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Language & Culture

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The Effects of Tourism on Developing Countries

The purpose of this paper is to incorporate all that I have learned during my course at Purchase College. As a Spanish Language & Culture major, I have chosen three countries to research: Costa Rica, Perú (a country in which I have had the pleasure of visiting), and the Dominican Republic. I aim to explore their culture, their tourism industry, and how does cultural tourism affect the economy of these countries.

Cultural tourism connects travelers with a country's culture and lifestyle. According to the *International Cultural Tourism Charter Professional*, cultural tourism has been defined as "travel directed towards experiencing the arts, heritage, and special character of a place." There are many types of tourism, three of which are: cultural ecotourism, indigenous cultural tourism, and attraction tourism. Ecotourism is tourism directed towards sightseeing natural environments. Indigenous tourism is visiting ancient civilizations, in which indigenous people are directly involved. Attraction tourism is visiting a country for recreational or entertainment activities. Tourism brings positive and negative socio-economic effects to both the visitor and the host country.

The Republic of Costa Rica:

Costa Rica is a country located in Central America and is bordered by Nicaragua, Panamá, the Pacific Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea. The Republic of Costa Rica is the official name of the country, and is home to approximately five million civilians. The official currency of the country is the Costa Rican Colón. Eighty-three percent of the population is made up of European descents, Castizos (those who are one-third indigenous), and Mestizos (those who are biracial). Eighty-one percent of the population are Afro-Costa Ricans that are descendants of Jamaican immigrant workers who migrated in the 19th century. There are over 104,000 aboriginals. Nine percent of the country's population consists of immigrants. The largest groups of immigrants are represented by Colombians, Nicaraguans, and Americans. Seven additional indigenous groups including the Bribri community calls Costa Rica home: the Borucua, Cabecar, Guaymí, Huetar, Maleku, Matambú, and the Térraba. All are recognized by the Costa Rican government.

The official language of Costa Rica is Spanish. There are indigenous languages such as "Bribri" spoken by approximately 11,000 native speakers. This language belongs to the *Chibchan* family. English, French, German, and Chinese are foreign languages that are taught to students. *Mekatelyu* is a variant of Jamaican Patois spoken in the Limón Providence of Costa Rica. The name *Mekatelyu* is a translation of the phrase "make I tell you," or in English, "let me tell you."

Costa Rica never fought for their independence from Spain. On September 15th, 1821, after Spain lost the Mexican War of Independence, Guatemala declared independence over all of Central America. Technically, under the Spanish Constitution of 1812, Costa Rica is considered to be an autonomous province.

The Costa Rican's education system has been ranked 20th according to the 2013 - 2014's edition of *Global Competitiveness Report*. It has been reported as high quality with a literacy rate of 94.9 percent.

Roman Catholicism is the official religion of the country. Fifty-seven percent of the population identifies with Catholicism. Twenty-five percent identifies as Protestants, fifteen percent aren't affiliated with any religion, and three percent identifies as "other."

Most of Costa Rica's gastronomy consist of fresh vegetables such as: chayote or choko, squash, onion, potato, courgette or zucchini, and red pepper. The most famous dish of the country is "Gallo Pinto." Gallo Pinto means "spotted rooster." The base of the dish is rice and beans. It can be served for breakfast or dinner. It has been said that the dish was originally brought over to Latin America and the Caribbean by African slaves.

Costa Rica's Tourism Industry:

Costa Rica is often known as "the poster-child of ecotourism." According to the *Costa Rican Tourism Board*, as of 2009, about forty-seven percent of international tourists engage in activities related to ecotourism. As stated by the Costa Rican government, biodiversity and

environmental conservation is very important. So much so, that in 2013 the Minister of Environment proposed an idea that prompted zoos to remodel and create more spacious and natural habitats for their wildlife animals.

The Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve is a point of convergence in biodiversity and wildlife. It is home to over 2,500 different species of plants, and is an immense attraction for tourists. The limit of daily visitors to the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve is 450 guests per day, but roughly 250,000 tourists visit the Monteverde region each year.

Poa's Volcano Crater and Cocos Island are one of Costa Rica's main ecotourist attractions. They are ranked among the top 100 nominees for the *World's New 7 Wonders of Nature*. According to the *Poas Volcano Tourism Chamber*, each year the volcano receives more than 620,000 visitors, but since eruptive activities has increased those numbers have decreased by roughly sixty percent.

Since the late 1980s, Costa Rica became popular for nature-travel due to its well-established system of national parks. Over 23.4 percent of the country's landmass is considered as protected area. Tourism is an imperative aspect of the Costa Rican economy. It became one of the fastest and largest growing economic sectors and foreign exchange earner for the country by 1995. The number of visitors increased from 780,000 in 1996 to 1 million in 1999. In 2008, roughly 2.1 million foreign tourists visited the country, allowing Costa Rica to earn roughly \$2.1 billion USD that year. According to the *World Travel & Tourism Council*, tourism contributed to 12.5 percent

of the country's GDP and was responsible for 11.7 percent of local employment in 2012. Tourists spent \$164 million USD in 2013. As stated by the *Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index*, in 2016, 2.6 million tourists visited Costa Rica, and spent roughly \$3.4 billion USD.

The Republic of Peru:

The Republic of Peru has a population of approximately 33 million inhabitants. Ecuador and Colombia are the country's northern neighbors, with Brazil to the east, southeast is Bolivia, Chile to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Peru is a representative-democratic state. The official currency of Peru is the Nuevo Sol. Peru has one of the longest history of civilization out of any country. Its heritage traces to dates as far back as the 4th millennia BC, which is approximately 9,000 BC.

Peru's literacy rate is roughly at 94.17 percent as of 2016. Education is free for all until high school. Spanish alongside the indigenous languages of *Quechua* and *Aymara* are the co-official languages of the country. Peru has a racial identity that is made up of: 60.20 percent Mestizos, 25.80 percent are Amerindians/ Indigenous, 5.89 percent are white, 3.57 percent are Afro-Peruvians, 0.16 percent are Asians, and lastly 4.36 percent either identifies as "other" or have chosen not to identify their racial background.

Quechua is spoken by twenty-five percent of the population, specifically by the Andean indigenous group. *Quechua* is also known as Runasimi, the "people's language." The language is classified as one of the world's primary language families. *Aymara* is spoken by 442,000

civilians in Peru. *Aymara* belongs to the “Aymaran” language family, which is related to the “Quechumaran” family. It is believed both languages originated in Peru. *Aymara* is now considered as an endangered language. Both languages of *Quechua* and *Aymara* are dominant language families in the central Andes.

As of 2017, Roman Catholicism is the predominant belief of Peru, followed by: 14.1 percent identifying as Evangelical, 4.8 percent are Jewish, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses, and 5.1 percent identifies as nonreligious or other.

Ceviche is the national dish of Peru. It contains raw fish/seafood marinated in lemon and lime juice. The acidic juice effectively cooks the meat, then the dish is served cold or at room temperature.

Peru's Tourism Industry:

- A. **Lima:** Lima is one of South America's largest metropolitan cities. It is home to the Museo Larco (the museum that holds a collection of Pre-Colombian art), el Museo de la Nación (where one can trace the history of Peru's ancient civilizations), and the Larcomar. Larcomar is an outdoor shopping center located in the Miraflores district that is frequently visited by international tourists. A trip to the city's central district churches is popular amongst tourists. The Cathedral and the Monastery of San Francisco which dates back to the 16th/17th century are often visited due to their subterranean gravesite. In 2017, the Peruvian capital welcomed 2.35 million international tourists.

B. Machu Picchu: Machu Picchu is an ancient city of the Inca Empire located high in the Andes Mountains. The city is 7,790 feet above sea level. It is known as the “lost city” after being rediscovered by Hiram Bingham III in 1911. In Quechua, “Machu Picchu” means “Old Mountain.” Machu Picchu is one of the *New Seven Wonders of the World*. The ancient city is considered to be the main tourist attraction of Peru and one of the most visited sites globally. Visitors are allowed to walk along the mountainous terraces of Machu Picchu. Approximately 1.4 million tourists visited the archaeological site in 2017.

C. Cuzco: Cuzco (can also be spelt as “Cusco”) was once known as the capital of the ancient Inca Empire, with a current population of over 400,000 inhabitants. It is estimated that roughly 1.5 million tourists visit Cusco each year. One of the most well-known and sacred animals of Peru is the alpaca. Many tourists visit the Awanakancha Farm located in Cuzco. It is a small farm dedicated to animals and textile-weaving products made from the animals’ wool. Tourists will visit the farm to meet the many alpacas, llamas, and vicuñas; all of which are assumed to be cousin species of each other. The farm also demonstrates how the animal’s wool is refined, dried, and woven into many fabrics and other textile products. Entrance into Awanakancha is free.

Tourism in Peru makes up the nation's third largest and its fastest growing industry. Since the early 2000s, Peru sees about 1.2 million tourists each year. Tourism in Peru is growing faster compared to any other country in South America. In 2009, Cuzco’s economy received \$2.47

billion USD through tourism. In 2018, the country welcomed 4.4 million tourists, generating \$4.9 billion USD in revenue, according to the country's *Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism*.

The Dominican Republic:

With a population of ten million people, the Dominican Republic is located on the western half of the Hispaniola island in the Greater Antilles of the Caribbean Sea. Most of its population is made up of: 72.9 percent Mulattos and Mestizos, 16.1 percent white, 10.9 percent afro-descendants, and 0.1 percent are Asians. The name "Dominican" derived from the Latin word *Dominicus* which means "Sunday." The official currency of the Dominican Republic is the Dominican Peso.

As of 2015, the country's literacy rate was around ninety-two percent. Education is free and mandatory at an elementary level. Higher levels of learning, excluding university, are also free but are not obligatory. Ninety percent of Dominicans identifies as Christians. A majority claims to be Catholic. Roman Catholicism in the Dominican Republic includes an "African-rooted" religion known as "Santeria." The remaining small percentage of religious believers are made up of those who identify as: Protestants, Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, Baptists, and Jews.

"Samana Creole" is an English dialect spoken by 12,000 inhabitants in the northeastern region of the island. "Samana Creole" is similar to the English Creole spoken in most of the Caribbean. Due to government policies, "Samana Creole" is now an endangered dialect.

Mangú, or mashed plantains, is a well-known breakfast dish of the Dominican Republic. It consists of mashed boiled plantains, fried eggs, red onions, and fried cheese. The dish is best served hot.

The Dominican Republic's Tourism Industry:

The Dominican Republic is one of the most popular tourist destinations of the Caribbean islands. This island is appealing to tourists for its sun, sand, and sea scenery. Top tourist destinations of the country are: Punta Cana and Santo Domingo.

A. Punta Cana: The name Punta Cana translates to “tips of white palms.” Punta Cana is a well-known resort area located in the eastern region of the island. The province has over 100,000 residents. In 2018, Punta Cana received 83.4 percent of the occupancy rate of accommodations in touristic destinations of the Dominican Republic, according to *Statistica*. Punta Cana is known for its clear waters that stretches across its many white sandy beaches. Some of these beaches have been ranked as the world’s best by the European Blue Flag Organization and by UNESCO. Zip-lining, windsurfing, kayaking, and sailing are also some favorite activities that tourists enjoy. Punta Cana receives roughly two million visitors annually.

B. Santo Domingo: Santo Domingo is considered to be one of the main tourist attraction destinations of the island. The city has a population of roughly four million civilians. It is

the capital, the oldest, and most populated city of the Dominican Republic. Santo Domingo was first founded by Bartholomew Columbus on August 5th, 1498. La Ciudad Colonial de Santo Domingo, also known as La Zona, is a historical neighborhood of Santo Domingo. It is the oldest permanent European settlement of the New World. In 1990, the area was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The neighborhood is home to the first cathedral and monastery of the Americas. According to *Statistica*, as of 2018, Santo Domingo received 60.7 percent of the occupancy rate of accommodations in touristic destinations of the Dominican Republic. Santo Domingo is the hotspot of economic activities for the island.

More than six million tourists visit the island annually. Tourism is the fastest growing sector and accounts for more than \$1 billion USD of annual earnings in the country's economy. The Dominican Republic receives over \$45 billion in foreign currency each year.

Effects of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism plays a vital role in the expansion of these developing countries. It holds both economic and cultural consequences. It is believed that tourism contributes to the diminishment of the local identity within these communities. Tourism development dictates that commodities should be present for the tourists in exchange of economic changes and benefits. In return, this affects the everyday life of the local civilians due to exploitation.

Hotel resorts are usually owned by foreigners in developed countries. In such cases, a majority of the profit earned from tourism would automatically go to its parent company. This puts a financial strain on the developing country to maintain these luxury resorts. The Dominican Republic has seen an increase in deforestation, endangered animals, and soil erosion. Soil erosion ends up in the sea and affects the island's coral reefs. *The UN* reported that as of 1993, the island has been losing roughly 20,000 hectares of its forestland each year mainly due to business interests. Deforestation has also been a problem for Costa Rica. According to the documentary, *Quebrando los Huevos de Oro*, many foreigners buy land for the sole purpose of building extravagant resorts, golf fields, and condominiums; essentially taking away vital resources from nearby communities.

Tourism is often seen as controversial. For many of these developing countries, the locals do not have clean water to consume from, while many tourists waste gallons of fresh water at their hotel. In the Dominican Republic there has been an increase in water pollution since the rapid growth of tourism. An increase in water pollution has also been found in Lake Titicaca, located in the Puno region of Peru. Tourism is one of the main sources of income for those who reside on the man-made floating islands of the lake. Unfortunately, Cusco has seen an increase of criminal/ illegal activities since the rise of tourism. In 2012, tourists vandalized a historically-valued site, the famous 12-sided Incan stone wall.

Although tourism brings aid to the local job market, many civilians in these countries live in poverty. As stated by the countries' *Official Statistical Agency*, the poverty rate of both Costa Rica and Peru remains at 21% as of this year. According to the *World Bank*, the Dominican

Republic's poverty rate in 2016 was 19.90%. There are some tourists who travel to these countries to sightsee and participate in voluntary work, "voluntourism." Voluntourism, also known as white saviorism, is the idea that westerners are needed to provide aid and to "save" these people in low-income countries, which is a destructive mentality. Nonprofit organizations such as the Peace Corp endorses white saviorism. A nongovernment organization that was created for humanitarianism doesn't bring aid to these countries because voluntourism is usually short-term. Once the tourists leaves, the civilians returns back to their norm of poverty. Voluntourism tends to cause an uproar. Many of these tourists visit developing countries and immediately post their work on social media for self-gratification. Their posts depicts these countries as helpless and that hope can be found when westerners step into the equation. Annually, more than 1.6 million volun-tourists spend roughly two billion dollars. The white savior complex erases the ramifications of the country's culture rather than it teaching the volunteers how to enjoy the country for its culture and natural beauty.

However, cultural tourism does have a positive impact on both the tourist and the host country. Socially, it exposes visitors to unknown cultures, backgrounds, and different walks of life. It provides an educational opportunity for those who visit. Traveling breaks social barriers, stigmas, and stereotypes. Economically, tourism is instrumental to the growth of local employment. It also provides social stability. Tourism has a beneficial influence on these developing country's economy. In all three cases, tourism is the fastest growing sector and generates the most revenue for Costa Rica, Peru, and the Dominican Republic.

Tourism contributes to the growth of sales, profits, incentives, tax revenues, and income for these countries. It increases foreign flights into the country, which brings more exposure. Tourism also promotes diplomatic relations between foreign countries. The positive impact of eco-cultural tourism increases the awareness of environmental preservation, such is the case of Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. Cultural tourism also contributes to the preservation of historical sites like Machu Picchu. The economy in the Caribbean, specifically the Dominican Republic, is highly dependent on its tourism industry. Cultural tourism allows these developing countries the opportunity to further improve their community and the living conditions of its civilians.

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