Introduction

Due to the invention of easier travel methods, the tourism industry has been transformed in the last century. With the emergence of the global middle class, more individuals have more money to spend on leisure activities. Hence, since the 1960s, more individuals are traveling farther and more frequently than ever before. Nonetheless, with this surge in tourism, there comes a plethora of environmental, economic, and social implications. Tourism greatly increases an individual’s carbon footprint due to transport and the overconsumption tendencies of most travelers. On the economic and social front, tourism can be financially beneficial for communities based around tourist destinations. However, this is often not the case due to tourist industry practices that commercialize the culture of locals, and end up taking money away from the community. Going into the next decade, several measures must be implemented to make tourism sustainable.

Definition of key terms

Tourism

Tourism is defined as travel away from home for at least one night for the purpose of recreation or leisure. There are any types of tourism that can be sorted into two main categories: Niche tourism and mass tourism.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a type of tourism that includes travel to see undisturbed natural areas or communities. Ecotourism is seen as an alternative to mass or commercial tourism and and falls under the category of niche tourism.

Heritage Tourism
Also referred to as cultural tourism, heritage tourism refers to travel that is done with the purpose of experiencing a place’s history and culture. It often includes travel to see artefacts, historic sites, and indigenous people of the area.

**Adventure Tourism**

Adventure tourism falls under the category of niche tourism and involves travel to a remote place and activities with a measured level of risk. An example would be climbing Mount Everest. Adventure tourism is often very expensive.

**Tourism Hotspots**

A location that attracts more tourists annually than usual due to an activity, site, or experience that can be seen or had. Examples include Venice and Machu Picchu. Tourism hotspots can be in danger due to the fact that they have limiting carrying capacity.

**Transnational Cooperation (TNC)**

A TNC is classified as any company that produces or distributes goods and services on an international scale. It could also be a company that receives foreign investment.

**Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**

Small island developing states are islands that usually rely on tourism as their main source of income and economic development. SIDS include but are not limited to the Caribbean and Mediterranean.

**Global Commons**

Global Commons is a term used to refer to natural resource domains existing at an international or national level.

**Background Information**

**The History of Tourism and Changing Demographics**
In the past, tourism was not common. It was seen as an activity of leisure that was exclusive to the highest socioeconomic class in the most developed countries. Those who could afford it rarely partook in the activity due to the cost and difficulty travel posed. When these individuals did travel for leisure, they often traveled to places that were nearby that could be accessed by train. Nowadays, individuals from most socioeconomic classes and many different countries have the ability to travel internationally for leisure. Moreover, they travel for leisure more often and cover farther distances at a more affordable rate. This increase in tourism rates can be seen in the graph below that shows the rate of change by region.

The International Tourist Arrivals by Region Between 1950 to 2018

This change in tourism patterns can be explained by multiple factors. Firstly, the invention of the plane has decreased the friction of distance. In other words, the plane made it easier and faster to travel to another country or a continent in a manner that boats and trains could not. This made travel faster and more affordable. Furthermore, the growth of the global economy has lifted more people out of poverty and led to the emergence of the global middle class. The global middle class includes individuals make a sustainable income and have enough money left over after necessary expenditures to spend on leisure.
or recreation. The global middle class is a large consumer market that has contributed to the rise in tourism.

The geographic patterns of tourism are also interesting. While Asia and the Pacific were not previously a popular destination, they have become increasingly popular, and are on track to become the most popular tourist destinations in the next 50 years. Currently the majority of international tourists originate from the United States but China is not far behind and predicted to catch up.

While tourism is typically for leisure, the definition has evolved to overlap with things such as trips for business, medical purposes or religious purposes. Modern tourism developed in a manner that the majority of the market is heavily commercialized. Globalization has also homogenized tourism to the point where much of the culture of destinations is lost. The preservation of culture is a big pillar of tourism. Because tourism rates have increased, places that were previously known as tourist hotspots are becoming overcrowded and the carrying capacity of these places are being exceeded. While this may simply cause annoyance in big cities, it serves as a real threat to ecological hotspots.

**The Principles of Sustainable Tourism and its Growing Importance**

Sustainable development is development that satisfies the needs of the present without putting the needs of the future world and generation at risk. Like sustainable development, sustainable tourism must ensure that renewable resources do not run out, protect biodiversity in ecological sites, respect tradition and culture in communities at tourism spots, gather input from the local community, and ensure that the city reaps the economic benefits of tourism. In other words, there are three major principles of sustainable tourism. The first is that the tourist site recognizes and operates within the carrying capacity of the area so that resources do not run out. The second principle of sustainable tourism is the recognition and conservation of the communities and customs of the tourist hotspot that not only help the residents but give the tourists a more authentic experience. The last principle of tourism is that local residents get a fair share of the economic gains from the tourism industry.

Experts predict that International tourism will increase by 3.3 percent from 2010 to 2030. There are many tourist hotspots that are currently at risk. These tourist locations must follow the outlined UNESCO measures to ensure sustainability. For instance, Machu Picchu is a very attractive cultural and ecological sites in all of Latin America. The number of visitors has steadily increased annually by a rate of six percent. This increase has exceeded the carrying capacity of Machu Picchu and has led to footpath erosion. Moreover, urbanization has occurred near the site due to increased tourism to build hotels and secondary tourist resources. This has led to water and air pollution. This has also meant
deforestation which can cause landslides. Moreover, the frequent helicopter flights cause excessive air pollution. Beyond the environmental costs, there has been an increase in petty crime, and tradition is being lost as the site becomes more homogenized. Furthermore, the money being generated by tourists is subject to leakage. Leakage describes the phenomenon where money does not stay in the home country but goes mostly to the international tour operators.

There are methods to run tourist sites so that they benefit a country. UNESCO helped the Ministry of Culture in Cusco establish new rules and adopt a plan to ensure sustainable development of site. For instance, now, groups no larger than 20 people can enter the site at a time. The tour guides are also now required to have official identification and uniforms. Moreover, some of the site will be closed off to visitors and only three trails will be open to the public. Time limits of 3-5 minutes were also set for tourists to stop at each site to prevent bottlenecks of tour groups.

Machu Picchu is just one example of a site that must be subjected to strict measures to ensure sustainable tourism. While it serves as a case study for the economic, social, and cultural impacts of tourism, there are many other sites facing similar issues. For instance, while Oxford in England does not contain ecological spots, its carrying capacity is often exceeded to the point of heavy traffic. Sustainable tourism must keep in mind the well-being of the tourist, the residents, and the site that serves as the destination.

The larger concern surrounding tourism is its cumulative environmental impact and carbon footprint. Transportation and airplanes are significant sources of greenhouse gases. Moreover, a lot of resources such as food and energy are required to serve tourists. The operation of hotels and resorts is not cheap nor does it encourage the mindset of conservation. As global warming becomes a big concern, efforts to promote conservative tourism must be taken. That being said, tourism can also be used to promote the environment. For instance, in places like Killarney National Park, much of the generated income is invested back into the park to maintain the biodiversity and overall well-being of the wildlife.

**Past and Current Initiatives to Promote Sustainable Tourism**

There are many initiatives that have been taken to ensure sustainable tourism. While some have been implemented on a local scale, others have been extended and recommended by larger organizations.

The World Monument Fund publishes a list of threatened cultural heritage sites every two years. The 2016 listed contained 50 sites in 36 different countries. The world monument fund also published a
pledge that consists of ten measures tourists and tourist-site operators can take to ensure sustainable tourism with the smallest carbon footprint. The WMF also provides grants for preservation and performs field work to monitor the status of different sites.

UNESCO has compiled a sustainable tourism toolkit for sites to use. It has also designated certain sites as world heritage sites that must be protected. It also monitors places and provides custom initiatives for tourism sites at risk. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council was also created to promote global sustainable tourism and identify areas that could be modified to do so.

While many organizations and councils have been made, the implemented solutions all follow the same thought process. Much of sustainable tourism development starts at the community level where a council appointed by the community discusses measures with other government leaders. Promoting sustainable tourism has also involved setting limits on visitation of the site. This was previously spoken about in regards to Machu Picchu but is now also being considered in Venice. The development of local tour operators is also imperative to ensure economic leakage does not occur and that the majority of the revenue generated stays within the community. Sustainable methods of travel are also being endorsed.

**Timeline**

**September 27th, 1980**
The Manilla declaration is signed by 107 delegations to recognize the nature of tourism. At this meeting it is agreed that tourism is linked to economic development and has the ability to link the gap between the rich and the poor. But it also established that there are some implications of tourism that should be studied and analyzed by individual countries.

**September 26th, 1985**
The Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code is published by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization.

**June 14th, 1992**
The Earth Summit is held and Agenda 21 is released. The UN publishes a document stating “We support the development of tourism programs that respect the environment and culture, as a strategy for sustainable development of urban and rural communities by decentralizing urban development and reducing disparities between regions” (UN 1992 Chapter 7).

**1993**
The first issue of the Journal of Sustainable of Tourism is published with 8 articles. This is considered to be the introduction of the concept of sustainable tourism into the mainstream.
April 28th, 1995  The World Conference on Sustainable Tourism is held and the Charter for Sustainable Tourism is established. It recognizes the need to adhere to previous documents and preserve communities.

May 27th, 1999  The 7th commission on Sustainable Development is held. One of the main three topics discussed is the sustainable development of tourism on small island developing states. This commission recognized the important role tourism plays in their economy but also highlighted many detrimental impacts that needed to mediation. Methods to address this were discussed including improving waste management systems and getting private businesses involved in sustainable development of tourist locations.

2002  The World Tourism Organization launches the Sustainable Tourism Poverty Elimination program to align with the millennium development goals.

2006  The United Nations Environment Program Established the International Task Force on Sustainable Development with objectives that span across five areas including policy, practice, education, pilot programmes, and communication networks.

June 20th, 2012  The Rio+20 United Nations Conference on sustainable development was held and a report was published entitled “The Future we Want”. One entire chapter is dedicated to the importance, development and funding of sustainable tourism.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Peru

Peru is home to Machu Picchu, a UNESCO world heritage site. It has taken several measures to promote sustainable tourism and keep Machu Picchu off the endangered sites list. Machu Picchu serves as a primary case study on the variety of measures that can be implemented to ensure sustainable tourism on economic, cultural, and environmental fronts.

England

England is home to Oxford, a famous university city. It attracts tourists from international and domestic origins with over 500 million tourists annually. Overall, has created 5000 full time jobs within
Oxford and brought in 200 million Euros. However, the area has experienced high traffic rates and economic inflation as a result of tourism. In turn they implemented the Oxford Tourism Strategy. The Oxford Tourism Strategy’s main goal is to increase the amount of money that tourists spend while also minimizing the environmental impacts of tourism. This program has several measures which include reinvesting profit to build sustainable infrastructure. England also hosts several other tourist hotspots including central London. While the city has not issued any official plans that pertain to sustainable tourism, individual agencies are making an effort to promote “responsible tourism”.

**Italy**

Italy is home to the tourist hotspot of Venice. Venice is very popular with an average 37,500 visitors daily. While this has economic benefits. The carrying capacity of Venice is much smaller and is only able to accommodate 9780 hotel stays, 1460 non-hotel stays, and 10,857 day-trippers. Putting a cap at about 25,000 tourists has been suggested to control the daily influx of tourists. In 2000, the carrying capacity was surpassed on 200 separate days. This not only lead to overcrowding but congestions in the center square. Tourists have also disturbed residents by vandalizing buildings and swimming in Canals.

**Costa Rica**

Costa Rica is home to the Monteverde Cloud Forests. The Monte Cloud Forests is a sustainable tourism hotspot that builds in conservation into its tourism model. 18% of the total revenue is reinvested back into the conservation and development of the site. Development around the site occurred at a small scale but was sufficient and created businesses, hotels, restaurants, reserves, and botanical gardens. Local guides are utilized and traditional arts and crafts have resurged. The created businesses all provided job opportunities and attracted migrants that were looking for opportunity. Because of this prosperity, the price of land has increased and more people are putting a strain on the community's infrastructure.

**The Maldives**

The Maldives consist of Small Island Developing States. Only 200 of the 1190 islands are inhabited and tourism serves as the main source of income for these islands and accounts for 28% of their GDP. However, they have faced significant challenges in regards to climate and infrastructure that has made them vulnerable. For instance, sea level rises have made the Maldives the lowest country in altitude making it prone to flooding and Tsunamis. The Islands are also located on a tectonically active
zone. When the Tsunami of 2004 hit, tourism fell. A similar decrease was seen in 2008 during the economic recession. In addition to the vulnerability of the industry it should be noted that average tourist consumes more water than a resident of the Maldives. Most of the water on islands are produced by desalination and most of the energy is produced using generators. While mitigations plans have been produced to tackle flooding, there are still concerns that tourism is not sustainable and the economy of the Maldives is too dependent on it.

China

China is not only ranked as the second country with the most tourists but it also is implementing many sustainable tourism methods itself. Measures include replacing plastic bottles with glass bottles in hotel rooms and utilizing local guides. China wants to develop an eco-friendly model of tourism as it wants to protect the visual beauty of many of its sites.

The United States of America

The USA is the number one source of tourists worldwide. The USAID views tourism as a tool that can be used to reduce poverty in communities, educate a population with skills that are applicable inside and outside of the tourism industry, promote equality, protect ecological sites, and develop relations with other countries.

UNESCO

As a specialized United Nations Agency, UNESCO has worked tirelessly not only to implement measures to promote sustainable tourism but also spread awareness regarding the necessity of sustainable tourism. It has established World Heritage Sites and united parties to discuss locally-inspired measures to promote sustainability.

World Tourism Organization

The UNWTO has held many conferences and drafted many documents that pertain to the development of sustainable tourism on an international scale. It not only aims to develop sustainable tourism but ensure that said tourism is accessible to all. Recently, the organization has published a report on the impact tourism transportation has on the environment and how low-carbon tourism can be implemented.
Rainforest Alliance

The Rainforest Alliance is an NGO based in New York City and Amsterdam which aims to unite farmers, scientists, indigenous communities, governments, and other people to build sustainable communities around rainforests. Many of their projects involve promoting sustainable tourism and helping indigenous communities use traditional crafts to profit and grow the economy.

UN Resolutions and Relevant Documents

- Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection (A/73/274), July 2018
- International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (A/RES/70/193), December 2018
- Sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America (A/70/215)
- General Assembly Resolution A/70/472 (Sustainable Tourism), 2017
- UNWTO Annual Report, 2017

Possible Solutions

Communication

Building lines of communication between the community, country, and international organizations is imperative to implement suggested measures to develop sustainable tourism. This could be fostered through the use of forums, reports, or monitoring systems.

Local Development

Local sustainable development will translate to the development of sustainable tourism sites. The idea is that local development around a site will accommodate visitors and increase revenue that is put back into the community.

Education

By making individuals, whether they are tourists or site operators, aware of the importance of sustainability, the recommended measures from the UN would more likely be enacted. Education could
also entail teaching local people different languages to get jobs in the tourist industry, and other vocational skills beneficial to them.

**Guiding Questions for your resolutions**

❖ In what ways can tourism impact the economy of a location in both a negative and positive manner?
❖ In what ways can tourism impact the culture and heritage of a location in both a positive and negative manner?
❖ In what ways can tourism impact the environment of a location in both a positive and negative manner?
❖ What is the biggest concern regarding sustainable tourism at the moment?
❖ How can the tourist industry be made more sustainable?

**Bibliography**

“A/70/472 - Sustainable Tourism :: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.” *United Nations*, United Nations,


