

by a few disabled Rutgers-Camden students, visited local malls and found several inexpensive changes that retailers could make that would ease the burden



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on disabled shoppers. Among the suggestions: Merchandise stacked vertically would be in convenient reach for shoppers of any height, while mirrors could be placed in a way that would accommodate everyone. Lighter doors would be easier for disabled people to open, and wider, less-cluttered aisles would be more welcoming for shoppers using canes, crutches, or wheelchairs. Simply putting down a floor mat when it rains can help an individual with a walking aid to gain traction on wet floors.

"In supermarkets, scales and plastic bags for fruits and vegetables are too high for many disabled shoppers," says Kaufman. "Fitting rooms for handicapped people are sometimes used as storage closets. And salespeople generally aren't trained to interact with the disabled." She points out, however, that "a business owner can learn how to improve the environment in his store simply by inviting a disabled person in and asking for feedback.

"In some of the interviews we've conducted, retailers give the excuse that they don't have disabled shoppers," continues Kaufman. "But that's like asking, 'What came first, the chicken or the egg?' If retailers made changes, maybe disabled people would be their best customers."

World Tour

THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON GLOBAL CULTURE

Tourism—the world's largest employer—is expected to account for more export earnings than any other industry by the turn of the century. Yet when it comes to the academic study of culture and ethnicity, tourism gets about as much respect as Chevy Chase in the *Family Vacation* movies.

"Tourism has become an intrinsic part of both global and local culture, yet serious scholarship on the subject has been held back, in part because studying

tourism may appear to be too much like taking a vacation and getting paid for it," says Robert E. Wood, an associate professor of sociology at Rutgers-Camden. "When it has been studied, the framework is simplistic and narrow. Tourism's place in the contemporary world goes beyond obvious questions like 'Is tourism good or bad?' and 'Does tourism's benefits outweigh its costs?'"

Tourism is also unfairly criticized for adversely affecting ethnicity, says Wood. "Take, for example, the idea that cultures marketed for tourism will be spoiled or become too westernized. The people in these countries don't necessarily want to be museum pieces for the rest of the world. They might consider westernization a good thing. We shouldn't make automatic value judgements of these issues; first there must be serious scholarly study."

Providing the needed academic examination is a new book compiled by Wood and Michel Picard, a researcher at the French National Center for Scientific Research in Paris. The anthology, *Tourism, Ethnicity, and the State in Asian and Pacific Societies* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), to which Wood and Picard each contributed a chapter, gathers papers from some of the foremost authorities on ethnicity and ethnic relations in Asian and Pacific societies. The contributors analyze the ways in which the very meanings of ethnicity and culture are contested and reworked in the wake of expanding tourism in China, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Pacific Islands.

National policies, cultural rivalries, and ethnic identities change from country to country, making generalization impossible, says Wood. "We find, for example, that very often the state is the critical link between tourism and ethnicity. But sometimes state policies have unintended consequences; and other times local groups take advantage of tourism to promote their own goals and interests. Does tourism flatten ethnic identity or does it give ethnic groups new chips to play with in the political game? Don't expect to find one answer." □

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