

Module 8: Ecotourism

**Forestry Training Institute
Tubmanburg, Liberia**



Key Topics

- Ecotourism and the Economy



Definitions of Ecotourism

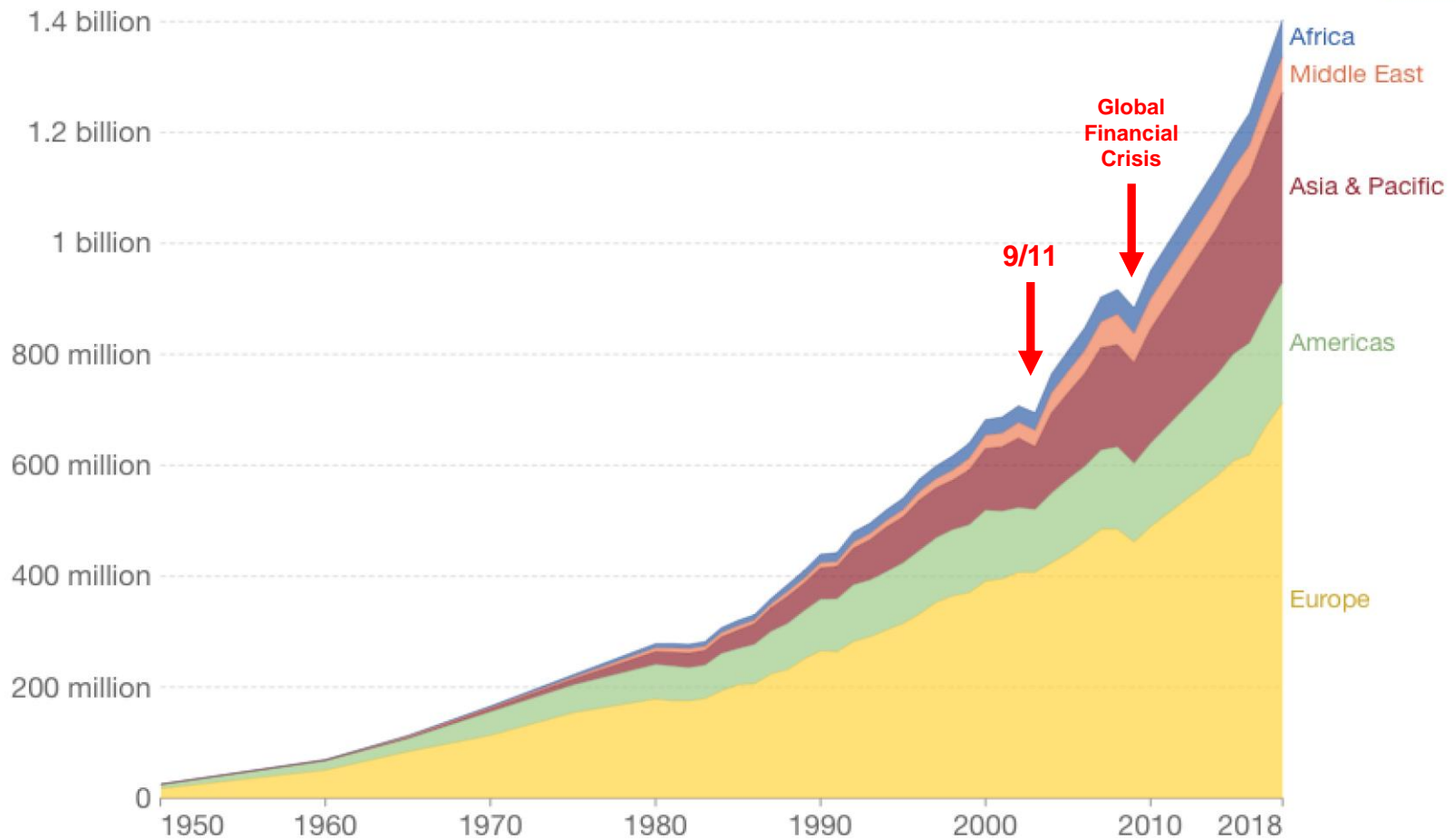
- ‘Environmentally responsible travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and benefits local populations.’ (IUCN)
- ‘Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.’ (International Ecotourism Society)

Ecotourism has *both* ...

1. environmental conservation
2. socio-economic development goals.

International tourist arrivals per year by region

Our World
in Data

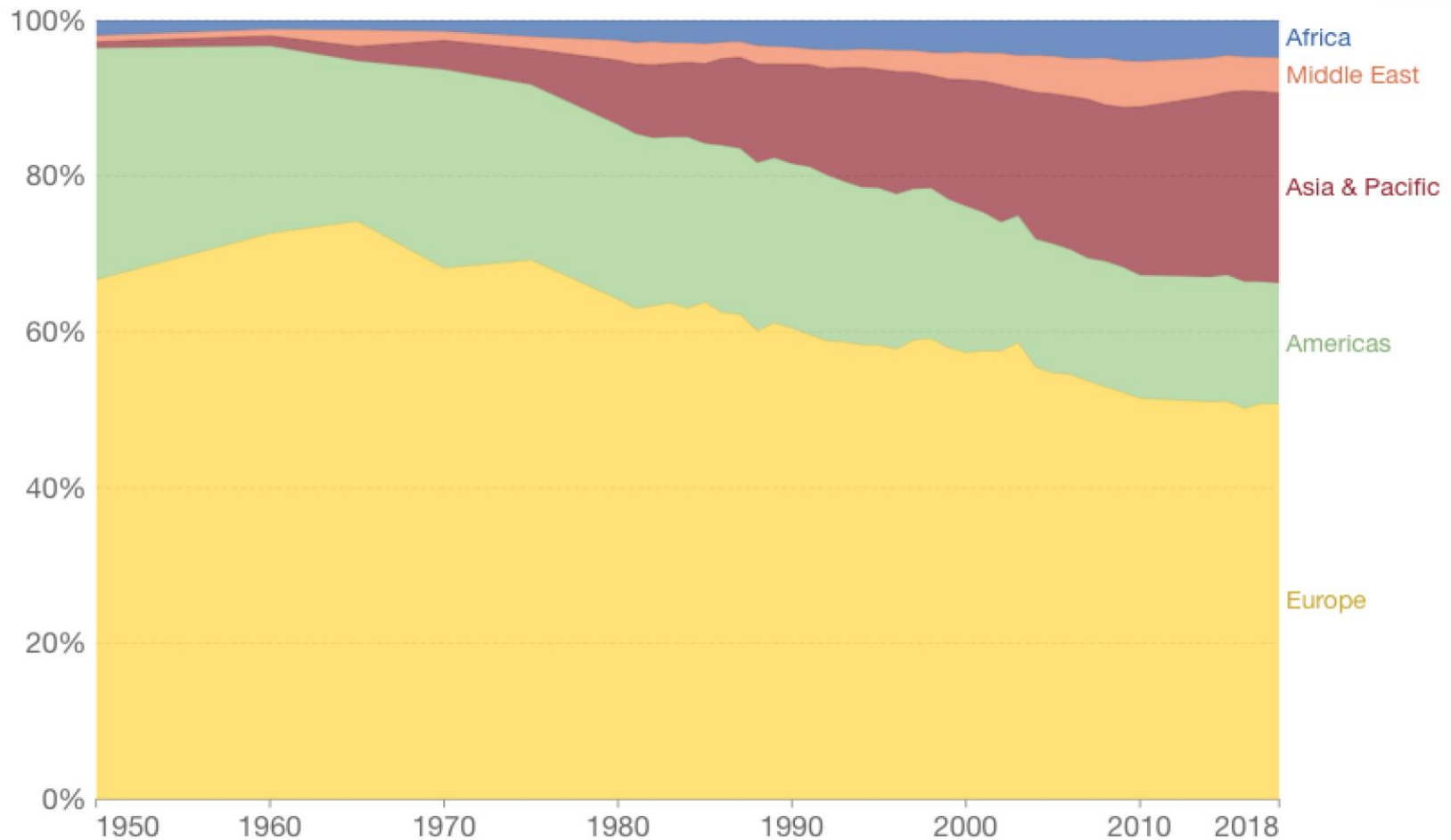


Source: United Nations World Tourism Organization - World Tourism Barometer (2019)

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International tourist arrivals per year by region

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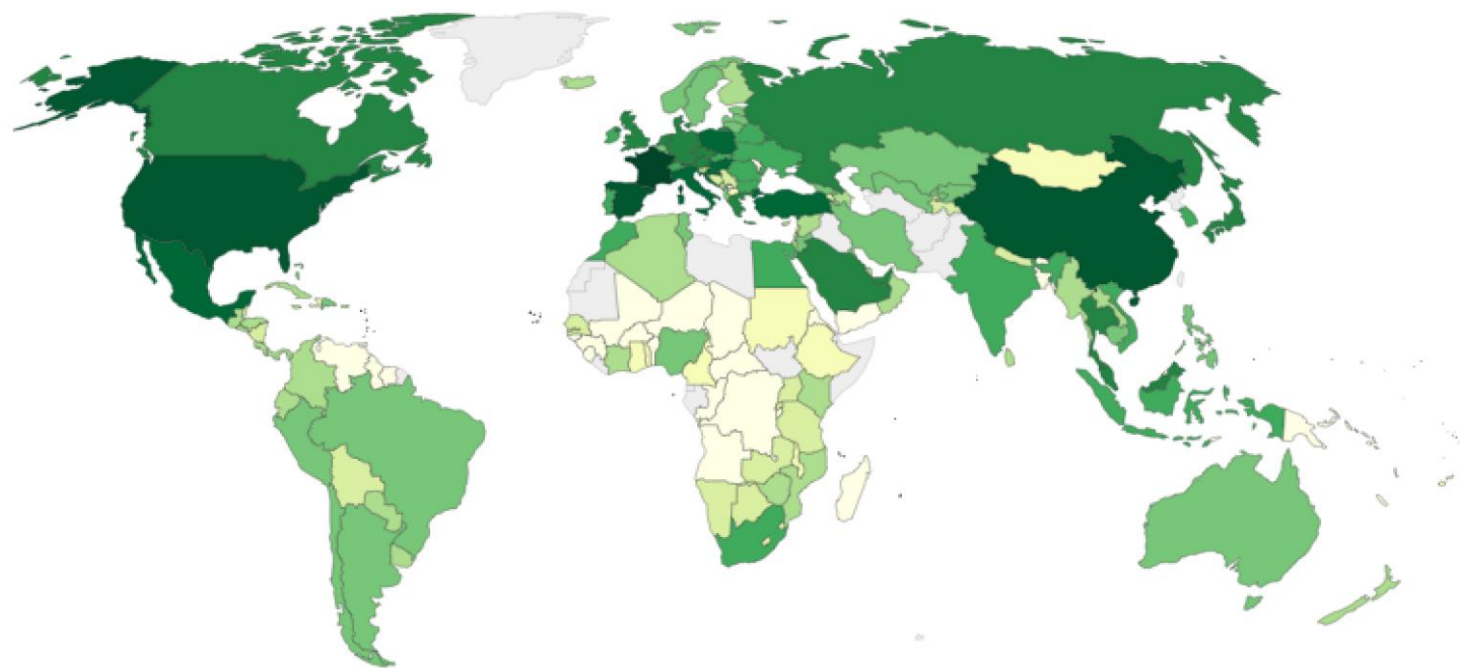


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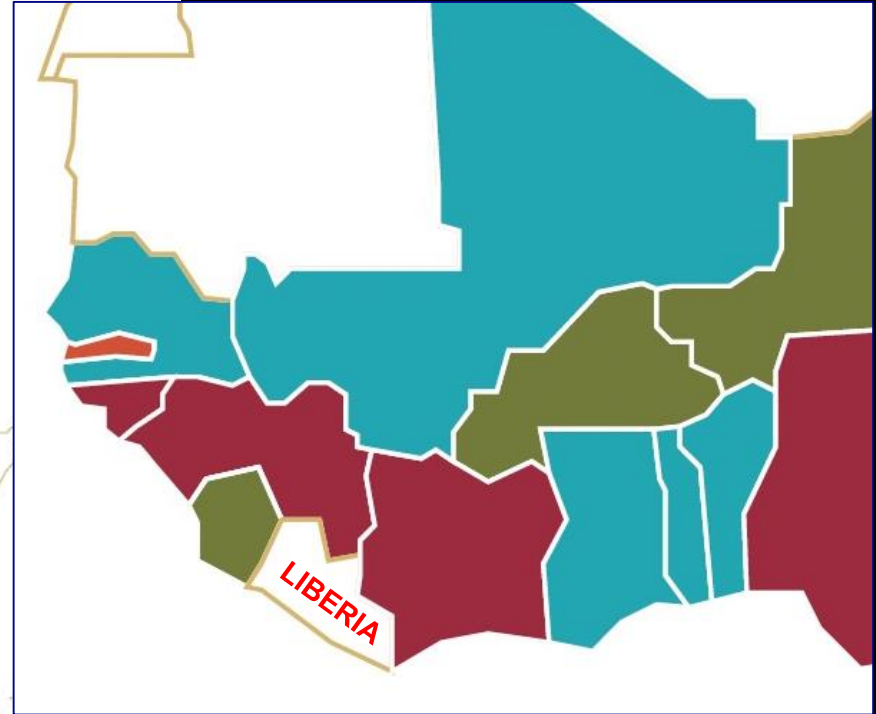
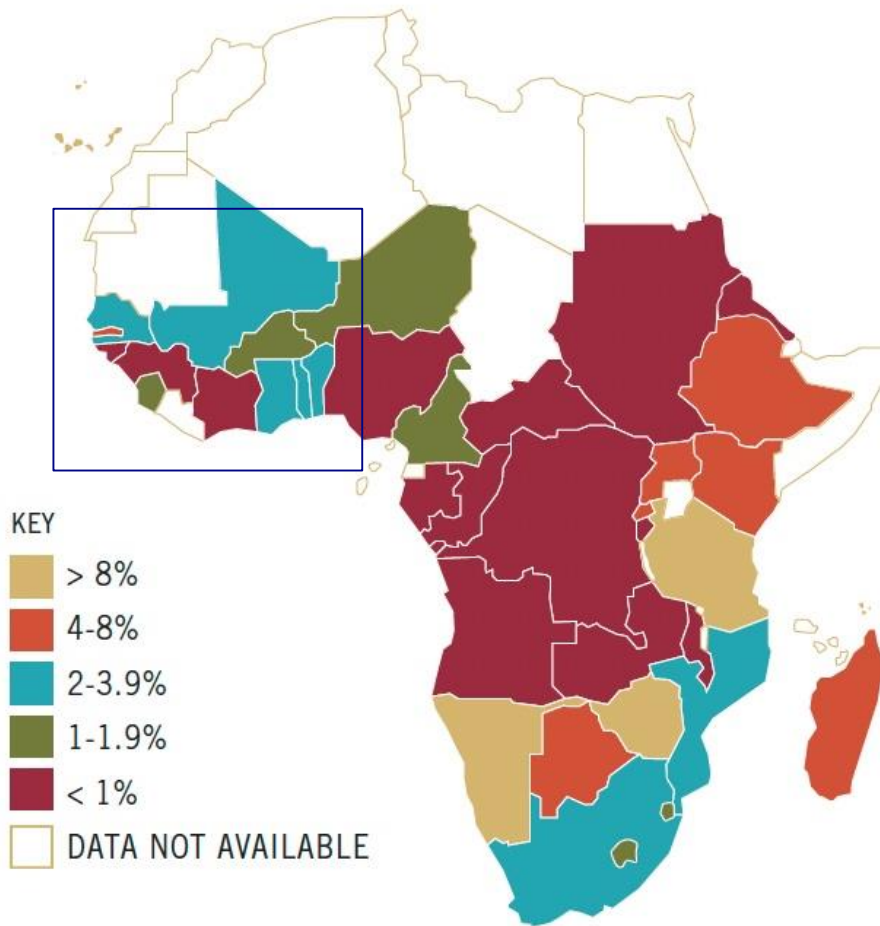
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International tourism: number of arrivals, 2019

Overnight visitors who travel to a country whose main purpose in visiting is not commercial.

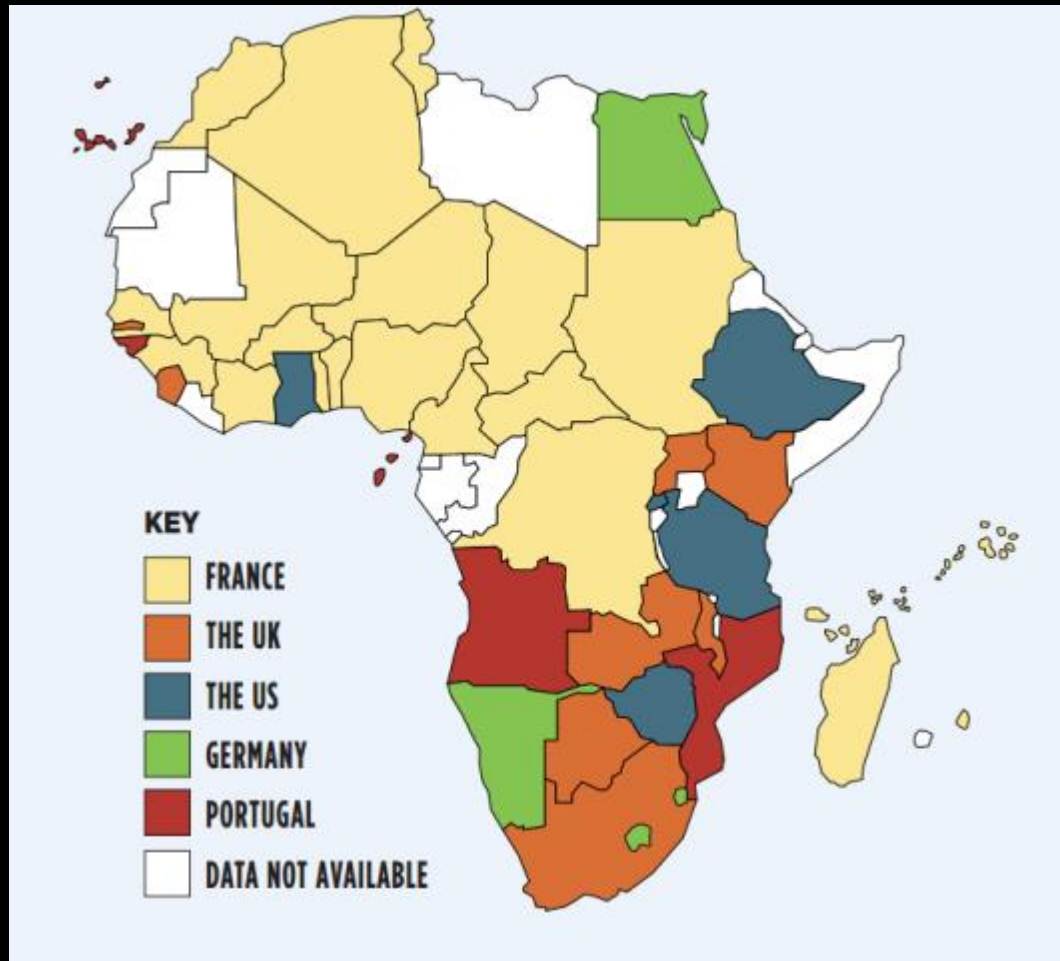


Tourism's Contribution to GDP in SSA



Discussion:

What does this map tell you about tourism's contributions to Liberia's GDP vs. surrounding countries in the region?



Source: *Tourism in Africa: Harnessing Tourism for Growth and Improved Livelihoods*, The World Bank, 2013

Why Tourism as an Economic Development and Conservation Approach?

- Tourism employs natural and cultural assets as capital
- Tourism provides incentive to preserve and conserve natural and cultural assets
- Tourism is a labor intensive activity that allow gender equality by providing tasks for everyone
- Tourism is often the only non-extractive economic option in rural and isolated natural areas
- Tourism the leading export in over half of Less Developed Countries (LDCs)
- Tourism is growing 2 times faster in LDCs that that of the global average
- Sustainable tourism grows 3 times faster than the tourism industry overall



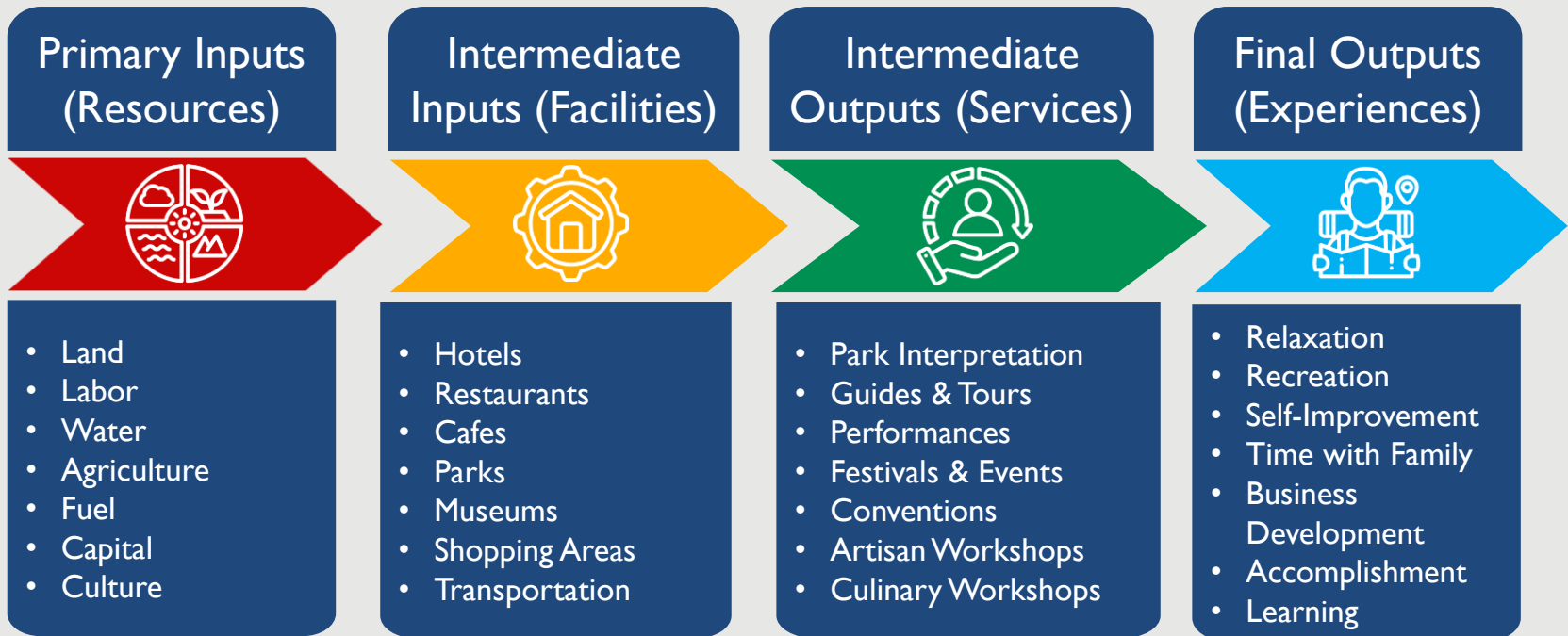
The Tourism Production Process

INTRODUCTION TO EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL



Process

Describes a step-by-step process that you may need to follow to complete a certain activity or task.



Smith, S.L. (1994). *The Tourism Product*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 21(3), 582-595

The Opportunities...

- Africa's tourism potential will continue to grow through attracting **new markets and developing new products**.
- **Niche products** not only attract new tourists but they also engage tourists to stay longer.
- Many of today's younger travelers, especially from developed nations, grew up with access to travel and have an **expanded interest in adventure, culture, and “real experiences”** compared to previous generations.
- Further, with more travel by Africans in Africa, there are new opportunities—and great potential—for **regional tourism growth** in Africa.



Tourism Products Opportunities in Africa



Special Considerations for Tourism: Sub-Saharan Africa

- a) Improving the **conservation and interpretation of natural areas** and their associated biodiversity and of paleontological/ archaeological/historic sites in many places
- b) Giving more emphasis to developing **urban tourism**
- c) Improving **tourist facilities, services, public health and safety and infrastructure** in many places
- d) Encouraging **more involvement and participation in tourism by local communities**

Special Considerations for Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa

- e) Ensuring **that land is available** where and when needed in an equitable manner for tourism development
- f) Providing more **education and training of personnel** to work effectively in all aspects of tourism and achieving greater public awareness about tourism
- g) Improving **the institutional framework** for financing tourism development and managing the tourism sector.

Special Considerations for Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Improving Tourist Facilities and Services

- Inconsistent facility quality
- Specialized safari lodges/hotels and tented camps
- Should not disrupt the natural environment



Special Considerations for Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Improving Infrastructure

- Many areas lack adequate infrastructure of roads, water supply, electric power, waste management and telecommunications
- Access roads and infrastructure for major attractions must be provided by the public sector
- Can be used to serve general community needs as well as tourism and should be multi-functional



Special Considerations for Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Community Involvement in Tourism

- In many areas, the traditional social system of village chiefs and elders is prevalent
- Religious leaders also have important community role
- Important to give local residents access to tourist attractions for successful involvement
- Tourism projects should be developed, owned and operated by local villages

Special Considerations for Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Availability of Land

- Zoning is the basic technique for ensuring that suitable land is reserved for tourism
- In Sub-Saharan Africa most lands are in communal ownership
- If the land is communally owned, negotiations must take place between the investor and the spokesman of the communal owners or the chiefs who control the land.

Special Considerations for Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Education and Training

- Need for training at community level so local residents are qualified to work in tourism
- Region generally undersupplied in providing tourism education and training needed
- Public awareness on tourism can be increased by utilizing local radio, television, newspapers, magazines, posters, and meetings.

Tourism in Liberia

- There are no formal and validated statistics regarding the number of visitor arrivals, length of stay and tourism expenditure in Liberia.
- Preliminary figures obtained from Liberian Immigration Services show that a total of **66,064 foreign visitor arrivals** were recorded for the period January 2018 to September 2019.
- That amounts to an average of **37,751 per year, 3,146 per month or 181 per day.**
- The **United States and Ghana comprised 50%** of these arrivals.
- Of those countries that contributed 1% or more to arrivals, visitors from **Europe (UK, France, Germany, Netherland, Sweden, Turkey)** added approximately **14%**, countries from **Africa 10%**, and those from **Asia 5%**. An additional 21% of visitors were from countries that contributed fewer than 1% of visitor arrivals.



Tourism in Liberia

Let's Take a Look!



Liberia Tourism Brand Video

2022 - (3 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3YrR1O-Oww>



Tourism in Liberia

Let's Take a Look!



Experience Liberia!

2022 - (3 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKm27Rkyfbl>



Tourism in Liberia

Tourism Brand

- Liberia's tourism brand is a mixture of nature and culture. This is due to generally poorly developed infrastructure and poor investor willingness caused by uncertainty of success.
- Liberia's core cultural values revolve around friendliness and openness to visitors.
- Goods and products from natural materials are often largely unprocessed, partly because they are part of the natural local charm.
- The Liberia National Tourism Association (LINTA) endorses ventures, products, and businesses which match this selected brand.

Tourism in Liberia

Biodiversity

- Liberia has unique natural forested areas, interesting and large wildlife, and birdlife.
- While the country is rich in beautiful, striking fauna, most are found exclusively in forested areas and this decreases likelihood of encounters with visiting tourists and visibility. This makes the presence of wildlife difficult to predict.
- In addition, the unique habitats are difficult to access, and require additional travel for tourists.
- Conservation reaps the benefits of forest cover and difficult access (hunting is more difficult), but it is a limiting factor for ecotourism.

Tourism in Liberia

Biodiversity

The species pictured below are unique, endemic, or striking fauna found in Liberia. Can you name any?



Tourism in Liberia

Biodiversity



Tourism in Liberia

Biodiversity



Tourism in Liberia

Biodiversity



Tourism in Liberia

Biodiversity



Tourism in Liberia

Uncertainty

- While Liberia has great potential for a combination of nature, culture, and adventure tourism, statistics are still low.
- Tourists who choose to come to Liberia are taking a risk that they may not see or experience anything new due to unlikely conditions.
- In other places, they have higher certainty of seeing and experiencing more.
- The poorly developed infrastructure of the country also plays a role in low tourist numbers.

Tourism in Liberia

Existing tourism attractions (Protected Areas)

Despite these challenges, there are several established national parks with identified tourism trails and tourist accommodation, more than a decade ago:

- Sapo National Park
- Gola National Rainforest Park (Elephant Falls)
- Lake Piso Multiple Use Reserve
- East Nimba National Reserve

Name other attractions in Liberia's protected areas.

Tourism in Liberia

Existing tourism sites (Others)

There are also other areas which provide a reasonable tourism experience:

- Kpatawee Waterfalls
- Nimba Mountains and trails

Name other attractions in Liberia's outside of protected areas.

Critical Components of Ecotourism

Ecotourism has the potential to...

- Contribute to biodiversity conservation.
- Sustain the well being of local people.
- Provide learning experiences for visitors.
- Promote responsible action on the part of tourists and the tourism industry.



Critical Components of Ecotourism

- Is delivered primarily to small groups by small-scale businesses.
- Requires lowest possible consumption of non-renewable resources.
- Stresses local participation, ownership and business opportunities, particularly for rural people (accomplished through targeted training).

Tourism Training



READING:

“The Ecotourism Training Manual for Protected Area Managers” (Chapters 1-6)

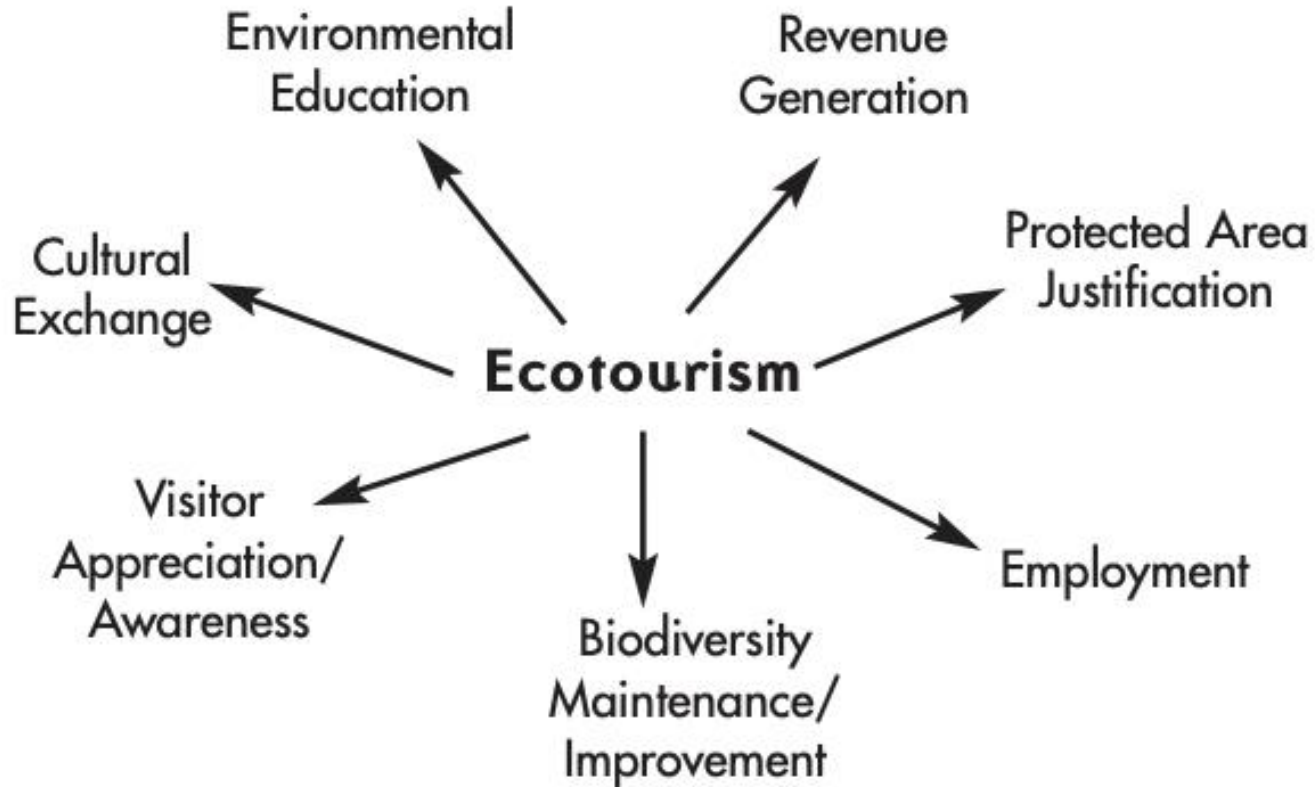
Principles of the Ecotourism Product

1. **Direct Experience:** Focus on giving visitors the opportunity to personally and directly experience nature.
2. **Interpretation:** Provide opportunities to experience nature in ways that lead to greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment.
3. **Sustainability:** best practices in environmental sustainability.
4. **Contribution to Conservation:** Contributes directly to the conservation of natural areas.

Principles of the Ecotourism Product

5. **Local Community Benefits:** Provide ongoing contributions to the local community.
6. **Cultural Respect:** Be sensitive to local cultures.
7. **Customer Satisfaction:** consistently meet consumer expectations.
8. **Responsible Marketing:** marketing and promotion are honest and accurate so that realistic expectations are met.
This is especially important in today's world where bad reviews can drive away business.

Ecotourism as Opportunity



What makes an ecotourist different from other tourists?

- Motivation
- Education
- Participation
- Behavior (ethics)

Give examples of each.

Characteristics of an Ecotourism Site

- Natural attractions
 - Landscapes, wildlife, etc.
- Viable, well protected ecological systems
- Trained on site staff
- Entrance fee system
- Education opportunities
- Visitors center
- Interpretive trails / information

Characteristics of an Ecotourism Site

- Amenities (e.g., water, sewage, & garbage disposal systems,)
- Communication systems
- First aid support
- Appropriate transport
- Regulations and behavior codes
- Nearby food/lodging
- A supportive local community

Ecotourism Sites

PRACTICUM: Fundamentals of Nature Interpretation



Attractions/Activities Inventory

- **Natural** (e.g. beaches, mountains, parks),
- **Historical** (e.g. iconic buildings, heritage monuments, religious buildings),
- **Cultural** (e.g. museums, theatres, art galleries, cultural events),
- **Recreational** (e.g. hiking, mountain biking, sailing)

<u>Name of Attraction / Activity:</u> <u>Description of Attraction / Activity:</u>	Strengths	Weaknesses
	Opportunities	Threats

Guiding and Storytelling

Great guides are **usually local residents** who have **knowledge and experience** related to the places and information you will feature on your tour experience.



Guiding and Storytelling

Visitors love to learn **not only facts & figures** (i.e. important history, dates, names, etc. about the destination), they also **love to hear local stories that bring those facts and figures to life** with personal accounts, knowledge and experiences of local residents.



Guiding and Storytelling

PRACTICUM: Dealing with difficult cross-cultural situations

In small groups, you will discuss cross-cultural situations that a guide might encounter. Discuss each situation and identify:

- a) the problem
- b) a possible plan of action, and
- c) what could be done next time to avoid the problem

Sustainability in Ecotourism

Sustainability of an ecotourism venture depends on how much of the activities involve consumptive vs. non-consumptive use of the natural area.

- **Consumptive use** is typically defined as the direct use or removal of wildlife or other natural products through activities such as hunting.
 - IUCN refers to 'enjoying' wild plants and animals e.g., eating traditional dishes made from local ingredients.
 - Wild game is an important source of protein in many parts of the world. Hunting, fishing, and trapping represent essential activities in many cultures.
- **Non-consumptive use** assumes a separation of ecotourism and the direct consumption of wildlife or other natural products.

Ecotourism as Material Consumption

- High amounts of water and energy.
- Imported goods that require extensive transport and packaging.
- Tourist consumption of local resources (e.g., impact on fish stocks, local nutrition, regional economies, labor allocation, etc.)
- Waste and sewage generation in out-of-way places.



Ecotourism as Cultural Consumption

- Rich and complicated cultures are reduced to snapshots or themes for tourists to consume.
- Creation of a 'staged authenticity' or an artificial version of the destination in order to suit tourist needs, expectations, and desires

Ecotourism: Wildlife Impacts



“The number of tourists demanding the experience of viewing a quetzal is HUGE, since the quetzal’s nesting period coincides with tourism’s high season.” (Vivanco 2003)

Sustainability in Ecotourism

READING

Turner, “Communities, Wildlife Conservation, and Tourism-Based Development: Can Community-Based Nature Tourism Live up to Its Promise?”

Looking at the bigger picture

- Is ecotourism more economically productive?
- How are economic benefits distributed?



Planning Ecotourism Ventures

SWOT Analysis

- **Strengths** (*Helpful internal forces to our destination / Affect us presently*),
- **Weaknesses** (*Harmful internal forces to our destination / Affect us presently*),
- **Opportunities** (*Helpful external forces to our destination / May affect us in the future*)
- **Threats** (*Harmful external forces to our destination / May affect us in the future*)

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	Strengths S	Weaknesses W
External	Opportunities O	Threats T

Summarizing the Situation – SWOT

- **The response to a SWOT analysis is to:**
 - Build on the strengths
 - Address the weaknesses (where they are holding the destination back)
 - Pursue the opportunities and
 - Minimize the impact of the threats

Very Useful information when we get to the product development phase!



Attractions Inventory: Criteria for Evaluation



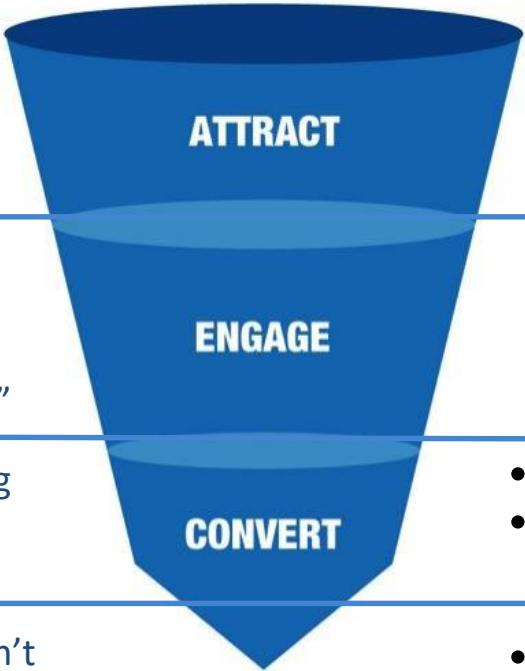
UNDERSTANDING THE TRAVELER'S DECISIONS

"I want to go on a family-friendly holiday."

"What makes the destination unique?"
"How could I spend my time?"
"Is it the right place for my holiday."

"What accommodation am I looking for"
"What do I want to book?"

"I am having an amazing time. I can't wait to share this with friends on social media"



**EXPERIENCE
SHARE**

- Generate earned media
 - Improve search rankings
 - Paid advertising
 - Social media sharing
-
- Offer travel planning information
 - Engage on social media
 - Distribute a regular newsletter
 - "Chat with someone"
-
- Provide direct booking options
 - Refer lead to qualified sales partner to facilitate final booking
-
- Encourage posting of reviews

Overall Stages of Destination Management Planning

Gathering Evidence / Assessment Process (SWOT Analysis)

Where are we now?

Establishing Strategy and Direction (Visioning)

Where do we want to go?

Developing Action Plans

How do we get there?

Monitoring and Reporting

Are we staying on course?

Ecotourism as Economic Development

Practicum: Design an Eco-Lodge

You will work in small groups to prepare an **Ecolodge Plan**. Assume you have adequate (though not limitless) funding to build an ecolodge in a part of Liberia of your choosing.

