

#3 Slummary Summary

Updated: Nov 26, 2021

The interest in social issues and concerns for the general human condition was one of the main motivations for slum visits that was identified by Fabian Frenzel, a professor at the University of Leicester and author of the definitive book on the topic, [*Slumming It: The Tourist Valorization of Urban Poverty*](#).

“In slum tourism, what I find clearly is that people are interested in this fact of inequality,” Frenzel said.

However, there is another, perhaps more fundamental, attraction of visiting some slum-like areas. Frenzel pointed out that the initial rise in interest in local slums was spiced up by a new technology: photography. Seeing images of some of these areas provoke the desire in many outsiders to go and see them for themselves.

“So instead of just consuming these pictures at home and then trying to do something there, people are increasingly trying to follow those images back to their source, trying to see for themselves,” Frenzel explained. “Every mediated picture seems to create more desire to actually see for yourself.”



Slumdog Tourism - in the eyes of Kennedy Odede

Kennedy Odede, a social entrepreneur was born and raised in one of the largest slums of Kenya; He believes that even though slum tourism has its advocates who believe it promotes social awareness, raises money to support the local economy, "at the end it's not worth it". It turns poverty into entertainment, something that can be experienced then escaped from. People visit, then go home. That is what we do, right?

He was a hungry 16-year-old, washing dishes outside his small, 100-square-foot home, when suddenly a white woman turned up in front of him, and took his photo... Before he could say anything, she moved on. This was his first experience of a slum tour. By the age of 18 he founded an organization that provided education, health, and economic services for Kibera residents. During an interview about his work, a woman took her video camera out to capture the moment of a man defecating in public. He says: 'For a moment I saw my home

through her eyes: feces, rats, starvation, houses so close together that no one can breathe. I realised I didn't want her to see it, didn't want to give her the opportunity to judge my community for its poverty, a condition that few tourists, no matter how well intentioned, could ever understand'.

Odede stated: "They get photos, we lose a piece of our dignity" (New York Times, [2010](#)).

Why write about slum tourism, orphanages, and volunteerism?

Many reasons. They are interesting, exciting, unseen and forever changing phenomenon's that draw my attention. I want to explore and experience slums. Interact with those living locally. I am naturally curious. Are you?

I am also scared. Scared thinking that despite all my efforts I may not be able to contribute to their mental or social wellbeing. Scared to think I may cause more damage than good - if I decide to visit after all.

I also want to see those children now living in orphanages belong in families. I also want to take all of them home and give them a loving home if they really have not got one.. and hold them tight, while telling them it is all going to be okay- and mean it.

There is a huge moral weight around these visits, whether you are visiting slums or orphanages or giving your time to a cause-if you are doing it right. By right I mean arriving with good intentions, by researching sustainable tour providers well before signing up for a tour, by finding or funding community projects, by finding the right way.

Before you head out with good intentions to support any cause, I encourage you to do your research and consider my (hopefully) provocative thoughts channelled across here and

there in this blog. I also hope you may think of the young Kennedy Odede when you get ready to snap a photo.

The decision to visit a slum, volunteer your time and efforts and the decision to whether visit an orphanage is always yours to make. Think twice.

I hope you enjoyed reading this blog, as much as I enjoyed writing it. If you would like to engage in a conversation, discuss concerns or share ideas- I am all ears! Feel free to send me a message or ping me an e-mail. (enikojuditgancsa@gmail.com)

XOXO, Judit