

# Tourism and photography by sontag essay

[Design](#), [Photography](#)



Tourism is a good representation for photography. Every year people travel away from their homes, breaking their daily routines to visit other locations. It is almost unnatural to go on vacation without a camera. Tourists snap pictures of everything to record and prove that they have been to some location. These pictures serve as memories later for the tourists.

Photography and tourism are in a sense intertwined. Photography is the mechanism by which tourism can be documented. Photographs play a major role in people's vacation. Tourists want to capture the environment surrounding them, the culture they are immersed in, the activities they perform, and the individuals enjoying the vacation with them. These photographs serve as constant reminders of their trip and serve as memories later. When returning from a trip, one is compelled to share their stories with friends and relatives and present their pictures to serve as proof that they were really there. These pictures also help with one's memory. When looking at a photograph, one may recall what is shown in the picture and the events surrounding it.

Susan Sontag states that " the very activity of taking pictures is soothing, and assuages general feelings of disorientation that are likely to be exacerbated by travel. " (Sontag 10) the older one gets and the more one has traveled the less likely they are to remember correctly the places they have traveled to and the details surrounding a certain trip. Taking photographs is soothing because you have captured on film permanently what you want to always remember and as you forget one has to just simply look at a photograph and memories come flooding back into one's mind. The

idea of traveling to another place and documenting it is very intriguing to many tourists. Individuals tend to be very curious beings.

Thus this is why they travel to other locations, to see new environments and to examine how others live. People have always been curious to see how others go about their daily lives. For instance we have magazines everywhere displaying pictures of celebrities doing routine tasks such as walking the dog to the more bizarre such as shaving their head. Individuals have an innate curiosity and want to document what they see. Travel gives them the excuse to explore and take pictures. Sontag states that " photography opened up a new model of freelance activity-allowing each person to display a certain unique, avid sensibility. Photographers departed on their cultural and class and scientific safaris, searching for striking images.

" (Sontag 89) Photography allowed for people to become amateur photographers and to let them go out and capture what they saw. Instead of waiting for an image to come to them, they went out looking for things to capture with their cameras therefore creating tourism. Individuals constantly want upgrades on everything such as cameras. Everyday electronics are being revised. They are becoming more compact, more accessible, more automatic, and more digital. People want the latest, newer model of cameras. As cameras have advanced people are more able to take a good photograph therefore increasing the desirability to take more pictures. This in turn causes people to venture more which increases tourism.

Sontag states that " the urge to have new experiences is translated into the urge to take photographs. (Sontag 162) People want to create new memories

for themselves and do so by traveling but only with their trusty camera by their side. Sontag also believes there is a bad side in the alliance between tourism and photography. In *On Photography*, Sontag explains the story of how photography damaged the American Indians. Tourists bombarded the Indians and snapped pictures of everything sacred to them such as their rituals, homes, and objects. She also mentions that the Indians were asked to move and stand in such a way that would be best for the cameras not keeping true to the actual environment.

Sontag 64) By altering the reality they are destroying what they are photographing. Sontag states “ they will get something down that is disappearing-and, often hasten its disappearance by photographing it. ”

(Sontag 65) In the case of the Indians, tourists are constantly appearing on their land, invading their privacy, and altering the reality that they capture with their cameras so much so that you don't know what is real anymore or how it originally was and causes the reality to disappear. The picture may distort, but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture. ” (Sontag 5) This creates a bridge between photography being an aggressive act. The words used to describe taking a photograph like aim and shoot make the camera seem more like a gun. Sontag states that “ armed with their machines, photographers are to make an assault on reality.

” (Sontag 121) This completely describes what tourists have done with the American Indians. Another aggressive side of photography is what Sontag called the machine gun approach. It is when “ many negatives are made with

the hope that one will be good-is fatal to serious results. " (Sontag 117)

Tourists do this to seize the reality that they are visiting in the hopes of taking a chunk back home with them. Photography gives people an activity to do. Individuals live in a fast paced environment and constantly want to be doing something. Even on vacation, a time when you are supposed to relax, people become obsessed with getting the perfect pictures to show their friends.

It almost becomes a job away from their actual job. Sontag puts this perfectly when she states that " the photographer is supertourist, an extension of the anthropologist, visiting natives and bringing back news of their exotic doings and strange gear. The photographer is always trying to colonize new experiences or find new ways to look at familiar subjects-to fight against boredom. " (Sontag 42) Being the photographer makes you the active participant and gives one the very important task of documenting everything that is experienced.

" You cannot claim to have really seen something until you have photographed it. (Sontag 87) This is the philosophy of many tourists when vacationing. Even though tourists are recording everything they see, doesn't mean that they are recording reality as it was. Overall, tourism serves as the perfect metaphor for photography. Cameras are a constant companion to tourists documenting their travels whether or not they are recording things as they are.

It gives them something to participate in and allows them to have memories to take back with them. As Sontag put, " essentially the camera makes

everyone a tourist in other people's reality, and eventually in one's own. ”  
(Sontag 57)