

Guided Poverty - Slums Through the Eyes of a Tourist

An extensive analysis of TripAdvisor Travel Reviews and Travel Blogs

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ABSTRACT:

This study discusses how tourists reflect their experience of visiting some of the poorest areas of the globe in a guided tour. Slum tourism is a rising touristic practice that connects the two distinct worlds of poverty and tourism, making it a very interesting phenomenon to research. This thesis analyses the tourists' experiences of Manilla, Kibera, and Belen slums in TripAdvisor reviews and travel blogs. It followed a qualitative thematic analysis of 337 reviews and 11 blogs posts.

Several debates are prevalent in academia that position slum tourism as voyeuristic and as an exploitation of the poor. However, it is also asserted to enhance the life quality of the slum dwellers, to bring economic developments and other non-material benefits, challenging the voyeurism critiques. Slum tours provide the tourists an encounter with the authentic, unspoiled, and uncorrupted by modernity. If slums are carriers of authenticity, they at the same time are significant of post-colonial tourism discourses of "othering". In this sense, visitors feel motivated with a search for authenticity, but also to contribute and get educated to the "others" reality.

Different authors researched how tourists frame slums as places of hope, progress, and self-development in TripAdvisor, neglecting the attention to real problems and need for structural changes. Tour guides are argued to twist the representation of the slums' reality, complacent with narratives of hope, romanticizing and normalizing extreme poverty.

The present thesis highlights that the tourists are attentive to the harsh reality of the slums. Although reflecting on their experience as challenging, authentic, unvarnished, and incredible, they did not fail in recognizing the need for structural changes in slums. Findings show that tourists left the slums "enlightened" and "humbled", valuing their own privileged lives. Their slum experience left them attentive to the huge disparities prevalent in the world and with desires to contribute in any way possible, not sharing a view of a "romanticized poverty". However, this narrative is also implied as an attempt to ease their uneasy feeling of being tourists in a place of death, filth, and starvation. In this sense, a negotiation about the ethical value of their experience was constantly questioned in their discourse. Still, narratives of doing the "right thing" were frequent, acknowledging the two-ended benefits of the tours. The guides are argued to be important pieces in a slum experience, defending their first-hand knowledge and active role in the slums' development. The analysis highlighted that their experience was authentic and not considered voyeuristic, and slums were framed as places of interesting cultural expressions, hope, happiness, hard work, but of huge inequalities and injustice. Guided tours were, in this regard, very informative and educational, framed as a step in the right direction, and as mean to contribute in some way.

KEYWORDS: Slum Tourism; Authenticity; Voyeurism; TripAdvisor reviews; Travel Blogs

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades, slum tourism has been growing on a global scale and drawing the interest of the international academy (Gui & Zhong, 2022). Slum tourism defines the conversion of areas that are known for their extreme poverty and harsh living conditions, into a touristic product (Dürr & Jaffe, 2012; Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012).

Other than home of extreme poverty and crime, slums are also considered places of rich cultural expressions (Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012). As such, visiting them is argued to be directly tied to a feeling of entering places of “others”, contemplating, and living authentic travel experiences (Crapolicchio, Sarrica, Rega, Norton, & Vezzali, 2022; Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012).

While before the increased tourists’ interest for slums, visiting them used to be a forbidden or dangerous endeavour, currently it is an organized and controlled touristic activity that attracts millions of tourists every year. Due to an increased interest of the international tourism community, in the last decade, new slum locations emerged in the touristic panorama (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015). Other than the historical and worldly famous Brazilian *favelas* and South African ghettos, slums in countries such as India, Philippines, Jamaica, Mexico, Egypt, Ghana, Namibia and Zimbabwe started to develop the interest of slum tourists (Rogerson & Mthombeni, 2015). Nowadays, the visits to these poor urban areas are extremely professionalized and take mainly the form of guided tours.

However, considering its nature of turn poverty into an attraction, slum tourism is, since its earliest form, a very controversial theme in both public and academic debates. If, for some, is considered to contribute to poverty alleviation, raise of awareness to poverty and to the development of slums (Frenzel, 2013, 2016; Hammad, 2021), for others, commodifying poverty by converting the homes of slums dwellers into a touristic attraction, is a clear exploitation of the poor and a violation of their privacy, being considered a sort of voyeurism (Rajamohan & Sundar, 2014; Nisbett, 2017; Iqani, 2016). An answer to this debate remains subjective and indicates

that there are multiple dimensions for approaching it. In this sense, studying its practices and some of its main actors– the tourists, and the tour operators – helps in achieving a richer understanding of those dimensions.

The present thesis analyses how tourists frame their experience after visiting, and how slum guided tours influence these tourists' perceptions of the life in slums. The main goal is to understand how tourists describe and position extreme poverty, what feelings arise from their experience, and what image do they construct about slums. This was possible by conducting an analysis of TripAdvisor travel reviews and travel blogs in three distinct locations: Manilla, in Philippines; Kibera, in Kenya; and Belen, in Peru.

What vision and opinion do tourists have after touring slums and observe how people live in such deprived conditions? What discourses arise from their experience? Can we discuss a normalised, and even romanticized vision of poverty? What is the role that guided tours play in all of this? Do the tourists leave the slums with a different perspective of life? These are all questions that this research tries to provide an answer to. As such, the research question is formulated as follows: *How do tourist discuss and reflect their experience of Manilla, Kibera, and Belen slums on TripAdvisor travel reviews and travel blogs after participating in a guided tour?*

The choosing of these locations reflects the fact that they are becoming increasingly popular slum destinations for tourists, but still more "niche" than the historical slum regions in South Africa, Brazil, or, more recently, India (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015). In this way, these locations are more relevant to conduct research upon, considering that Brazil, India, and South Africa have been more extensively researched in the past years. Moreover, it can be argued that, for being more popular and commonly visited, these locations have achieved a certain level of standardization and ritualization of their touristic activities. In this sense, smaller locations offer a more interesting opportunity to examine tourists' opinions and perspectives on their slum experiences. In such manner, analysing Manilla, Kibera and Belen can provide new and more up to date insights about slum tours.

Moreover, the focus on guided tours stands for exploring its controversial character since critics argue that they romanticize and normalize extreme poverty (Nisbett, 2017; Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020). Nisbett states “(...) the tour operators and tourists jointly construct a view of poverty that is normalized, even romanticized. It is seen as neutral, natural and benign, rather than something deadly, which diminishes wellbeing and threatens life” (Nisbett, 2017, p. 37). While tourists leave the slums happy for having witnessed some place of realness and authenticity, the slum dwellers are left in the same poverty settings, with little space for change and progress (Nisbett, 2017).

Previous studies focused on the overall experience of tourists visiting slums (Dovey & King, 2012), how the poverty image is represented (Dyson, 2012; Meschkank, 2010; Turan, 2017), how slum tourism can contribute to poverty alleviation (Frenzel, 2013; Hammad, 2021), the ethics of this kind of activity (Rajamohan & Sundar, 2014; Crapolicchio, Sarrica, Rega, Norton, & Vezzali, 2022), and the role of tour guides in the changing of preceptions (Turan, 2017). Also, in more similar lines with this thesis and within a limited research body, studies were conducted on slum tourists’ TripAdvisor reviews by Huysamen et al. (2020), by Nisbett (2017), and by Iqani (2016). Although mentioning guided tours, it was not their main angle of research. Moreover, the slum locations under analysis in this thesis also differ from past related research. With this said, the present study intends to fill this literature gap, and combine both tourists’ TripAdvisor travel reviews and travel blogs, with the experience that arise from going in a slum guided tour.

It is academically relevant to contribute to an emergent topic as slum tourism since it deals with two completely different and relevant realities - the tourism industry, and one of the biggest socio-economic problems of the world – extreme poverty. Understanding how slums are framed and discussed in travel platforms appears as crucial to a better representation of extreme poverty in the context of an increased globalized world. Studying slum tourism is providing a voice to slum communities, a tangible approach to poverty, and an opening of ways to better comprehend this complex and culturally rich places.

This study contributes to better illustrate how the real problems in slums are being considered by tourists and can provide a vehicle for the public to have a glimpse of understanding on what is happening in these places. This thesis can also contribute to a possible reflection of the tour operators, in assessing how and in what ways is their activity influencing the tourists' perceptions about slums. Finally, this study pretends to broaden the readers' knowledge of the debates surrounding slum tourism, as well as serving as a tool to be utilized to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

This thesis delves into concepts of slum tourism, the ethics behind this activity, and to concepts of authenticity and voyeurism. It will pay particular attention to how the cultural, economic, and social "other" is represented in user-generated-content (UGC), in the form of travel reviews and travel blogs. This study tries to shed a light on key slum tourism issues such as the commodification of extreme poverty (which can lead to its romanticization), the impact of slum tours on the tourists' slum imaginary, and the role of tour guides on the tourists' portrayal of these places. By doing all of this, it contributes to the existent slum tourism academic debates, and its exposing in travel platforms, which are increasingly a relevant topic to research within tourism studies.

Regarding the structure of this thesis, it starts with a theoretical framework, where important past research and key concepts are covered. A discussion of methodological approaches follows, in which the research methods' choice, the selection of the data, and the analytic techniques followed are outlined and properly defended. After, the results derived from the data analysis are presented and extensively discussed, providing the reader with in-depth explanations of how the collected data helps in providing a justified answer to the proposed research question. Finally, in the last chapter, research conclusions are presented and discussed, summarizing the main findings and main arguments of this study. This is joined by the study' limitations and suggestions for future related research.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter starts by providing the reader with proper slum tourism definitions and the history and evolution of the phenomenon. The tourists' motivations and intentions to visit slums will be introduced, as well as the reasons behind their increased interest in slums. Moreover, an overview on the specific case of slum guided tours will be provided, covering their moral ambiguity, and outlining the slums' representation in the TripAdvisor platform. Finally, the chapter will end approaching the ethical debates existent in academia regarding the turning of places of extreme poverty into a tourist attraction, analyzing both benefits and harms that it causes for local communities.

As the main arguments, it can be stated that tourists show an increased interest in slums because they carry a level of authenticity that cannot be found in other places formatted to receive tourists. Although touristic experiences in slums are starting to get more standardized and professionalized, it is still possible to contemplate how people live below the poverty line. The experience of such conditions is argued to offer tourists a meaningful, educational, and enlightening encounter with the authentic. However, these visits are criticized for being voyeuristic, as they entail people in a position of privilege gawking at poverty for pleasure, engaging in slum tourism to alleviate their consciousness. The action of the tour guides is also criticized to normalize and even romanticize extreme poverty, diverting the tourists' attention to the slums' real issues.

Moreover, the tourists feel the need to describe their slum visit in travel blogs and on TripAdvisor as an experience that changed their lives. For some authors, this narrative is criticized as a strategy used by tourists to position themselves in the realm of ethical tourism, fighting the voyeurism criticism associated with it. This is also argued to accentuate the differences between the wealthy tourist and the poor slum dweller.

Additionally, travel platforms like TripAdvisor, or travel blogs, are extremely useful to learn more about destinations and touristic experiences. However, it cannot

be disregarded that these have a “specific” audience. These will be read mainly by tourists from the global north, who are looking for feedback on the experiences of others. In this manner, the opinions and recommendations that tourists write can be considered performative. They use a certain “morally accepted” discourse for others to read and identify, and in this sense, they may not portray the complete reality of their experience, but rather how they position themselves about the ethics around slum tourism.

2.1 History of Slum tourism

Slum tourism is considered by many as an emerging tourism practice (Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012). The phenomenon is argued to be one of the most rapidly growing types of tourism after the 2000’s (Turan, 2017). This practice entails the purposeful intention to travel and visit some of the poorest urban zones of the globe, participating in cultural activities and actively interacting with the local population (Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, Slum Tourism, 2012). Slums are the product of an accelerated growth of population in urban areas, making it almost impossible for local authorities to provide basic amenities like housing, health infrastructures, or sanitary conditions to everyone (Gui & Zhong, 2022). These urban areas are primarily located in the global south, and receive the interest and visit of, mainly, wealthy visitors from the global north (Dyson, 2012).

Although only object of academia’s interest in the last two decades (Gui & Zhong, 2022), the first signs of similar practices remount further back in time. The term *slumming* has its roots in the late nineteenth century, when the Victorian London upper classes used to leave the comfort of their houses to participate in “tours” towards the East part of London, to observe and contemplate how the poor lived (Koven, 2004; Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012). About one century after, the concept of *slumming* was imported to the United States of America. The wealthy people of London who used to “tour” slums in their hometown, brought the concept to New York, with the goal of comparing the North American slums with the ones in London (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015; Meschkank, 2010).

These early forms of slum tourism in the global north paved the way to its contemporary form, revealing several similarities to current practices, now present in the Global South (Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012). Slums are early described in both tourism discourses and existent literature as places of “others”, which are more than places of poverty. In Frenzel et al. own words, “(...) the slum was also a surface for the projection of a societal ‘Other’ loaded with repulsion and fascination (...)” (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015, p. 241). An attraction to see “otherness” and to contemplate the “other side of the city” is argued to shape the early slum tourism practices (Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012).

However, it was in the global south, specifically in the South African townships and in Brazilian *favelas*, around the 1990's, that the phenomenon evolved and assumed its most similar form to current days. The South African townships gained a more assumed touristic character in post-apartheid times, and international events hosted in Brazil, such as the FIFA world cup tournament, and the Olympic games, raised awareness to these interesting poor settlements, increasing the slum tourism popularity in a global context (Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012). In this manner, both Brazil and South Africa were clear indicators of the high professionalized character of slum tourism, putting in evidence the activity of touring slums as a successful “business” (Gui & Zhong, 2022). These two countries paved the way to other global south destinations to start paying attention to the potential of their own slums for touristic proposes.

Therefore, the slums tourism geographical borders spread from South Africa and Brazil to other countries like India, Philippines, Jamaica, Mexico, Egypt, Ghana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe (Rogerson & Mthombeni, 2015). Today, slum tourism is a developed, organized, and affirmed touristic activity, being in many cases supported by local governments, and present in travel itineraries as “must do” activities (Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012). A whole business was built around poverty (Gui & Zhong, 2022) and, consequently, the academic interest for this topic expanded (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015). Since 2004, several studies approaching different aspects of the phenomenon were published (Gui & Zhong, 2022). Examples of past research focused on the overall experience of tourists visiting slums and how the

poverty image is represented (Nisbett, 2017; Iqani, 2016; Dovey & King, 2012), how slum tourism can contribute to poverty alleviation (Frenzel, 2013), how guided tours shape the visitors' conceptions of slums (Turan, 2017), and the ethics of this kind of activity (Cardoso, et al., 2022). All this research is going to be discussed in the following sections.

2.2 Slums as touristic attractions

The tourist profile is changing, and the so called "new tourists" are increasingly searching for more "real" and meaningful experiences in their travels. According to Dyson, "For many, holidays are not solely a time for 'relaxation and recuperation' but also a time for immersion into foreign landscapes and cultures". In the view of several authors, slums are not just places of harsh living conditions, crime, violence, and poverty. Steinbrink et al. signify that slums are containers of authenticity, deviant liberty, and "otherness" (Frenzel, Koens, & Steinbrink, 2012; Dyson, 2012). Dyson puts it in an interesting perspective - "Across the world 'the slum' is positioned as space more authentic and realistic than the artifice of the concrete cityscape" (Dyson, 2012, p. 1). Therefore, they constitute places of interest for the tourists who wish to get off the beaten track and have more authentic encounters with the local culture. (Altamirano, 2022; Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015; Dyson, 2012). Slum tours offer access to places which were, otherwise, inaccessible (Dyson, 2012).

Privitera critically argues that poverty is everywhere, and most of the times it does not spark interest. However, it becomes suddenly fascinating when it is happening in specific places, and when carries different ways of life (Privitera, 2015). Likewise, several studies have been conducted in an attempt to analyse the reasons that lead tourists to visit places of extreme poverty (Dyson, 2012; Rolfes, 2010; Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015). Similar results were found in South Africa townships, Brazilian *favelas* and Indian slums, where tourists justify their visit with a desire to see the "real image" of a country, to help in its development, or just due to the attraction for the unknown (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015).

These reasons relate to past research, in the sense that a quest for authenticity is a key motivator behind the tourists' attraction for slums (Meschkank, 2010; Rolfes, 2010).

However, slum tourism is criticized by several authors as it is argued to be an exploitation of the people living in extreme poor areas, to the sole entertain of tourists (Rajamohan & Sundar, 2014). Critics claim that slum tourism objectifies the poor and puts into perspective the huge differences between visitor and resident (Whyte, Selinger, & Outterson, 2011). From a post-colonial perspective, Iqani suggests that slum tourism sits on the slums' colonialism, apartheid, and neoliberal backgrounds, that stimulated a continuous and unfair exploration of the poor and of their labour. The author adds that "People are not simply underprivileged; they have been deprived and exploited by others (...)" (Iqani, 2016, p. 83). Therefore, being tourism a privilege of the wealthy, the author finds hypocritical and morally questionable the turning of places that were, in their first-instance, created by oppression and privilege of the wealthy, into a touristic attraction, which is in itself argued to be an exploitation of the poor (Iqani, 2016).

From a sociological perspective slum tourism is argued to cause mental trauma for the slum residents and to accentuate the socio-economic differences between visitor and local (Rajamohan & Sundar, 2014). In this sense, the visitors (tourists) are placed in a position of power and privilege, while the visited (local slum communities) are framed as inferior human beings, and which "poor settings" serve only the purpose of educate tourists to a different reality of their own (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020). In the same lines, Gui and Zhong argue that the tourists search for authenticity in slums is what emphasizes the socio-economic differences between the visitors and the locals. The author defends that turning poverty into a touristic attraction is what highlights the voyeuristic character of slum tourism (Gui & Zhong, 2022).

However, Lisle (2004) argues that authenticity and voyeurism are intrinsically interrelated. The tourists take holidays to escape banality, and to look for something extraordinary outside of their homes, searching for the real and for the authentic. This search entail that sites drowned by catastrophe, like slums, are the only places left in the world that are not simulated, mediated, and banal, being, therefore, authentic in their own discourse. In this sense, the author argues that "people are not just repulsed

by sites of horror—they are also attracted to them as possible containers of authenticity and reality.” (Lisle, 2004, p. 16). That is the reason that leads the author to defend that discourses placing voyeurism as a wrong behaviour in tourism fail in understanding the reasons for which tourists need to experience sites of tragedy in first-person.

But the visitors’ interest for slums are not only explained by curiosity and a search for authenticity. The intention to visit slums comes also with a moral obligation rooted in the tourists’ motivations, to feel that they are “part of the salvation”. Frenzel et al. state that helping slum inhabitants and directly intervene to the slums’ development act as a desire for the tourists, as they, somehow place themselves as “agents of change” (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015). Hammad also defends that the tourists feel motivated and driven by a desire to contribute to the slums’ development through the profits generated by touristic activities (Hammad, 2021).

This is related with the role that tourism has nowadays, where it went from presenting a total leisure character, to possessing an additional social and humanistic layer. Nowadays, there are several charity tourism practices that intend providing some sort of help to the visited communities (Amo, Jayawardena, & Gaultier, 2019). Frenzel criticizes this view, pointing out the hidden side of the so called “humanitarian tourism”, which positions the residents as needing and awaiting the tourists’ salvation, relating it to a post-colonial common critique of the phenomenon (Frenzel, 2016; Iqani, 2016).

Moreover, the tourists’ visit to slums is argued to “hide” an important component that the phenomenon fails to deliver – the enlightenment of the real problems and challenges that slum inhabitants go through every day, replaced by a vision of hope and progress (Nisbett, 2017; Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020). And since the visits take mainly the form of guided tours, these are often criticized for not presenting the complete reality of the life of these poor communities (Turan, 2017). This is what this thesis intends to discover by analysing the discourse of tourists in TripAdvisor travel reviews and travel blogs posts. The goal bares in identifying how tourists relate to their slums experience, and if they acknowledge the problems of the

slum communities, or if those are hidden and replaced by an optimistic and hopeful view on their reality.

2.3 Slum Guided Tours

Slum guided tours are also called “reality tours”, as they intend to portray and offer to visitors an experience of how it is like to live below the poverty line (Rolfes, 2010). This practice is gaining importance as Dyson affirms: “Getting a ‘taste of real life’ by exploring the people and landscapes that sit off the standard tourist itinerary is fast becoming a priority for many tourists across the world.” (Dyson, 2012, p. 1). But the fundamental question is whether these “reality tours” actually provide a true representation of the reality.

In this context, the role of a tour guide cannot be disregarded as crucial to any touristic experience, as they are the front-line professionals and the information-givers, acting as representatives and “ambassadors” of the destination in the eyes of tourists. As such, they are the bridge between visitor/resident, and the holders of the truth (Pereira, 2015; Turan, 2017; Ap & Wong, 2001). According to Ap and Wong, tour guides have the capacity to transform a simple tour into a whole experience. They are able to achieve this due to their knowledge and interpretation of the destinations’ culture, and by maximizing their communication and service skills (Ap & Wong, 2001).

In 2017, Turan suggested that the tour guides have a crucial role in shaping the thoughts of the tourists about slums. From his analysis of TripAdvisor reviews, at least in Delhi, India, everything in slum tours is perceived by tourists as ritualized and staged. The guides walk through familiar routes to offer the visitor a supposed “real experience of slum life” (Turan, 2017). This is criticized by the author in the sense that the guides show to visitors what they expect to see, and not the entire slum reality. However, Dyson defends that there is a fine line between what is real and what is fiction, appealing to the subjective character of what is considered authentic or staged in a slum tour (Dyson, 2012). Similarly, Rolfes state that, in a slum tour, the concepts of authenticity and reality cannot be taken by their face value and must be perceived as social constructions by the tour guides (Rolfes, 2010). The author adds that the role of a tour guide is not promoting poverty, but rather relativizing it. By doing so, the guides

intend to diminish the slums' exclusive association with it, elucidating the visitors that there is more to slums than poverty and suffering. Not disregarding an objective view of a hard reality, the tour operators try to normalize it, pointing out the resilience and creative engagement of the slum dwellers (Rolfes, 2010).

This is criticized by some authors (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015; Nisbett, 2017). Frenzel et al. (2015) and Nisbett (2017) argue that the tour operators, together with the tourists, construct a romanticized image of the life in slums, which is miss represented in the tourists' post-visit discourse, painting a rather "positive" image of poverty, consequently diminishing the real importance of the problem, depoliticizing and normalizing it. Gui and Zhong consider this to be dangerous, as it downplays the real suffering that these communities go through every day (Gui & Zhong, 2022). Nisbett defends that this romanticized vision does not foment progress and change, but rather limit the action and potential of slum tours as "international development tools" (Nisbett, 2017). As an example, in the case of Dharavi, India, "Its poor sanitation, lack of clean water, squalid conditions and overcrowding are ignored and replaced by a vision of resourcefulness, hard work and diligence." (Nisbett, 2017, p. 37). To Huysamen et al., this jointly constructed narrative is what allows the tourists to not position their slum experience as voyeuristic and exploitative, but rather beneficial and "needed" (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020).

Adding to the role of guided tours in shaping the tourists' perceptions of slums, Meschkank researched how are the Indian slums perceived in the eyes of visitors before visiting them, analysing the impact of slum guided tours in the possible change of those perceptions (Meschkank, 2010). Rolfes conducted similar research, but in Cape Town, South Africa. Both authors' findings showcase that, before touring slums, these were framed by tourists as places of "passivity, stagnation and desperation". However, after participating in a slum guided tour, the tourists' perception of poverty shifted to a more optimistic view, associating the life in slums with signs of "activity, development and hope", being their image centred on "activity, progress, the friendliness of the people, the sense of community, and good educational opportunities." (Meschkank, 2010, p. 61; Rolfes, 2010; Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser,

2020, p. 6). This co-relates to the Nisbett 's romanticized vision of poverty fomented by the tour guides (Nisbett, 2017).

Additionally, guided tours are often criticized by academics relating to their ethical character. A Koens's study about slum tourism suggests that one of the biggest companies responsible for slum tours in that region is far away from being "immersed in the community", and which efforts and contributions to the community development remain largely unknown (Koens, 2015). This creates a situation where the locals get upset, leaving them with wishes of more transparency and greater direct involvement in the touristic activities (Koens, 2015). Amo et al. add to this business character of slum tours, stating that, in its majority, the tour guides are no part of the slum communities, being involved in tours out of pure business (Amo, Jayawardena, & Gaultier, 2019). Nevertheless, this contradicts the Turan's findings that showcase the guides being individuals of the communities (or locals) as one of the most important aspects relating the quality of the information provided (Turan, 2017).

2.3.1 TripAdvisor travel reviews

In the same line of this thesis, Huysamen et al., Iqani, and Nisbett researched tourists' experiences in slums by analysing online TripAdvisor travel reviews (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020; Iqani, 2016; Nisbett, 2017). Their research tried to enlighten how tourists construct slums as places of hope, and as culturally vibrant spaces, twisting the concept of slum tourism and positioning themselves as "ethical, enlightened and morally superior tourists" (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020, p. 2). Their research showcased that the framing of slums as "places of hope" all around TripAdvisor, put in evidence the neo-liberal narratives present in the tourists' discourse.

Huysamen et al. (2020), in conformity with Nisbett (2017), argue that this discourse fails in acknowledging the urge to real structural changes in these places, contributing to the depoliticization and normalization of poverty. Moreover, and also according to the same authors, Iqani (2016) argued that the tourists' narratives about leaving the slums "humbled" and "enlightened" by experiencing authentic poverty

“reflects a colonial gaze that discursively fixes slums outside urban modernity while narratives of hard-working, dignified, proud, and happy residents minimises ‘the violence of poverty’ and erases the long-established structural inequalities and injustices that have produced these relative positions of poverty and privilege in the first place.” (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020, p. 7). This is a truly interesting perspective to consider, as it exposes the role that the guided tours are argued to have in the positioning of slums as productive cultural spaces, rather than places of suffering, death, and inequality.

Huysamen et al. concluded that the framing of slums as places of hope is what allow the tourists to position themselves within the realm of ethical tourism. Framing of slums as hopeful places just accentuates and conceals the inequalities between tourist and locals, normalizes poverty, and contributes to the preponderate of social inequalities (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020). This is the connection that can be made by this thesis, where the visitors express their feelings through reviews and blogs. In this sense, the narrative present in TripAdvisor reviews is perceived to shift the role of a slum tours as not to “showcase poverty”, but rather to construct a cultural and educational view about it (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020).

Nevertheless, the tourists’ discourse present in reviews or blogs is performative. They represent what their position is, and not fully how their experience really was. The tourists write for the future readers, who come usually of similar backgrounds (tourists from the global north) to validate their positioning. In this sense, considering the common critiques made towards slum tourism, to appear “morally correct”, their discourse can be argued to have some additional “colouring”.

2.4 An ethical debate

The tourism relation with poverty is still a very controversial topic in academia, since combining pleasure with suffering origins an obvious point of conflict for most (Altamirano, 2022; Nisbett, 2017). There is a whole ethical debate around the idea of making poverty an attraction, and for Frenzel “Tourism is no longer only a means to

fight poverty, but poverty is an attraction of tourism.” (Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015, p. 1).

While some researchers argue that slum tourism is a tool that can enhance and contribute to the development of slums (Frenzel, 2013; Cardoso, et al., 2022; Dyson, 2012; Amo, Jayawardena, & Gaultier, 2019; Hammad, 2021), others defend that it is a form of voyeurism and an exploitation of the poor (Iqani, 2016; Rajamohan & Sundar, 2014). Psychoanalytic theories place voyeurism as the desire to look for something that is forbidden (Lisle, 2004). With this desire comes simultaneously a repulsion for the place under scrutiny. This is what happens with tourists visiting slums. Their desire for the authentic and for the raw parts of the country, is joined by a questioning of the reasons that lead them to be attracted to them in a first instance (Lisle, 2004). In this sense, voyeurism must be viewed as an effective discourse that controls how tourists consume tragedy, disaster, and violence by invoking both desire and repulsion with a search for authenticity (Lisle, 2004).

The nature of slum tours is actively criticized as voyeuristic due to the fact of being comprehended by wealthy individuals observing people living in deprived areas from a position of privilege and safety, serving the only purpose of satisfy the tourists' curiosity (Dyson, 2012). Some even refer to it as "poverty porn" since it objectifies the underprivileged, making their plight an allure for people in positions of power (Nisbett, 2017; Amo, Jayawardena, & Gaultier, 2019). Rajamohan and Sundar state that tourists sneaking inside a slum house to see how a poor family lives is pathetic and diminishing for that family, appealing to the exploitative character of the activity (Rajamohan & Sundar, 2014).

On the one hand the tourism industry should not preponderate and be complacent with such activities, “encouraging” poverty. But, on the other hand, since slums inevitable in world full of socio-economic disparities (Gui & Zhong, 2022), the benefits that can derive from touristic activity cannot also be disregarded as impactful (Nisbett, 2017). Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, it is important to approach the existent ethical debates in the light of the advantages and disadvantages that the touristic activity in slums can brings. These were specifically analysed considering the tourists discourse present in the travel reviews and blog posts, relating to their slum

experience, and what they consider to be the benefits of their presence, and the downfalls.

Considering the supposed benefits, Frenzel argues that an improved understanding of poverty is made possible by studying slum tourism and the practices around it (Frenzel, 2013). Dyson claims that slum tourism can have a conscientizing effect on visitors and raise awareness for poverty (Dyson, 2012) and Hammad defends a raise of local awareness for the positive consequence that slum tourism can bring to Egypt (Hammad, 2021). Dovey and King suggest that the “obscene” interest of western tourists for slums can be vehicle to potential transformations and political change (Dovey & King, 2012). In this sense, organized tours to slums help in poverty alleviation due to an increased flux of money entering there, as well as other non-material benefits that tourism brings, such as social interactions between visitor/resident (Frenzel, 2013).

In opposition, several authors share a different perspective. Nisbett argues that there is a huge lack of evidence that showcase the local communities as the ones benefiting from touristic activity, namely from guided tours (Nisbett, 2017). While tour operators claim to be strongly against voyeurism and to give part of the tours’ profits back to the community, there is not enough research that can prove it to a large extent. Similarly, Privitera argue that slum tours can be extremely unfair for the local communities when these are not directly involved in the touristic activities (Privitera, 2015). Likewise, Cardoso et al, who conducted research about slum tourism in Mumbai, India, argue that the tour operators are the ones who benefit the most, and not the slum habitants. Their research concluded that, in line with other studies, slum tourism causes more damage than benefits (Cardoso, et al., 2022).

From a sociological perspective, Rajamohan and Sundar and Cardoso et al., the concept of slum tourism is a direct attack to the dignity and privacy of the poor, arguing that showcasing “their” poverty can create mental trauma for the slum residents that feel observed, excluded and caged, seeing their life being turned into a touristic attraction (Rajamohan & Sundar, 2014; Cardoso, et al., 2022). This creates a distance between the visitor and the resident that contibutes to the feeling of inferiority and less dignified postion of the slum dwellers (Cardoso, et al., 2022).

Additionally, if slums represent a quest for authenticity and for “real” landscapes, the visitors later shock with the harsh reality of the life conditions in there (Dovey & King, 2012).

This takes on an even more contentious character because slum tourism is heavily concentrated in a small number of locations that are easier to access or that are more visible (particularly due to their feature in popular media). As a result, they receive the majority of slum tourists in the global picture of the activity (Rolfes, 2010). According to Cardoso et al., “80% of the slum tours are concentrated in just two destinations: the townships of South Africa and the favelas of Brazil (...)”, with Indian locations gaining also a more influential character in the last years (Cardoso, et al., 2022). This causes huge differences in the possible development of slums, and a lack of space and clarity for effective structural changes in the global panorama.

However, there is also research that showcase that the local communities do not feel bad, annoyed, or exploited by the presence of tourists in their hometown, and rather the opposite (Koens, 2015; Chege & Waweru, 2014; Amo, Jayawardena, & Gaultier, 2019). According to Koens (2015), Chege and Waweru (2014), and Amo et al. (2019), for slum dwellers, tourism is seen as a source of income, generate business opportunities, and creates employment. Amo et al. (2019) state that slum dwellers feel proud to show their homes to visitors, and do not position tourism as a exploitative or voyeuristic activity.

In conclusion, the moral character of slum tourism remain ambiguous within academia, and, as all questions from the same nature, it is rather a complex phenomenon, which moral implications depend on the prespective that it is looked at. Yet, even considering all the ethical debates, slum tourism keeps gaining force year after year, and these locations are more visited than ever (Gui & Zhong, 2022; Turan, 2017). On the one hand, those in charge of tourism continue to profit from poverty and suffering, which is immoral. But it is also asserted to enhance and contribute to the quality of life for slum dwellers and creating awareness for poverty (Chege & Waweru, 2014; Dovey & King, 2012). Cardoso et al. suggests that, to make slum tourism more sustainable, there is the need to a greater involvement of the local population, to a more “humane” manner of conducting slum guided tours, making sure

that the local communities benefit from the activity, and a more respectful way of advertising slums in general (Cardoso, et al., 2022).

As so, it is of relevance to analyse how tourists frame and represent their experiences and perceptions about slums tours. By doing this, is then possible to see which arguments fit better in the practicality of the activity, as well as better assessing the tourists' concerns regarding to its morality and ethics.

3. Methodology

After explaining the theoretical foundations of this thesis, together with its main concepts and previous studies, the present section focusses on laying out the methodological approaches that were followed to effectively provide a reasoned answer to this thesis' research question: *How do tourist discuss and reflect their experience of Manilla, Kibera, and Belen slums on TripAdvisor travel reviews and travel blogs after participating in a guided tour?*

Components such as the thesis research design, the sampling and analysis methods, as well as the procedures followed will be covered and further explained upon, providing a proper reflection and justification on the reasons behind their choice. Some limitations on the methods used are also stated, as well as some ethical considerations.

3.1 Choice of method

The present thesis focusses in understanding how tourists frame and represent slums after participating in a guided tour through Manilla, Kibera, and Belen, and understanding what discourses arise from it. This was accomplished by an extensive analysis of slum tourists travel reviews posted on the TripAdvisor platform and travel blogs' posts online and describing their slum experience.

To effectively provide an answer to this, a qualitative content analysis was the method of choice to collect and extensively analyse the data. According to Sandelowski, the fundamental aim of conducting qualitative research is to understand how different individuals make sense of the world around them (Sandelowski, 2004). Qualitative research methods use the analysis of words to interpret a specific collection of material, whereas quantitative research methods use statistics and measurable data (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, the choice of qualitative methods allows to retrieve more deep and insightful findings, which quantitative methods cannot effectively provide (Bryman, 2012). Likewise, to truly

understand the tourists' practices, behaviour, and perspectives regarding touring slums, a qualitative approach allows for a better understanding of tourists' perceptions and opinions about slum life, as well as on the character of the slum guided tours. This will be concretely observed through the way that tourists express their experience in TripAdvisor travel reviews and travel blogs' posts.

Moreover, this thesis deals with online material available throughout online platforms, therefore it follows a content analysis approach. Schreier defends that content analysis is a research method extremely useful to analyse online material and attribute meaning and significance to it (Schreier, 2012). However, it is important to note that meaning is not a given "thing", in the sense that the data does not speak for itself. It is rather fruit of the research own interpretation (Schreier, 2012). Although subjective to every researcher, a level of standardization of meaning can be achieved by researchers with the same cultural background and ideologies, which will, to some extent, agree with the meaning of a certain collection of material, addressing therefore the issues of validity and reliability.

3.2 Operationalization

The operationalization is the process of describing how the study concepts' will be concretely observable through the data analysis (Bryman, 2012). Based on this thesis' research question, one of its principal goals is to analyse how tourists represent their experience of slums and slum life, after participating in a guided tour. As so, it will look directly into the concept of voyeurism, which is the one of the most discussed concepts around slum tourism and regards the criticisable nature of the activity. This will be concretely observable through the way in which the travellers relate to their experience, and to what behaviour they demonstrated in the slum guided tours, as well as on what feelings the tours arose in them. Moreover, as the question of ethics is pertinent to discussions of slum tourism, this will be concretely analysed by the way that the tourists express their feelings, concerns, and overall attitudes towards engaging in such controversial activities. Additionally, the concept of authenticity will also be explored, specifically relating it to the action of the tour guides. This concept

will be concretely analysed by observing and understanding what is the role that guided tours possess in the (changing of) perception of undergoing in a so-called “authentic slum experience”. Moreover, it will also explore the tourists’ framing of slums as places of authenticity where one can observe the real image of a country and analyse how this view relates to the character of the guided tours.

This is the basis that underpin the conceptual framework of this thesis, and which allowed for a rational and logic finding of interesting conclusions that illustrate the proposed research question’ goals.

3.3 Sampling strategy

This study collected a large number of travel reviews on the TripAdvisor platform, as well as travel blogs’ posts available throughout the internet. TripAdvisor appears as an interesting platform to research due to its popular character among the international tourism community, being one of the most trusted and visited online touristic platforms in the world (Xie, Chen, & Wu, 2016; Fong, 2010). Furthermore, according to Iqani, by being constantly updated by its users, represents a “living and evolving collectively produced discourse about tourism” (Iqani, 2016, p. 66). In this sense, it is relevant to academic research.

Additionally, it is interesting to consider two distinct forms of writing about touristic experiences (travel reviews vs blog posts), where travel reviews are shorter and contain less information, and the travel blogs more extensive, requiring more elaboration. On the one hand, less information can be claimed to “go straight to the point”, but, on the other hand, it may exclude crucial justifications that allows to conduct a detailed analysis regarding tourists’ experiences in slums. Blog posts are more extensive, and the tourists have the “space” to truly express themselves and their feelings towards touring places of such extreme poverty, and perhaps could provide more in-depth explanations of the moral ambiguity of those same places. All in all, one can argue that the combination of both formats of writing about touristic experiences in slums allows for an interesting contrast and result in meaningful findings, being, in this sense, justified the reason behind their choice. Moreover, both

these forms of writing about their touristic experiences are written with a specific audience in mind - wealthy individuals that are looking to do have the same slum experience. This factor may lead the tourists to express themselves in a more colourful way, illustrating their experience in a form to which others can identify and relate to.

In order to collect the proper data to provide an answer to this thesis' research question, a purposive method of sampling was pursued. Inside this method, a criteria sampling was applied. Purposive sampling is taken by different authors as the goal-directed selection of cases that best enable the in-depth exploration of the research question (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). It is a non-random sample method, where significant cases are purposively chosen from the many, which best enlighten and give significance to the topic under research (Bryman, 2012; Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Likewise, since the primary goal of this research is to analyse how tourists frame and represent slums after partaking in a guided tour, a direct analysis of their discourse on both travel reviews and travel blogs' posts can origin interesting findings and distinct points of view. It is by analysing how they relate to their experience that interesting and insightful conclusions can be retrieved and be connected to past research conducted on the topic. This allows for an enriching of the academic knowledge on slum tourism, and particularly on the role of guided tours in the tourists' slum experience.

As such, the TripAdvisor reviews were selected based on two criteria's: they had to be written by travellers who had visited slums in a guided tour, or with a guide, and must be descriptive of their experience, providing some pertinent opinions and comments on what they saw, or on the emotions they felt while there. To help in the process of finding these reviews, in the specific case of the slum of Belen, in Peru, key words like "guided" and "tour" were applied in the TripAdvisor reviews' filter search, to easily access the interesting ones. The selection criteria for travel blogs were the same as for travel reviews.

The data set comprehends a total of 337 TripAdvisor travel reviews and 11 travel blogs posts. Of the entire 337 reviews, 98 correspond to the location of Belen, in Iquitos, Peru; 124 of Baseco, in Manilla, Philippines; and 115 of Kibera, in Nairobi, Kenya. Regarding the travel blogs, 5 of them correspond to Manilla, 5 to Kibera, and

only 1 to Belen. This enhances the challenge in finding travel blogs on Belen's slum tourism that include taking a guided tour. It can be explained by the fact that it is not a particularly well-known slum tourist area and lacks a specialized tour operator that offers guided tours. However, the sample size is thought to include the most important aspects of the tourists' experience, and the TripAdvisor reviews for this area are believed to be representative of the critical elements. Considering the limitations of this thesis, the conclusion section appropriately addresses this problem. Furthermore, the time frame of the visits to the slums must be in the last 10 years. The collection of the raw data was done entirely by the researcher, and was extended for a period of, approximately, 1 month. After the proper collection of the entire data set, the analysis process was initiated.

3.4 Thematic Analysis

For this thesis, a thematic analysis was the chosen method, where all the collected travel reviews and blogs' posts underwent by a detailed process of examination. According to Braun and Clarke "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). It is an extremely useful research technique to make sense of a particular large dataset of text, or other forms of qualitative data (Bryman, 2012). It entails the careful identification of patterns, similarities, and differences in the data by the researcher, that later origin themes of significance (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). By organizing these patterns and similarities in a coherent structure it was possible to come up with insightful conclusions and interesting findings about the topic under examination.

Thematic analysis is a very popular qualitative analysis method due to its flexibility of use and interpretation, and for its ability to manage ample datasets (Javadi & Zarea, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Its flexibility stands for the fact that it is very useful in analysing different types of qualitative content such as interviews, focus groups, online textual content, surveys, etc., and for its ability to provide an answer to

various types of research questions (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Consequently, thematic analysis is an appropriate method for analysing online content. In this case, online travel reviews and travel blog posts are rich in their detail and complexity. As so, thematic analysis enabled the researcher to make a structured sense of recurring patterns and similarities across multiple opinions and perspectives on the same subject, forming the desired recurring themes of significance to be later discussed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Consequently, it allowed for the researcher to have a better and clear understanding on several aspects of slum tourism and on the experience of the visitors, establishing the basis to provide a reasoned answer to this thesis' research question.

In this research, the results were originated inductively, where the codes, categories and themes were formulated without a pre-existing code tree (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). After the collection of the entire data set, the process of transcribing began. All the travel reviews and travel blogs posts were transcribed to a separated Microsoft Word file. Braun and Clarke (2006) define six key steps to conduct a proper thematic analysis. In the first step, the researcher must become familiar with the data by reading it several times. After this, the initial codes are generated. In the third step, the researcher search for themes of significance. These are later reviewed in the step four. The sixth and final step involves the writing and critical discussion of the results (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As so, after the first stage of getting familiar with the data by reading it and transcribing it, the coding process was started, and initial codes were generated by colouring different types of words and expressions that were significant to the analysis. This initial stage is called open coding and is very useful to organise the data in a meaningful and systematic way, by reducing it to small pieces of meaning (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). After this process, those coloured codes were grouped into different categories of similar significance. After an exhaustive process of going through these different categories several times, and, again, grouping those categories by similarity, themes of significance were finally originated. These reflect all the analysis process and underline the most important pieces of information that derived from it. The topics were then examined to determine whether everything made sense

and whether they overlapped, and if there were sub-themes that could fit into them (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). With all in conformity, names were attributed to these themes.

As so, from the analysis of the TripAdvisor travel reviews and travel blogs, four main themes of significance were originated. The first theme relates to the traveller's view of slums, slum life and on its habitants - "Too real of a reality?"; the second relates to the ethical considerations of the tourists regarding touring slums - "Ethically unethical"; the third relates to the action of the tour operators and the important role of the tour guides - "Angels in hell?"; and the fourth, and final, relates to the hopeful and authentic portrayal of slums and slum tours, and the feelings that arouse from their visit - "a disturbed sense of hope and enlightenment?". To better organize the data, a table was constructed (see appendix 1). This enables a clearer overview on the analysis results. The table contain the emerged themes, the codes and their description, and an example from the travel reviews and travel blogs. The emerged themes will be further discussed in the following results section of this thesis. These will be related to the theoretical framework, and the findings will be stated and critically discussed.

3.5 Ethical reflections and methodological limitations

Regarding the ethical issues raised by this thesis, one may counter that, since the reviews and blogs are published online and available to everyone, one is acting in accordance with the ethical principles of academic research. Moreover, other than in the raw data files, which are not present in the main document, the names of the travel reviewers and of the travel bloggers are never mentioned in the analysis, to assure their privacy.

Regarding the researcher limitations, it can be argued that the findings are limited to the researcher own interpretation. Changing the researcher, while maintaining the same study, can, possibly, result in different interpretations of the collected material, potentially leading to different results. However, the research is

well embedded and sustained by a large set of literature and, in this sense, the results are properly defended. Additionally, the researcher has never visited any of the analysed slums and therefore does not have first-hand knowledge of the reality in there, not being able to relate the findings with his own experience.

4. Results

In the present chapter I introduce, describe, and critically discuss the themes that emerged from the thematic data analysis. The chapter is divided into sections, where each section focusses on a specific theme of significance. Throughout the chapter, the main arguments made are always supported by quotes of the tourists travel reviews and travel blogs, to better illustrate the case and allow for further reflections.

The results start by describing the authentic view that travellers have towards slums and slum life, where they share their thoughts on the landscapes that they encountered. For a clearer example of this, some hard descriptions of their reality are included. Important reflections are made on how tourists depict the slums as places of happiness, and as places of hard and honest work despite their living conditions, which can be critically seen as a “naive” perspective by the tourists, not making justice to the harsh reality. The travellers also emphasize characteristic aspect of the realty and people that they encounter, which is connected to a feeling of “othering”.

Furtherly, the ethical considerations present in the traveller’s discourse are presented. The scepticism that some of the travellers demonstrate in engaging in such controversial activities is placed in perspective. The morality of slum tourism is also discussed, as well as the ethics of the tour operators. A constant negotiation of their ambivalent feelings is observed throughout the data.

After, the role of the tour guides is discussed. Comments on the quality of their performance are presented, as well as their power to shape the visitor’s thoughts. These thoughts are, in their vast majority, positive and illustrate the good work that the tours operators do in maintaining the respect towards the locals and their privacy, preventing an exploitative behaviour.

Finally, the narrative that these tours may serve as a tool for development is also discussed after an analysis of how tourists relate to this. In the end, the feeling that visitors get when they leave the slums "enlightened", "with their eyes open", and with a big desire to help is discussed.

4.1. Theme 1 – “Too real of a reality?”

4.1.1 Places of authenticity

"Fools wander, wise man travels" (Review 86)

The first theme explores the tourists' perception of slums. The vast majority shared a perception of slums as being places of a raw reality and authenticity. Visiting them was perceived to be a very meaningful experience. The travellers did not hide the fact of being immersed in a completely different reality of their own, acknowledging the harsh living conditions present in there, and the sense of entering the “world of others”. As mentioned in the theoretical framework by Frenzel (2015), slums are not only places of extreme poverty, but also places rich in culture, and where different cultural expressions “inhabit”. This tourists' discourse of entering a space of authenticity emphasizes this rich value of slums in terms of their different cultural and social expressions.

Words such as “authentic”, “amazing”, or “inspirational” were commonly used to illustrate their experience. Slums were also argued to be fascinating and to contain a vibrant environment, where it is possible to observe the “true culture” of the country they were visiting: “We visited parts of Manila that we would have otherwise never see. The real Manila”; “I loved the vibrancy of the slum. It is a totally different way of seeing life.” (Review 198; Review 246). The travellers never referred to slums as being clean or to contain beautiful landscapes, but rather shared about the spirit and rich cultural side. This goes in accordance with previous research conducted by different authors on the cultural value of slums (Dovey & King, 2012; Gui & Zhong, 2022; Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink, & Rogerson, 2015).

Iqani (2016) suggests that this narrative of spiritual wealth prevalent in slums, in opposition to their material poverty, place slums as habited by “the Other”. A colonial perspective is argued to be present, placing slums as not yet corrupted by civilization, therefore authentic in their own discourse. Also, the referring to the slums

as “the real Manilla”, for example, frame a post-colonial discourse of poverty as the defining rule of authenticity in the global South (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020).

As so, and since we know from previous research that authenticity plays a key role in the tourists’ desire to visit slums (Rolfes, 2010), this positioning of slums as containers of authentic landscapes grasps with the tourists’ motivation to search for places not yet simulated, banalized and mediated within tourism discourses (Lisle, 2004). Some travellers even stated that not visiting slums in a country where those exist, is lacking in experiencing on its cultural side at the fullest. Here we can see how tourists construct the concept of authenticity, as implicit and only achievable in a visit to slums:

“(...) If you’ve been to Kenya and you’ve not been to Kibera, you’ve not truly visited Kenya.” (Review 241)

“(...) It is, however, a window into how poor people have adapted to thrive in this particular environment, and if you are curious about learning about different cultures and lifestyles you will find it fascinating.” (Review 48)

Having in mind that the search for authenticity is inherent to the tourists’ motivations to participate in slum tours, this search is argued by Huysamen et al. (2020) to accentuate the differences between the rich visitor and the poor resident. Meschkank (2010) states that poverty is becoming a fundamental component for the global north tourists to perceive authenticity in the global south. In this sense, the poorer the site, the more authentic it is. This discourse place slums as “the other side”, reflecting colonial discourses of underdeveloped, poor, “frozen in time” places, where it is still possible to get in touch with a raw reality, as if outside slums everything is ritualized and staged, being them the only carriers of the true culture of a country.

4.1.2 Overwhelming and staggering poverty

“The sights, smells and size of Kibera served as a stark reminder of the number of people who live in what I believe is substandard housing with inadequate access to utilities such as electricity, clean water and proper sanitation” (Review 337)

The “authentic”, however, comes with both the beautiful and the ugly parts. The tourists pointed out some slums’ problems such as their dirtiness, pollution, and odd smell. One of the tourists even described Kibera as a “punch in the stomach” (review 282), which fully demonstrates the state of overwhelming felt when facing such (lack of) conditions by a global north tourist. This goes along with the research of Dovey and King, where the authors discuss that visiting slums causes a shock with a reality that the tourists are not used to see or experience (Dovey & King, 2012). They may be aware, prior to the visit, that the living conditions are scarce, but visiting this, as Dovey and King put it, “intensive labyrinthine urbanity”, is a hard and overwhelm confirmation of the real, where their desire to experience authenticity is joined by a repulsion for the object under scrutiny (Lisle, 2004):

“The poverty is simply staggering. Mud and trash combine to form a stinking carpet on the shores underneath stilt houses (...) It was heart-wrenching.” (Review 75)

“Fatal attraction - your drawn to it but repulsed at the same time: An overwhelming dose of poverty, disease, overcrowding, exploitation, and filth.” (Review 45)

This lack of conditions (poverty) is the factor of attraction for these places in the first instance. Visiting slums is contemplating poverty in its purest form (Rajamohan & Sundar, 2014; Rolfes, 2010). As such, the above reviews do not imply that their experience was bad or not memorable, but rather the opposite. If slums were not places where one could experience and observe extreme poverty, they

would lose its character as an attraction, in conformity with research from Frenzel (2013). The attraction for poverty and the ambiguous feelings that the travellers expressed in the reviews and blogs will be addressed later in this chapter.

It is important to provide some examples of the tourists' illustrations of slums. In this case, since the travel blogs are platforms where the tourists have more space to deepen their thoughts, it was possible to assist to some more extensive and detailed portrayal of the slums' reality, in comparison with the TripAdvisor reviews:

"A black viscous foul smelling river defines the first slum. It cuts through the heart of the slum like a deadly clogged artery. It is renowned as the filthiest river in Asia and as Tessie tells us, even the mosquitoes can't survive here. But somehow people do."

(Blog 1)

"The ground beneath our feet was buried under several layers of rubbish. It was exactly how I had pictured an African slum, and difficult to digest. The refuse underfoot, the smell of garbage, and the families living side-by-side amongst all this, purely because they were born here and this was their lot in life. Life in Kibera is hard." (Blog 7)

Throughout the data it was observed a constant negotiation of the tourists' feelings. If on the one hand, the "real" environment of slums was much appreciated, on the other hand, their experience was also confronting and challenging. This challenging perspective was often joined by an ambivalent feeling and a questioning of their role in such places but arguing that the experience is "essential to understanding true poverty and the human spirit" (Review 258). The mentioning of the smells, the dirtiness, and the human decay can be interpreted as the tourists expressing to others what to expect. The tourists are aware that their comments will be read by others, being their discourse targeted in that sense. By reading their comments and coming from similar background (tourists from the global north), they understand and identify with similar portrayals of the experience.

Nevertheless, to challenge the academic definition of voyeurism, which entails the act of gawking at catastrophe sites by means of pleasure and curiosity (Lisle, 2004), the tourists discourse place slums as being places of great interest, carriers of authenticity and strong cultural expressions, leading to an informative and cultural rich experience:

“I'd give it a 0/5 stars for cleanliness, safety and ethical standards, but a 5 for interestingness.” (Review 29)

“(...) the visitors go home with a deeper understanding of the complexities of urban poverty- it's hard for me to deny that this has the potential to be a powerful cultural exchange.” (Blog 8)

Their situation of extreme poverty is not overlooked by the tourists, but a “bright” side is also attributed to their living conditions – the opportunity to learn and be educated to a whole different reality.

4.1.4 Slum dwellers as the “Other”

“While the plight of people on the fringes of society are disturbing, their grit and determination to survive and provide for their families is uplifting.” (Review 276).

Slums were positioned as “the other” side of the Philippines, Kenya and Peru, and their habitants were frequently referred as “the other half” (Review 191). In conformity with Frenzel et al. (2012), this discourse clearly positions the slums as outside of the urban modernity inhabited by the distant “Other”, and, according to Huysamen et al. (2020), accounts for a neoliberal and post-colonial feeling of superiority.

Nevertheless, the data shows a constant appreciation made towards the slum inhabitants. They were praised by their will, strength, and positiveness in facing their harsh reality. The word “happiness” was often present in the reviews, along with the word “positive”, relating to their attitude. The slum dwellers were characterized as very welcoming, genuine, and inspirational to many of the tourists. The tourists did not expect that, even living in such deprived conditions, the slum dwellers were still able to smile and be positive about their life, receiving them with a smile on their faces.

“(…) as we walked around the community we felt welcome and were greeted by friendly people along the way who were happy to see us.” (Review 304)

“All the people we met were happy to see us. We played basketball with the kids and peeled garlic.” (Review 102)

Taking the above reviews as an example, the analysis highlighted a constant narrative of the tourists being welcomed by friendly slum residents, happy to see them. For Huysamen et al (2020), this narrative of friendliness is positioned alongside a refusal of a voyeuristic behaviour. The ethical insecurities posed by the tourists are reduced when they encounter “happy and smiley” residents. This allows them to position as not intruders, welcomed at the eyes of the locals, pushing aside the possibility of being inserted in a context of “poverty porn”.

As so, this discourse can be interpreted as way of facing the challenging reality when visiting a slum. By taking the locals’ positiveness into consideration, and their happiness with their presence, they resist the stigma around slum tours (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020). This is not to imply that the slum dwellers are not happy, but rather to raise the question of whether this "happiness" is something that tourists "search" to alleviate their guilty feelings. Their discourse also transmits to others the ability to look beyond the staggering poverty, while being amidst staggering poverty:

“The tours would change your first impression and give you a different thought about the definition of happiness. People living in the slum taught me that even on the worst day, there's still a possibility of joy.” (Review 119)

The optimism to which the tourists refer to the slum life conditions puts in perspective the lack of comprehension shared for the communities' real struggles and may overshadow the awareness to help and change those places. This is one of the issues that Nisbett (2017) and Iqani (2016) discuss in their research, arguing that the portrait of slums dwellers' happiness and hope hide the issue of critically acknowledging their misery and the urgency for doing something about it.

Nevertheless, while mentioning their ability to look to the other side of poverty, the tourists did not fail in acknowledging the problems observed in their visit, “such as electricity, clean water and proper sanitation”, for example (Review 337). They constantly emphasized that slums, although rich in cultural and human spirit, need to change to get more humane and liveable. A desire for everyone to contribute in any way possible was commonly expressed in the tourists' post-visit discourse. This demonstrated that the tourists are aware of the slums' reality, and that their visit, while also showing a different side, do not romanticize it.

4.2 Theme 2 - “Ethically unethical”

4.2.1 Ethical considerations

“We were a little hesitant about the tour at first, as it seems a little strange to go tour a slum and look at the residents' way of life as a tourist attraction.” (Review 335)

This section is fully dedicated to the ethical issues that the visitors debated with, before and during the slum tours. Mainly after reading other tourists' commentaries on platforms like TripAdvisor, some travellers expressed their concerns about engaging in slum tourism. Their concerns were related to a feeling of exploitation and violation of the living space and privacy of others, considering their behaviour as potentially voyeuristic. This narrative shows awareness and is positive as it demonstrates that they care for their actions as tourists.

“In Nairobi, I was of two minds about stepping fully into local life (...) because I was a bit unsure of the best way to go about it. (...) something about wandering through this pocket of the city as a privileged tourist didn't sit very well with me initially.” (Blog 6)

The popularity of travel platforms allows everyone to find a variety of different opinions and feedback on slum experiences, which influence how others pre-conceive the ethical side of it. The tourists' sceptical discourse demonstrates that they had knowledge of the debates surrounding slum tourism before participating in tours. In this manner, by expressing their awareness to the controversial ethical side of it, and ending up choosing to do the tour anyways, place their decision as “ethically constructed” and responsible: “Reading the reviews before, it raised some questions about the ethical point of view of such tours, which are completely valid (...)” (Review

111); "I had such conflicting views about engaging in "poverty porn" while I was on vacation. (...)" (Review 101).

The tourists discourse shows a constant concern in trying to not have (or, at least, show to others) a voyeuristic behaviour. To show their knowledge of the voyeurism criticisms surrounding the activity, tourists frequently used terminology like "poverty tourism" or "poverty porn" in their discourse. Like Huysamen et al. (2020), expressions like these were simply implied to show that their tour was not voyeuristic, always being followed by a justification of how their trip was the exact opposite of that. As such, the tourists expressed caution in giving out donations to not patronize, not taking pictures, and participating in the slum dwellers businesses.

Some even stated their lack of understanding towards commodifying poverty: "People were not hostile towards us but it was clearly not meant to be a touristy attraction."; "It's not tourist-y (...) which just makes it an uncomfortable reality, that we can leave, and they can't." (Review 89; Review 69). By not considering slums a touristic attraction, they critically questioned the action of others, appealing to their inappropriate behaviour while on tour:

"(...) I don't want to be too negative but I really don't see how this is anything to rate on doing in Iquitos. (...) This is also a slum area and is dirty and as a tourist you stick out like a sore thumb. Is there a reason to gawp at the poorer community most likely just to turn your nose up at what they are selling?" (Review 72)

"It bothered me a bit when we were clearly instructed not to film any of people's livelihood, but there was another guest who insisted filming everything with her gopro. I advise you to walk away from this tour if you wish to acquire a Instagram shot."
(Review 196)

Why visiting slums if one is not going to respect and act in conformity with the recommendations? It is a valid point to note, which, again, refer to the discussed

voyeuristic and exploitative character of slum tourism. In this sense the participants expressed that they were not there to be passive spectators, but rather to actively participate in their culture, learning and obtaining a different vision of slums, and poverty in general. The analysis highlights that it was successfully achieved. However, it can be also interpreted as the tourists placing themselves against exploitation and invasiveness of the slums' dwellers privacy. By pointing the "wrong" behaviour of others, it is implicit that they behaved ethically.

4.2.2 Morality of slum tourism

"(...) I smiled awkwardly but quickly stopped because I thought that might be inappropriate. But what is the appropriate way to approach strangers in a place where you both know the truth, and you are on opposite sides of privilege?" (Blog 8)

Other than scepticism in visiting these places, the travellers also made sure to express their considerations on the whole morality of commodifying poverty, which is inherent to the more prominent paradigms of slum tourism: is it acceptable to tour the homes of people starving, dying, and living literally in the middle of trash? While discussing these moral issues, the tourists actively negotiate their position of ethical consumption, as Frenzel et al. (2015) calls "agents of change", pointing out the benefits that their visit bring to the communities. As such, a mentioning of positive aspects such as the tours contribution to the slum communities' development, and to the raise of awareness and education for extreme poverty were commonly mentioned in the reviews and blogs.

Many defended their choice to participate in slum tours to educate themselves, and to, above all, contribute in some manner to the development of slums: "I was motivated to see how life is like, educate myself and help in what little way my tour ticket would" (Review 127). Positioning their education in the centre of the interest in slums allows the tourists to eliminate possible criticism about slum tours (Iqani, 2016).

Their discourse was commonly joint by a feeling of “guilt”, associated with the uneasy feelings of being tourists in a place not meant for tourists. Nevertheless, part of their feeling of “guilt” seemed to be reduced by themselves, acknowledging that the revenue of the tours is a way to help the communities. In this manner, the tourists reflect it to be the turning point where exploitation and voyeurism shifts to development and prosperity: “We were shown a couple of small-scale projects that seemed to impact 4-5 people at a time. On reflection, I feel this is where the tour could eliminate the feeling of 'just going to have a look'.” (Review 127); “We were glad to hear that the money made from the tours goes directly to help the people of the slums.” (Review 140). Gui and Zhong (2022) criticizes that this is a “strategy” used by tour operators together with tourists in positioning guided tours as a form of ethical consumption, that offers benefits to both sides of the equation. Turan (2017) argues that the tour operators provide a sort of a “moral blanket” to tranquilize the tourists who appear sceptical with the ethical nature of the activity, assuring that they were doing something positive and beneficial for those communities (Turan, 2017).

It also emphasizes the constant ethical balance that the tourists made explicit in the reviews and blogs. By contrasting their knowledge around the controversy of slum tours, with an enlightenment of its benefits, the tourists position their visit as ethical and not intrusive. The following quotes are illustrative of this:

“(…) In the end, I'm glad I did the tour. Despite feeling like a voyeur at points (...) And if this sort of tour can help change the perceptions of Kibera and other similar slums, raise awareness around poverty and encourage visitors to spread the word, volunteer or even channel funds into the right places, then I'm all for it.” (Blog 6)

“Yes our guided tour around Belén had been a lot of fun, as well as both incredibly interesting and fascinating, however I couldn't help but feel a little like an unwilling voyeur. These people live like this on a permanent basis; they have no escape from this way of life. However as tourists we have lives which are a lot more privileged, and although our tour around Belén had given us a little window into how its inhabitants

live, at the end of the day it was just a window we were peering through. We will never fully understand and appreciate these people's lives and the daily challenges they face." (Blog 11)

The tourists did not fail in recognizing their privilege and position as mere visitors. As observed in the above blog excerpt, tourists are simply that - tourists. They reflected that, while they can visit the slums for a few hours, distribute some money, and "get" educated to a different reality, after that, they simply leave for the comfort of their accommodations. Meanwhile, the slum dwellers are left in their extreme poverty settings and harsh living conditions, with little perspectives of change (Turan, 2017). This is what makes poverty tourism so complex, interesting, and censurable. How does visiting these places actually affect the tourists' perspectives, and how does it contribute to any real changes in the slums? Who really benefits? This will be discussed in the next themes.

4.2.3 Ethics of tour operators

"I applaud them both for their caring and for their professionalism. They both made us feel welcomed and safe." (Review 238)

Regarding the ethical considerations of the tour operators, very positive notes were left by the travellers. The ethical point that stood out from the many was the prohibition to take photographs during the whole tour as "this [tour] is to gain an understanding/insight not a photo opportunity." (Review 160). This was expressed as extremely important to the non-violation of the slum dwellers privacy, and to safeguard a possible voyeuristic behaviour. In this sense, contrary to Amo et al. (2019) statement about the business character of the tour operators, we can understand by the tourists' discourse that the tour operators are not focused on profiting of sensationalistic poverty, but rather on providing the visitors an immersive, real, and authentic slum experience, while, at the same time, preserving the integrity of the local communities. Words such as "respectful", "ethically", and "privacy" were often

present in the tourists' discourse, emphasizing their position as against poverty exploitation, and their sense of awareness for that controversial aspect of slum tourism:

"It was done in a compassionate and respectful way, and I felt like our visit was a good way to show that we care and to provide a little financial support." (Review 151)

The analysis highlights a tourists' perception that when slum tours are conducted by the tour guides in a respectful, conscious, and fair manner (at least, perceived as such), they are beneficial for everyone. This goes in accordance with the findings of Whyte et al. (2011), which take into consideration the benefits of slum tours when conducted as a mean of a "fair trade". However, this can be again interpreted as strategy of the tourists to position their behaviour as ethical. In this sense, Huysamen et al. (2020) establishes that the construction of the slum itself determines how a visitor establish its own tourism practices. "In order for the tourist to be ethical, the tour must be ethical. In order for the tour to be ethical, the township must be imagined as a place of hope rather than a place of despair." (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020, p. 17).

Putting the present section in perspective, it is interesting to observe this existing ethical ambiguity present all over the tourists' discourse, which demonstrated a lot of moral doubts, considerations, but also the certainty of doing the right thing. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this "ethical discourse" present in the reviews and blogs can be critically discussed to be performative. Considering the nature of TripAdvisor, reviews do not completely mirror what people experience, but rather what they want to show to others about their positioning on the ethics of slum tourism. Being reviews and blogs generally written to be read by people of similar backgrounds, the reviewers take a specific "acceptable" position by talking about the morality of the practice to be accepted by others, or even to alleviate their own consciousness.

4.3 Theme 3 - “Angles in hell”

4.3.1 Tour guides

“The tour guide was very professional and knowledgeable and passionate about sharing her knowledge” (Review 195)

The role of a guide cannot be overlooked because tourists are in a completely hostile and unfamiliar environment, being the guides their single connection to slums, and the bridge between the two distinct worlds of tourists and locals (Pereira, 2015). It is through them that the slum image is constructed, providing them the power to shape those constructions (Ap & Wong, 2001).

Every single traveller that made a reference to the tour guides, did so in a positive manner, pointing out their qualities, and the respectful way that they conducted the tours. The fact that tour guides are necessary to the success of the tour was also stressed in the tourists’ discourse. They were argued to have significantly influenced the tourists’ experience. Terms such as “informative”, “friendly”, “excellent”, or “helpful” were often used in the reviews and blogs, and often included the tour guide’s name.

Nevertheless, since in the current days, the success of tour operators and tour companies depend on the tourists’ commentaries in travel platforms like TripAdvisor, it is important to acknowledge that this can have some influence on the tourists’ optimistic reviews, in an attempt to help the guides. The guides’ names need to be mentioned, joined by positive feedback for the tour companies to succeed. The tourists are aware of this, and as so, it can be argued that it can influence their extreme positive portrait of their experience.

***“Finally, a big shout out to our tour guide MELANIE! I can’t say enough about her. She was educational, funny and passionate about the people who live in the slums.”
(Review 117)***

The most referred aspects to justify these cheerful comments was the fact that the guides were residents of the slums themselves. As such, they were able to provide factual histories, first-hand knowledge, and interesting insights of the development of the slums' overtime, positively contributing to the tour' educational value:

“Our tour guide lived in the community that we visited, and provided detailed information about the history of the community, as well as the struggles that residents faced in order to survive there.” (Review 179)

One of the participants even compared the value of the guides' knowledge with different media sources that also portray the life in slums: “Every stop on the tour was unique and taught us a lot of things we never would have been able to learn from a book or documentary.” (Review 335). This connects to the key role of the tour guides in the customers' satisfaction and image construction researched by Ap and Wong (2001). Moreover, according to Lisle (2004), tourists need to gaze the so called “catastrophe places” in person to experience authenticity and reality. Seeing a documentary or reading about these places do not provide the experience that they feel the need to engage in to fulfil their desire for the authentic.

4.3.1 Guides' influence on the slum experience

“Good to let Kevin show you this part of Nairobi. He explains things about his projects there to keep on developing Kibera. It brings more awareness of the differences within this city. And allows you to contribute the help Kevin is giving the neighbourhood.” (Review 328)

In accordance with Turan's research (2017), the guides prestige among the community was seen as an important factor to the creation of a “positive” slum image, reducing the tourists' voyeuristic concerns, and consequent interpretation of their experience. The tourists often stressed how comfortable they felt during the tour.

Observing poverty in the company of a respected local, allowed the tourists to feel accepted by the community, pushing aside a feeling of invading the space of others, safeguarding their behaviour as ethical:

“The slum tour guide grew up in the slum, and gave us so many explanation about how the life there is: how to get water, how to get electricity, how people earn money and so on. Even though it's very poor, at no point we felt awkward or exploitative.” (Review 135)

“I have always wanted to visit somewhere like this but it has always seemed too unsafe, but Kevin is so respected in the area that their was never a moment when I felt uncomfortable. It is not a glamorous tour but instead an authentic look at life in Kibera Slum.” (Review 307)

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise some critical points that can be made towards the action of the tour guides. Their behaviour as “poverty guides” is often criticised by slum tourism’ researchers due to its ambiguous character. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Nisbett (2017) and Huysamen et al. (2020) argue that they present a “romanticized” vision of the life conditions in the slums. This romanticized vision concerns the placement of a “touristic cover” on the reality, portraying the slums as places of hope and hard work, presenting to the tourists what they expect to see in a slum.

This is not to say that the tourists do not effectively observe and experience poverty. It is rather to manifest that the tour guides place it in a way that is compelling with a vision of hope and progress: “(...) you can see their real lives, which is of course tough and severe environment but actually the joy and hope still exist” (Review180). As illustrative of this argument, the tourists’ discourse was filled with positive remarks, such as the slums authenticity and interesting cultural expressions, as well as the positive attitude of the slum dwellers towards life. The travellers leave the slums with a slight twisted vision of what is really like to live in such conditions, and, in this sense,

depoliticize poverty, deviating the awareness to its real issues (Nisbett, 2017; Iqani, 2016).

Nevertheless, on a different angle, Rolfes (2010) argues that the role of the tour operators is exactly that - to present the visitors a different vision of slums, rather than those being exclusively associated with poverty (Rolfes, 2010). Taking the tourists discourse into consideration, this was successful achieved: "Seeing, hearing, smelling and feeling the essence of poverty, combined with the people's determined efforts to live and survive is worth every moment of the tour." (Review 258).

The words "honest" and "truthful" were frequently used by the tourists to describe the guides' speech, recognizing their readiness to answer all their questions. However, one can argue that, since touristic activities in slums are increasingly normal, these have achieved some level of standardization and ritualization in what they present as being the "slums' reality" (Turan, 2017), losing some of the "authenticity" that tourists desire for. The guides walk through the same paths, and talk to the same people every time, showing the tourists the same slum "reality" – people struggling with poverty but still happy going through their day to day.

Even so, considering the reviews and blogs, the tours were perceived to be authentic and the guides very honest and truthful, portraying an objective reality of slums, "behind all of the glam and glitter most operators want to show you." (Review 158), being considered "a true tour of life in the slums" (Review 147) which contradicts these findings from Turan (2017). With this said, the analysis highlighted the crucial role that tour guides have in shaping the tourists' positive and hopeful conceptions of slums, where poverty becomes inherent to a narrative of hope.

4.4 Theme 4 – “A disturbed sense of hope and enlightenment”

4.4.1 Unique character of slum tours

“Once in a life time experience” (Review 287)

The analysis highlights that the tourists thoroughly enjoyed their encounter with poverty. In their perspective, it was an extremely positive and rewarding experience, that they could not undergo in other locations. Their discourse was based on key words such as “incredible”, “fascinating”, “amazing”, or “unique”. For them, the slum tour was an: “Authentic, Unvarnished Experience!” (Review 24), “(...) incredible experience.” (Review 171) “Fascinating experience!” (Review 33) “real experience” (Review 206). Some even affirmed that the tours were the highlight of their trip: “A highlight of Nairobi” (Review 256); “I travelled 5 months in Asia and this is my highlight. (Review 203). It is intriguing to observe how visiting places characterized by extreme poverty and lack of conditions receive such positive feedback from the travellers, and even be the most memorable part of their trip. It shows, once again, that slums are not merely areas of deprivation. With the aid of tour guides, visiting them is a unique and authentic poverty experience.

The positive comments demonstrate the enthusiasm felt in learning and experiencing a whole different and authentic reality. However, this narrative is also what allows the tourists to “fight” the voyeuristic criticism around slum tourism, challenging the morality of the practice. Being slums framed as an “unique experience” (Review 148), provide the arguments for tourists to face the narrative of spectatorship and exploitation of the poor, arguably caused by slum tours (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020). For being unique, they must be visited. And for offering an authentic environment, they must be experienced to escape the banal.

“This thought provoking and moving tour allows a visitor to truly see both the visual definition of poverty, as well as the strength of the human spirit to survive. If one is visiting Kenya, I believe this tour should be a must on their itinerary.” (Review 258)

Other than referring the authentic and necessary character of the tours, several travellers described their experience as “unforgettable”, “enriching”, and even “life changing”, that made them return home “back with 2 feet on the ground” (Review 99), arguing that “You won't ever see the world in the same way again.” (Review 105).

Nisbett (2017) and Iqani (2016) argue that this tourists' discourse of leaving the slums with a new perspective of life, is an empowering of the wrong people. If slum tours serve the propose of educating the tourists for the different sides of poverty, they, at the same time, fail in “giving power” to the people who really need it – the slum dwellers. The tourists leave slums more positive about their own lives, while the slum dwellers are left in the same poverty settings. Instead of mentioning the concrete ways in which their visit contributed to the slums' development, on a larger part, the reviews were focused on the “benefits” that the tours brought to themselves, accentuating the inequalities between tourists and locals. Iqani (2016) argues that the tourists' education in positioned in the centre of their post-visit discourse, whereas the role of the tour guide, and poor conditions of the residents are only complementary to that educational purpose, relating it to a post-colonial view on these places.

“It empowers us all. What I have saw, what I have learned, how I have changed.... that is something that will stay with me forever.” (Review 105); “This tour empowers everyone and becomes the moment of lift.” (Review 108). Both these examples emphasize the empower effect of the tours but do so in the tourists' perspective. The discourse of “empowering all”, again, allow the tourists to take a position of respect, fighting the voyeuristic character of the activity, balancing their unease experience. This narrative sits on a neoliberal tourist' discourses, whereas the construction of the “empowered poor” is made as an attempt to ease the tourists' feeling of unease (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020).

4.4.2 Perceived benefits of Slum tours

“Even though most of the fee goes to the NGO which helps improving the community, i always believe that i benefit more than what I give.” (Review 116)

The travellers claimed to have learned insightful things about the lifestyle of the ones living below the poverty line, which are not discussed, often “hidden” of the public gaze (Dovey & King, 2012). “(...) it has become important that I see and experience those hidden aspects of the countries I visit” (Review 134). The guided tours were described as educational, informative, and even necessary cultural experiences to comprehend the other side of the spectrum: “Definitely recommend this interesting, educational and inspiring way to explore the other side of Manila!” (Review 119), “The tour is educative and a good eye opener to real life issues.” (Review 249). Many travellers ended their review by recommending slum tours for others to educate themselves, and to get out of the “touristic bubble” that the tourism industry has created, searching for more meaningful and authentic experiences, while, at the same time, contributing to a good cause: “Get off the tourist trail and cultivate some real understanding of life in the selva is really like for many.” (Review 45), “At least for one time do something different. Leave the pub crawl for another day, do the bike tour in another city, and for at least one time try to put yourself in someone else shoes that lives completely different from you.” (Review 106). As also argued by Huysamen et al. (2020), this type of discourse was implied with a sense of moral superiority towards others, indicating that visiting slums is the “right” thing to do, placing themselves above others that opt for other “less valuable” touristic experiences.

However, isn't this suggestive discourse fomenting the prevalent inequalities existent in the world, by constantly position poverty as a synonymous of authenticity? And do slum tours really provide the tools for a more holistic comprehension of poverty? Or is it just something that helps in alleviating the tourists' conscience rather than alleviating poverty?

Iqani (2016) posed the question of how these tours really contribute to any changes and action on the behalf of the visitors, arguing that little to no explanations

of how these translate into concrete measures of help were introduced by the tourists in TripAdvisor. Likewise, it can be concluded from the data analysis, that the reviews and travel blogs fail in providing the specific ways that the tourists will, with their “enlightenment”, do something for poverty, other than stop complaining about their absurd “first world” problems. Nevertheless, the tourists left the slums full of hope for a better future, expressing their desire to do something that could make a difference for those communities:

“You definitely leave the tour with the desire to do something to help the residents there. Of course the question is how to help in a way that it actually reaches the people who need it.” (Review 331).

“It’s an experience and a donation all in one so it’s a great way to travel ethically. Poverty ultimately exists because the world is unfair. It’s important to redress the balance in any way we can.” (Blog 4)

This tourists desire to help is, however, criticized by some researchers. According to Nisbett (2017) and Iqani (2016), the “rich white tourists” interest for slums can act as a way for them to position themselves as “higher and superior human beings”, where their help is wanted and needed by the residents. In similar lines, Frenzel (2016) also critiques this positioning of the humanitarian tourism, which provides a unilateral dimension where the “poor locals” are placed in a position of wanting and needing the help of their “saviour tourist” (Frenzel, 2016).

Many debates have been raised concerning the role of slum tourism in the contribution for the slums’ development, and concretely to poverty alleviation. While Frenzel (2013) argues that it can be an efficient tool, Nisbett (2017) and Iqani (2016) defend that it only contributes to the continuation of the problem and not its solution. Contrary to critics, the tourists left clear remarks on the positive power that the tour companies possess in assuring a good (possible) future for the slum communities from

the profits made with guided tours. In this sense, the tourist felt that, by engaging in slum tours, they were doing “their part”. Many made several aspects clear on how slum tours help the communities, such as providing visibility to these places and the contact with different people, which leads to increased opportunities of a better life. All these aspects relate to the Frenzel (2016) research, where the author argue that slum tourism has the power to give visibility to these places, consequently, allowing for political and structural changes (Frenzel, 2016):

“While Kibera is still facing significant challenges, these organizations have stepped up and made a positive difference in the lives of its citizens. We can all be encouraged by this progress. And hopefully, more families living in this informal settlement can be brought above the poverty line.” (Blog 10)

“In addition to raising awareness and offering a unique experience, these tours are led by residents of the Manila slums, offering them opportunities to earn a better living, practice English, attend university classes, and even begin their own initiatives (my own excellent guide had started a family planning program in her neighbourhood).” (Review 134)

However, it is also important that the tour operators act in conformity with their promises, avoiding an exploitation of the poor. A fair distribution of the profits needs to be considered in slum tourism activities. If not done in the fairest way possible, it will benefit ones more than others, namely the tour operators that will take most of the money, leaving the slum dwellers with nothing, as denoted by Turan (2017). Nisbett (2017) mentioned that there is few evidence that showcase the impact of guided tours in the slums development. Some tourists expressed their concerns in these regards: “I do hope the money we pay for the tickets genuinely go towards the people in the slums” (Review 147). However, looking at the tourists’ optimistic discourse, it was understood that the tour operators act in conformity with their promises to invest the profits back in the community. Some mentioned physical

evidence, like schools and hospitals, constructed with the tours' profit. Proof like these provided the "moral blanket" for the tourists to realize that they were making a difference by visiting slums.

4.4.3 Emotions and perspectives of touring slums

"The slum tour was a glimpse into the reality of how some people live. It was grounding, at the least, and forces one to grapple with the dynamics of privilege, basic human rights and resilience." (Review 207)

Strong emotions arose from the tourists' slum experience. Many realized the privileges of living in developed countries. One of the most used expressions to illustrate their experience was "eye opening" or "enlightening", as if the slums had showed them a completely new side of life that they were unaware of, which relates to the educational value of slum tours. A big percentage of the travellers referred that their confrontation with poverty offered them a new perspective on the life conditions of "Others", that they had failed to acknowledge before. The travellers considered their experience to be "humbling" and needed for a more complete understanding of our surroundings. Here are some examples of the traveller's perspectives:

"There might be no better way to enlighten yourself on the challenges that Nairobi and similar societies face in dealing with the human needs of less advantaged people. (...) I encourage you to help him and help yourself by experiencing this eye-opening tour which will broaden your understanding of our species and our lives on this little rock of ours." (Review 276)

"It was indeed a humbling experience for me and I have to say that my perspective and outlook on life has changed. Smokey Tour showed me how fortunate I am compared to

all the slum tour residents. Not only I realized that any problems or struggles that I am going through in my life is nowhere near theirs. I recommend this tour to those who wish to see the other side of life and reality of life itself.” (Review 211)

However, this type of narrative can be critically addressed as hypocritical. Is it necessary to experience poverty to acknowledge that poverty is real? There is the need to bear in mind that, what is a fascinating and unvarnished experience for one, is one more normal day living below the poverty line for others. While the tourists leave the slums “enlightened” and glad that they could experience such authentic places, as it allowed them to valorise their own life, the slum dwellers stay in the same hopeless place, without any perspective of changes (Turan, 2017).

Huysamen et al. (2020), Nisbett (2017), and Iqani (2016) critique this tourists’ narrative. By framing the slum tours as an eye-opening, enlightening, and humbling experience, the travellers put themselves in a position to resist the stigma created around slum tourism, placing themselves in the realm of “ethical tourism”, assuming their visit as “socially conscious cultural encounters”. These tourists’ comments of leaving the slums enlightened just contribute to the accentuation of the differences between the global north and the global south, emphasizing that the slums are “frozen in time”, unspoiled by urban modernity and significant of the poor as the authentic (Huysamen, Barnett, & Fraser, 2020). The same authors also argue that the travellers, together with the tour operators, construct a vision of the slums as places of hope, diverting the attention that should be placed in understanding the real issues and the need for changes.

However, this critique was not entirely observed in the present research. Although the tourists framed their experience as enlightening, eye-opening, and humbling, they did not fail in, at the same time, recognizing the problems that they found, the state of overwhelming felt towards the huge disparities, and to the urgent need for change. At the same time, while it was expressed to be a “very rich cultural experience” (Review 150), it also raised in them a desire to effectively intervene. Nonetheless, this was also commonly joined by a strong realization of the little power

that one has in successfully change anything. In this sense, the tourists expressed that slum tours are a step towards progress.

“It is a unique experience. It is eye opening. It is humbling. It is sad. It promises to change your life and it begs the question. What can I do to help?” (Review 117)

What was also often observed in the tourists’ discourse was a comparison of the slums’ reality with their own, diminishing the importance of their “first world problems”. In similar lines of Huysamen et al. (2020), by reflecting on their own reality compared to the poor slums, and by expressing the “rich” side of poverty, the tourists emphasize their social consciousness and their desire to free themselves out of materialistic and superficial things. By diminishing the value of their own life, the tourists, simultaneously, fix on discursive arguments of prevalent inequalities between the rich tourist and the poor slum dweller.

“While at the western world, I complain about everything, honestly, from not finding a perfect veggie burger or a perfectly comfortable pair of shoes (...) How petty can I be? (...) This is a special place for teenagers/young people to tour that could teach them to be grateful and learn to empathize with others who have less.” (Review 173)

The different approach to poverty provided by the tours also relate to one of its key goals. Besides helping the communities, the tours also try to diminish the stigma around slums, where poverty and decay are their exclusive features in the eyes of the public (Rolfes, 2010). The analysis of the tourists’ opinions, show that it was accomplished. After the guided tours, poverty becomes associated with narratives of hope, progress, and self-improvement, where the slum dwellers have the capacity to lift themselves out of poverty, and in this sense, serve as an inspiration for the wealthy tourists:

“In many people’s imagination, slums are lifeless places full of sick, starving people, fighting to survive, but surprisingly it’s quite the opposite here. People are up and about early, getting on with their day, cooking, washing, cleaning, working. It’s actually a rather lively place.” (Blog 3)

“I’m not sure what my day in the slums will mean for me long-term, but for now, I feel inspired. I peeked into the reality of urban poverty in Africa’s largest urban slum, but I found something unexpected. For the first time in a long while, I felt hope.” (Blog 8)

This follows the findings from Rolfes (2010) and Meschkank (2010), who argue that slum guided tours have the power to turn “passivity, stagnation and desperation” in “activity, development and hope”. This final section demonstrates that, contradicting the findings of Nisbett (2017) and Iqani (2016), the tourists’ discourse does not place poverty as a depoliticized and normalized issue. The reviews and blogs are filled with real concern about the life of those communities and put in perspective the future of the children that are growing up in slums. Contrary to Huysamen et al. (2020), that suggest that in TripAdvisor the tourists do not recognize the need for infrastructural and social changes in slums, the travellers shared some important concerns in those regards. Nevertheless, those concerns were more notable in the travel blogs, where the tourists had more space to reflect on that. All in all, the tourists end up portraying the slums as places of very interesting life conditions, of happy and hardworking people, but also recognize the existent inequalities, and the need for help and deep changes to allow the slums dwellers to live a more dignified life. They left slums enlightened, humbled, sad, but also inspired, which says a lot about the resilient and hopeful future of the most disadvantaged.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyse the phenomenon of slum tourism. It intended to provide an answer to the following research question: *How do tourist discuss and reflect their experience of Manilla, Kibera, and Belen slums on TripAdvisor travel reviews and travel blogs after participating in a guided tour?*

As such, and to effectively provide a structured and reasoned answer, TripAdvisor travel reviews and travel blogs written by tourists who have participated in a guided tour in the above-mentioned locations, were collected. These were thought to be illustrative of the tourists' perspectives and opinions regarding slum life, and on engaging with slums in a touristic way.

In total, 337 TripAdvisor travel reviews and 11 travel blog posts were gathered and extensively analysed. Several interesting findings derived from the thematic analysis, that can mainly be connected to, among all the mentioned, similar studies of Nisbett (2017); Iqani (2016) and Huysamen et al. (2020), who also researched slum tourism through an analysis of TripAdvisor travel reviews. From the process of thematic analysis, four themes of significance were originated, that cover the most important aspects of the analysis and illustrate the key findings. Key findings of this study relate, in a large extent, to the action of the tour guides in guiding the tourists through these poor settlements, and how the tourist felt this experience, leading to the portrayal of slums as places of huge inequalities, but also containers of hope, authenticity and happiness.

One of the key goals of the tour operators is to diminish the stigma around slums, and to show the, not so often discussed, "other side of poverty" (Rolfes, 2010). The tourists' discourse demonstrates that this was accomplished. The tourists shared a constructed vision of hope and progress in the slums, where their sense of community is rather appreciated and valorised by the visitors, and the feeling of "joy", disproved of material benefits, was praised, and envied to some extent. The tourists discussed their experience of visiting the slums of Kibera, Manilla and Belen as very authentic, where one could observe the real culture of the country that they were visiting. Slums

were framed as places of happiness and hard work, but the tourists never disregarded their extremely hard life conditions. At the same time, it raised in them a huge awareness for the lack of influence and power to effectively do something about the poor conditions of those communities but arguing to be doing “their part” by engaging in slum tours, since the profits go towards the development of the slums. Guided tours are therefore seen as a step in the right direction. This narrative of progress emphasizes the constant ambivalence present in the tourists’ discourse. Ethical concerns were commonly raised, joined by a justification on how their visit caused a good impact. However, this narrative was also perceived as an attempt of the tourists to place their slum tourism experience in an ethical, and non-voyeuristic way, challenging the critiques associated with the practice. This allowed them to eliminate the feeling of violating the living space of others, since it was necessary to achieve those developments and change for the better.

This is to show that, contradicting to some extent the findings from Nisbett (2017) and Iqani (2016), the tourists do not see poverty as a depoliticized, or even a normalized issue. Travellers shared real concerns about the life of that people, their little conditions, and put in perspective the future of the children growing in the slums. Although, corroborating findings from Nisbett (2017) and Iqani (2016), the feeling of leaving the slums with their eyes open, enlightened, and humbled allows for the tourists to see their experience as ethical, educational, and beneficial for both parties, it does not empower the wrong people. It empowers both sides – tourists and locals. In the bigger picture, guided tours do not deviate the attention from the real problems of slums, and on the contrary, contribute to a raise of its awareness, leading to possible changes and progress, as also stated by Frenzel (2016). The analysis highlighted that, in the worst-case scenario, slum tours create a sense of awareness among tourists for poverty, and act as a call for help of the slum communities. And, in the best-case scenario, it provides opportunities for the slum dwellers, promote a rich interchange of cultural expressions, and contribute directly to the slums’ socio-economic development.

Additionally, this research made it evident that these travel blogs and reviews contribute to the process of self-reflection that is necessary before engaging in slum

tourism. With the amount of information shared online on every aspect of tourism, the commodification of poverty is also target of the tourists' critiques and reflections. This allows anyone who thinks in doing a slum tour, to put the whole phenomenon in perspective first, and to construct their own view before going. This is considered extremely positive, contributing to eliminate the concept of voyeurism associated with slum tourism, where the tourists are motivated by the power of positively contributing in some way.

All in all, the tourists portray the slums as places of hope, in accordance with Iqani (2016), Nisbett (2017), and Huysamen et al. (2020). However, the authors place this in a negative manner, appealing to the neoliberal as postcolonial aspects of it, where the unprivileged are, again, target of exploitation for the privilege of others. This research suggests the contrary. The tourists portray the slums as places of hope, but do not fail in acknowledging the problems that these communities face every day. A romanticize view on those conditions is not present in the tourists' comments, as they realize the lack of basic conditions, and the need for urgent changes. On the contrary, a raise of the traveller's education and comprehension for the "Others" life conditions was noted to be present in a larger force. In this sense, the travellers perceived the guided tours to be authentic and to portray the exact reality of the life in slums, contrary to Turan's (2017) ritualized and staged character argument. Moreover, the role of the tour guides was crucial to formulate the tourists' positive perceptions and thoughts on the slums "spiritual wealth". Being slums local habitants, and active members in its development, the guides were able to offer the tourists a comprehensive and truthful presentation of some crucial aspects, that end up shaping their perceptions of poverty to be associated with a narrative of hope and progress.

Finally, some remarks can be done about the whole ethical side of turning poverty into an attraction. It became clear that the tour operators are really concerned in contributing to the development of slums, while respecting the privacy of the slum dwellers, at least this is what the tourists' experience implies. This development is possible by the profit made from the guided tours. Therefore, and putting all of this into perspective, it can be argued that, based on the positive narrative present in the data, slum guided tours are more beneficial than detrimental for the slum

communities. They provide opportunities for the residents to live a better life and to have some connection with the “outside world”. It allows the residents to practice English and helps in the building of crucial infrastructures like hospitals and schools. Moreover, and on a more holistic angle, it contributes to the raise of awareness for extreme poverty and, arguably, is a bridge to structural and political changes.

However, there are also some critical points that need to be addressed considering these feelings/reactions from the tourists. Aside from the more eloquent or passionate remarks, the "lightness" with which some tourists described their slum experience cannot be passed unnoticed. One cannot forget that the focus of this thesis are slums, which are unprivileged places of extreme poverty. The tourists possess the right to share their thoughts in the way that they seem adequate, but sometimes one had to give a step back and remind oneself of the object of study. It is not “all roses” and “fascinating” experiences. There is the need to take into consideration what the serious problem poverty is. Nevertheless, in its whole, it was possible to understand that the majority of the travellers are aware of these poverty conditions, and do not leave the slums with a romanticized vision of them, but rather the opposite. It’s possible to conclude that, in contrast with Nisbett (2017) and Iqani’s (2016) findings, these guided tours do not romanticize and normalize poverty, but rather help the tourists in constructing a less negative image of it.

5.1 Limitations and Suggestions for future research

It is important to discuss some of this thesis limitations. First, due to the qualitative nature of this research, it is notable that a different combination of previous studies provided in the theoretical framework could lead to different findings and/or discussion points. Secondly, the findings can vary depending on the destinations chosen. Being the ones under analysis not the most mature slum tourism destinations, the practices can, to some extent, differ from other locations, where slum tourism assumes a more professionalized and standardized character. Brazil, South Africa, or India are good examples of this more mature character of slum tourism. Finally, some notes must be considered towards the slum in Belen, Peru. Due

to the fact of being a less touristic and popular slum location (when compared to the other two present in this study), and for not having a professionalized tour operators' infrastructure, it was extremely difficult to find travel blogs where the tourists clearly expressed that they had participated in a guided tour. Some more material could have been collected towards this location. Nevertheless, in the case of the travel reviews, this was not the case, due to their concentration in the same platform - TripAdvisor.

Regarding a recommendation for related research, future studies could focus on providing a more in-depth exploration of how the tourists relate to the action of the tour guides, since they represent a crucial role in the construction and formation of the "slums' image" at the eyes of the visitors. It would be interesting to understand to what extent the slum tours have reached a saturated level of ritualization and standardization, where their authentic character cannot be taken for granted anymore. Their action can thus lead to different perceptions and consequently different representations of the slums' reality.

Moreover, future studies could also focus on comparing highly "developed" slum destinations, where tourism is happening daily, with less developed ones, where the touristic activity is only gaining force. This comparison can be interesting in understanding if and how the tourists' perceptions on the ethics of this type of tourism, as well as their contribution to the communities' development, differ.

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Appendix 1

Table: Themes and codes emerged from the thematic data analysis

Theme	Category/Code	Description	Example - Quote
Aspect of slums and slum life “Too real of a reality?”	Places of authenticity	Travelers share their thoughts of slums as being very interesting and authentic, where one can observe the “true culture” of a country and of its people.	“Amazing place to visit and see how the locals live.” (Review 83) “In many people’s imagination, slums are lifeless places full of sick, starving people, fighting to survive, but surprisingly it’s quite the opposite here. People are up and about early, getting on with their day, cooking, washing, cleaning, working. It’s actually a rather lively place.” (Blog 3)
	Overwhelming and staggering poverty	Travelers point out the staggering and overwhelming slums landscape.	“A black viscous foul smelling river defines the first slum. It cuts through the heart of the slum like a deadly clogged artery. It is renowned as the filthiest river in Asia and as Tessie tells us, even the mosquitoes can’t survive here. But somehow people do” (Blog 1)
	Slum dwellers as “the other”	Travelers make an appreciation on the kindness, strength and happiness of the slum dwellers even considering their harsh living conditions. They frame the slum habitants as “the other”	“The locals of the slum are very hard-working people and poor, but also warm and welcoming, full of smiles, and going about their daily lives despite the struggles they face.” (Review 131)
Ethical considerations “Ethically unethical”	Ethical considerations	Travellers demonstrate sceptical feelings in engaging in slum tours.	“In Nairobi, I was of two minds about stepping fully into local life. Not because I was nervous or hesitant to do so, but because I was a bit unsecure of the best way to go about it. (...) something about wandering through this pocket of the city as a privileged tourist didn’t sit very well with me initially.” (Blog 6)
	Morality of slum tourism	Travelers demonstrate their perspectives on the ethics of touring slums. Debate	“(…) I smiled awkwardly but quickly stopped because I thought that might be inappropriate. But what is the

		themselves with issues of privacy of residents, exploitation of the poor and other ethical considerations.	appropriate way to approach strangers in a place where you both know the truth, and you are on opposite sides of privilege?" (Blog 8)
Tour guides and Tours operators "Angels in Hell"	Tour guides	Travelers share positive feedback on the guides action, denoting the importance to go with a guide and justifying that importance.	"Our guide, Melanie, who grew up in the slums as well, guided us through the winding alleys and dusty shacks, showing us the side a city people often ignore. She was patient, informative, and kind." (Review 105)
	Guides' influence on the slum experience	Travelers share their perspective on the role played by the guides in contributing to their positive experience.	"I cannot speak more highly of Kevin, he his kind, knowledgeable and with the money he collects from the tours he gives right back to his community from providing food security, to building trenches and pathways so community members stay safe while walking around." (Review 288)
	Ethics of tour operators	Travellers demonstrate how tour operators act in respect of the slum communities.	"The tour was conducted really well and we were kept in small groups. They ensured that the dignity and privacy of the people in the area we went around in remained intact and protected by prohibiting taking any sorts or pictures." (Review 123)
Feelings and perspectives of touring Slums "A disturbed sense of hope and enlightenment?"	Unique character of slum tours	Travelers portray the slum tours as having a high educational character, aligned with their interesting and insightful characteristics. They also refer to it as an authentic and fascinating experience.	"It was AMAZING! This is one of the best things we've ever done on any holiday..." (Review 242) "It is well organized and a great experience and absolute must to do when spending time in Manila, as it takes you to places and gives you insight you would not be able to see or experience yourself." (Review 169)
	Perceived benefits of slum tours	Travelers reflect on the benefits of slum tours to both themselves, and as a mean to give back to the slum communities.	"In addition to raising awareness and offering a unique experience, these tours are led by residents of the Manila slums, offering them opportunities to earn a better living, practice English, attend university classes, and even begin their own initiatives." (Review 134)

	<p>Emotions and perspectives of touring slums</p>	<p>Travelers share their emotions and perspectives about touring slums, stating it to be an eye-opening, life changing and unforgettable experience. Also denote the need for intervention and wonder how they can make a difference.</p>	<p>“It is a unique experience. It is eye opening. It is humbling. It is sad. It promises to change your life and it begs the question. What can I do to help?” (Review 117)</p> <p>“Honestly, I didn’t want to leave, I wanted to stay there and play with the kids, I wanted to see their hiding places, meet their parents sing karaoke with them for 5 peso’s and let their innocent happiness influence me.” (Blog 2)</p>
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