles of his peers:

Fishermen were told to stay one mile from the harbour! On an ordinary day, we ,might go and check on our buoys, only to find them [the water police] cut off the rope! This happened just two weeks ago. We lobbied for meetings with the authority for them to clarify where the real boundary is, but nothing so far.

The fishermen recounted several instances when fish nets and pots were cut and destroyed by the PAJ/RCCL's water police, estimating material cost at US\$62 for each time they are damaged, which puts a strain on their financial resources to replace them. Based on the interviews, it is clear that the needs of the developers and external investors take precedence over the local people's, despite the early signs of exclusion and inconvenience that such developments were creating.

While the fishermen in Lucea did not experience a physical relocation, they did have serious concerns over access to the water zones that had previously served as their fishing place before the construction of the Grand Palladium Hotel. One fishermen in his 50s stated, with frustration, that: "[mass] tourism doesn't complement the fishing industry...the hotel industry just doesn't support fishing", which effectively captures the general feeling of displacement and anger amongst the majority of the fishermen there.

According to the fishermen, the hotel security guards have consistently instructed them to stay clear of the shoreline running parallel to the hotel's property. One fisherman in his 50s described it:

Everything is blocked off now, everything! People used to come from all around and use the beach. [But] tourism changes a lot of things...fishermen leave from here and they can't even pull up over there [pointing at the nearby hotel waters]. You could take up small picnic trips to go over there [pointing to the spot formerly called Bamboo Beach] but now you can't do that.

A representative from the Grand Palladium Hotel tried to justify why the fishermen are kept out of the hotel's waters, noting that "if fishermen and other local residents come to this area, they would have to do so legally. We have security personnel who patrol the area...the fishermen have no legal access to the property."

Unlike the Falmouth fishing area where buoys have been placed in the water to mark the border of the Pier's waters, there was nothing in the Lucea harbour to demarcate the exact boundary. When asked about the absence of a physical marker to identify the border beyond which fishermen do not have access, the Grand Palladium representative replied:

There's no need for a physical demarcation as hotels are not meant to share their facility with the community. This is a hotel and all our beaches are owned by the hotel. They weren't intended to be shared with fishermen.

Jamaica presents an anomalous case in which local residents are barred from beaches on hotel properties as in other Caribbean countries such as Barbados and the Bahamas, all hotel beaches are public. One commonality between the fishermen of Falmouth and Lucea is that they complained about the longer journey they have to make offshore in order to locate any significant catch. This has been the case since they were verbally told by the respective enclaves to stay clear of the properties' waters. To-date, there is no written expression of such regulations to the fishermen in the study areas. Another challenge

experienced by the fishermen from both towns involves the disturbances of the coral reefs – by the dredging process – where the fishes breed and live. The disturbance, they believed, has resulted in the migration of fishes further offshore. The Fishermen in Falmouth particularly complained about the disturbance in the marine environment which resulted from the construction of the Pier.

Not only have the Falmouth fishermen been struggling to navigate these challenges but also the new struggles which arose from being at the new location. They indicated during the interviews that the new location has no working sanitation facilities such as toilets and they were still at loggerheads with the Parish Council over the ownership of the coastal land which they presently occupy. At the time of the fieldwork, the fishermen in both study areas were engaged in negotiation with planning authorities for better treatment. One disgruntled fisherman indicated that he and his peers are yet to receive compensation money that was said to be released by the PAJ for them to re-start their fishing business at the new location: "We heard that the PAJ gave the Parish Council big money to give to us who were relocated but until now we haven't received any! This is the only building remaining from the demolition... and we were the ones who brought it from up there."

Figure 2
New location for Falmouth fishing village



Source: Author's fieldwork

Overall, the fishermen raised serious concerns that they are largely excluded from decision-making, a phenomenon that is not unique to Jamaica but also plays out in other coastal areas of the Global South. Gray (2016), for instance in her study on knowledge integration in a marine protected area in Belize, concludes that the experiences and knowledge of fishermen are not significantly accounted for in the decision-making process. It is largely for this reason that the support of the fishermen of Falmouth and Lucea for mass tourism is fading. According to them, several meetings have previously taken place between the fishermen and Parish Councils and the Ministry of Fisheries but none has addressed these concerns. Among others, they cited the inability of fishermen to stand up to the authorities during the implementation of the new regulations, and disunity among the fishermen as contributing factors to the fruitlessness of previous meetings. Therefore, the fishermen were also at fault for the burdens that mass tourism has created for them. In the opinion of the President of the Falmouth Fishermen's

Association greater cohesion among the fishermen might have resulted in a more favourable outcome:

The fishermen weren't brave enough to stand up to the authorities. The unity was absent amongst fisher-folk. Even to call a meeting they still sat and played dominoes or even went home for the day. Everyone is pulling in different directions!

Conclusion

The relationship between mass tourism development and the environment is a complex one. This complexity tends to be more pronounced in Small Island Developing States such as Jamaica since the natural resources that tourists and tourist activities require are in relatively narrow supply. Although mass tourism development has created many job opportunities for the people of Falmouth and Lucea as well as contributing to some aspects of town beautification, these benefits have been overshadowed by the loss of fishing and recreational spaces.

The exclusion of local residents from some of the most beautiful parts of the coastal areas and fisher-folk from key inshore areas has created serious concerns for both broad community well-being and has compromised small-scale fishing livelihoods. The loss of access to the Bamboo Beach in Lucea to facilitate the hotel construction, for instance, is a clear example of dispossession and how the loss of place can play out with mass tourism development. Rather than separating local people from their coastal environments, the relevant authorities ought to discover and implement means of incorporating them and their activities in the overall tourism development vision for the country. More research is welcomed to shed insight on the dynamics between power, decision-making and space production. Lastly, it would be interesting to compare the key findings from this study with other studies conducted in other destinations of the Global South.

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