

This book is dedicated to Susan and  
'little' John, perfect travelling companions  
on the journey of life.

# Sustainable Tourism Management

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## Preface

In recent years, the concept of sustainable tourism has taken centre stage in the tourism world. It has stimulated numerous conferences, textbooks and corporate policy statements. So much has been written and spoken about sustainable tourism that one could be forgiven for thinking there is nothing left to say on the subject.

However, for all the words, there are still relatively few examples of successful sustainable tourism initiatives to inspire both students and practitioners. In other words, we have failed, to date, to put theory into practice. Even where attempts have been made to turn words into action, the results have generally been very limited.

The aim of this book is to focus on the practical side, to explore the ways in which tourism could be managed in ways that would make it more sustainable.

It is underpinned by a range of underlying principles, including the following:

1. Sustainable tourism is not just about protecting the environment; it is also concerned with long-term economic viability and social justice.
2. Initiatives designed to achieve sustainable tourism bring benefits to some people and costs to others. It is thus a highly political, rather than just a technocratic, field.
3. Sustainable tourism cannot be separated from the wider debate about sustainable development in general.
4. There is a need for more critical evaluation of existing thinking and techniques in the area of sustainable tourism. There are too many 'sacred cows' that are not being challenged rigorously enough or often enough. For example, where is the evidence that small-scale tourism is inherently more sustainable than mass tourism, regardless of the nature of the environment in which it takes place?
5. Progress towards more sustainable forms of tourism will depend far more on the activities of the industry and the attitudes of tourists, than on the actions of public sector bodies.

The book is designed to be contentious and to stimulate critical debate in this important field.

To achieve its aims, the book is divided into a number of sections, as follows:

- (i) **Part One** sets the scene for the rest of the book by:
  - offering a historical perspective on the broader concept of sustainable development

## Acknowledgements

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This book is one that I have wanted to write for some time now. The fact that I have been able to complete it is thanks to a wide variety of people, including:

- (i) the authors whose detailed studies of aspects of sustainable tourism or particular destinations or companies have provided much of the substance of the book
- (ii) those students who have allowed me to try out my ideas on them and have given me their valuable, honest opinions on my views.

Whatever strengths the book has are largely due to these two groups while the weaknesses are all mine.

However, this book could not have been written without the selfless support offered by my wife, Susan Horner. It would not have been typed were it not for Judy Mitchell, the only person in the world who can read my hand-writing. Finally, it would have taken over my life had it not been for our son John, who convinced me that reading comics, playing tennis in the yard, and listening to music is more important than writing books.

I must also place on record the eternal debt of gratitude I owe my parents who made sacrifices for me and encouraged me to always ask questions.

## Part One

### Introduction

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This section sets the scene for the rest of the book and provides valuable background for the reader.

The four chapters in this part of the book cover:

- (i) the history of the whole concept of sustainable development
- (ii) the nature and scope of sustainable tourism
- (iii) a critique of current thinking on issues and techniques in sustainable tourism
- (iv) the author's ideas on the principles which should underpin the practice of sustainable tourism.

## Historical Background

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### The History of the Concept of Sustainable Development

The debate over the concept of sustainable tourism is a phenomenon of the 1990s. However, its origins lie in the wider concept of sustainable development which has been with us for many centuries.

By sustainable, we generally mean development which meets our needs today without compromising the ability of people in the future to meet their needs. It is thus about taking a longer term perspective than is usual in human decision-making and implies a need for intervention and planning. The concept of sustainability clearly embraces the environment, people and economic systems.

While the term 'sustainable' has only begun to be used explicitly in the past 20 or 30 years, the ideas which underpin it date back to the earliest examples of city planning, for example. Perhaps, therefore, some of the earliest attempts to achieve sustainable development were the towns and cities which were planned and developed by the Romans.

Likewise, many traditional agricultural systems were based on the principle of sustainability. Farming was carried out in ways which preserved rather than destroyed the productive capacity of the land so that it would still be able to support food production in the longer term.

However, over time, technological inventions, population pressures, together with social and economic change, led to the growth of industry and urbanization. This in turn put pressure on farmers to maximize food production in the short term. These developments led to problems which in turn led to private and state initiatives as we can see if we look at the case of urbanization in the UK.

Industrialization in the UK transformed the economy and society as well as the natural environment. There was a recognition that if it were not controlled, the process could destroy the physical environment, and lead to a very poor quality of life for the population. This resulted in the growth of 'model' settlements, built by paternalistic industrialists who attempted to provide good living conditions, such as New Lanark, Saltaire and Port Sunlight. At the same time some industrialists developed parks to ensure that future generations would have some green space to enjoy in the heart of industrial cities.

Most of these were initiatives taken by affluent, powerful business men. However, as industrialization led to urban sprawl and a decline in public health, governments and local councils began to take action to safeguard the long-term future of towns and cities, as well as ameliorating short-term problems. This trend was at the heart of the development of the first statutory town plan-

ning systems in Europe, which dated from the end of the last century and the beginning of this century.

The desire to safeguard the environment and provide social equity also stimulated the rise of the Garden City movement in the UK which was formed in 1898.

The Second World War gave a new impetus to all forms of planning, with the idea that a new world order had to be built once the war ended. This resulted in a plethora of plans that were all related to the concept of sustainable development. Leading planners like Abercrombie were preparing blueprints for the future development of whole regions such as Greater London. Strategies were being developed to systematically exploit social and economic resources in ways which reduced disparities between regions. Plans were being laid to create national parks across Europe.

Also in the postwar period, the first major planning legislation was introduced in many European countries, most notably in the UK. Slowly, across the developed world, bureaucratic systems of land-use planning developed between 1945 and the 1970s.

However, some commentators would argue that planning has failed to help us achieve sustainable development. There is growing cynicism about the ability of planners to manage development effectively in the interests of sustainability. Indeed, writers such as Beckerman would even argue that state intervention probably impedes the move towards sustainable development by distorting the free market system. The argument being that the market, if left alone, will ultimately lead to sustainable development. However, this author feels it his duty to point out to any reader who is relatively new to the sustainable tourism debate, that this is a position held by a minority of commentators. The conventional wisdom appears to be, rightly or wrongly, that sustainable tourism requires intervention and planning.

From the 1960s the question of sustainable development also became a major issue in the so-called 'Third World'. As the countries of Asia and Africa gained their independence, they were intent on closing the wealth gap between themselves and the

developed countries. Some of them took a purely short-term view and set out to exploit their natural resources for short-term gain. Others tried to take a longer term view and there was much debate about how development could take place in a more sustainable manner.

At the same time, there was a growing recognition in some developed countries that the emphasis on materialism and the 'consumer society' was taking too heavy a toll on the world's resources. For example, in 1960, the US marketing guru, Vance Packard, published *The Waste Makers*, a critique of the 'throw-away society'.

In 1972, Danella and Dennis Meadows published 'The Limits to Growth', a report on the impact of economic growth on the future of the world. The Massachusetts-based team used computer simulations to show that the world could not cope with the level of resource use and pollution that economic growth was creating. They used a systems approach to analyse the problem and suggest that the economic system had to be modified to achieve a 'state of global equilibrium'.

Numerous reports also warned that the earth's future was under threat because the global population was growing too rapidly, and was not sustainable in relation to the Earth's resources. One of the first reports to talk openly about the concept of sustainable development was the 'World Conservation Strategy' which was published in 1980 by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Then in 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development published 'Our Common Future', otherwise known as the Brundtland Report. This

placed the concept of sustainable development centre stage and promoted it as a vehicle for deliverance (Murphy, 1994)

This report was based on the well-established idea that:

we do not inherit the Earth from our forefathers, but borrow it from our children (Murphy, 1995)

**Table 1.1.** Sustainable development components. Source: adapted from Murphy (1995) based upon the Brundtland Report 1987.

Establishing ecological limits and more equitable standards	'... requires the promotion of values that encourage consumption standards that are within the bounds of the ecological possible and to which all can reasonably aspire'
Redistribution of economic activity and reallocation of resources	'Meeting essential needs depends in part on achieving full growth potential and sustainable development clearly requires economic growth in places where such needs are not being met'
Population control	'Though the issue is not merely one of population size but of the distribution of resources, sustainable development can only be pursued if demographic developments are in harmony with the changing productive potential of the ecosystem'
Conservation of basic resources	'... sustainable development must not endanger the natural systems that support life on Earth: the atmosphere, the waters, the soils, and the living beings'
More equitable access to resources	'Growth has no set limits in terms of population or resource use beyond which lies ecological disaster ... But ultimate limits there are, and sustainability requires that long before these are reached efforts are made to ensure more equitable access to resources ...'
Carrying capacity and sustainable yield	'... most renewable resources are part of a complex and interlinked ecosystem, and maximum sustainable yield must be defined after taking into account system-wide effects of exploitation'
Retention of resources	'Sustainable development requires that the rate of depletion of non-renewable resources foreclose as few future options as possible'
Diversification of the species	'... sustainable development requires the conservation of plant and animal species'
Minimize adverse impacts	'Sustainable development requires that the adverse impacts on the quality of air, water, and other natural elements are minimised so as to sustain the ecosystem's overall integrity'
Community control	'... community control over development decisions affecting local ecosystems'
Broad national/international policy framework	'... biosphere is the common home of all human-kind and joint management of the biosphere is prerequisite for global political security'
Economic viability	'... communities must pursue economic well-being while recognising that [government] policies may set limits to material growth'
Environmental quality	'Corporate environmental policy is an extension of total quality management'
Environmental audit	'An effective environmental audit system is at the heart of good environmental management'

It was based on the idea that economic growth had to take place in a more ecologically sound and socially equitable manner.

Table 1.1 outlines the main components

of sustainable development, as defined largely by the Brundtland Report, interpreted by Murphy. The emphasis is clearly primarily on the environment. As we will see, as the book develops, this emphasis on

the environmental dimension to sustainability rather than the economic and social dimensions, is a real problem in the debate on sustainability and sustainable tourism.

Since 1987 the growing interest in sustainable development has been fuelled by:

- the Rio Summit in 1992 and Agenda 21
- environmental problems such as 'global warming' and the 'smog' which affected South-East Asia in Autumn 1997.

In 1997, Hunter produced a valuable list of the key issues which are wrapped up in the sustainable tourism debate. This list is

**Box 1.1.** Major issues in interpreting sustainable development. Source: Hunter (1997).

- The role of economic growth in promoting human well-being
- The impact and importance of human population growth
- The effective existence of environmental limits to growth
- The substitutability of natural resources (capital) with human-made capital created through economic growth and technical innovation
- The differential interpretation of the criticality of various components of the natural resource base and, therefore, the potential for substitution
- The ability of technologies (including management methods such as environmental impact assessment and environmental auditing) to decouple economic growth and unwanted environmental side-effects
- The meaning of the value attributed to the natural world and the rights of non-human species, sentient or otherwise
- The degree to which a systems (ecosystems) perspective should be adopted and the importance of maintaining the functional integrity of ecosystems

reproduced in Box 1.1. The inclusion of such disparate issues clearly helps to explain the breadth and lack of focus which typifies much of the sustainability debate.

## The Sustainable Development Spectrum

In the same article, Hunter went on to adapt the earlier work of Turner, Pearce and Bate-man, to argue that sustainable development is not a single absolute standard. Instead there is, as Table 1.2 suggests, a wide spectrum of attitudes, and levels of commitment, towards sustainable development. This spectrum is also seen in terms of consumer interest in sustainability as we will see later in the book when we look at the concept of 'shades of green consumer'.

## Sustainable Development and Ethical Business

Since the 1980s, there has been a growing interest in the ethical standards of businesses. This has been a response to numerous scandals relating to unethical or irresponsible actions on behalf of companies. Public and political pressure has been growing for companies to behave more ethically in relation to a range of issues, some of which are illustrated in Fig. 1.1.

The concept of sustainable development fits readily into this trend. Companies are being encouraged to take their responsibilities towards the environment most seriously, because:

- if they destroy environmental resources on which their business depends, then the future of their business will be in jeopardy
- if they do not act voluntarily, governments may need to regulate their activities
- they have broader responsibilities to society, to be 'good neighbours'.

As a result, more and more companies are seeking to make their activities more sustainable through:

- pollution and waste reduction measures
- energy conservation initiatives

**Table 1.2.** A simplified description of the sustainable development spectrum. Source: Hunter (1997), adapted from Turner *et al.* (1994).

Sustainability position	Defining characteristics
Very weak	Anthropocentric and utilitarian; growth oriented and resource exploitative; natural resources utilized at economically optimal rates through unfettered free markets operating to satisfy individual consumer choice; infinite substitution possible between natural and human-made capital; continued well-being assured through economic growth and technical innovation
Weak	Anthropocentric and utilitarian; resource conservationist; growth is managed and modified; concern for distribution of development costs and benefits through intra- and intergenerational equity; rejection of infinite substitution between natural and human-made capital with recognition of some aspects of natural world as critical capital (e.g. ozone layer, some natural ecosystems); human-made plus natural capital constant or rising through time; decoupling of negative environmental impacts from economic growth
Strong	(Eco)systems perspective; resource preservationist; recognizes primary value of maintaining the functional integrity of ecosystems over and above secondary value through human resource utilization; interests of the collective given more weight than those of the individual consumer; adherence to intra- and intergenerational equity; decoupling important but alongside a belief in a steady-state economy as a consequence of following the constant natural assets rule; zero economic and human population growth
Very strong	Bioethical and ecocentric; resource preservationist to the point where utilization of natural resources is minimized; nature's rights or intrinsic value in nature encompassing non-human living organisms and even abiotic elements under a literal interpretation of Gaianism; anti-economic growth and reduced human population

- the use of recyclable materials
- improved recruitment and training procedures.

Companies are trying to prove that in the debate over sustainable development, they can be part of the solution rather than the problem.

For many organizations, this is part of a wider campaign to be seen as ethical, by their actions, in the belief that this might improve their competitive position in the market. The link between sustainable tourism and ethics in business will be explored in more detail in Chapter 34.

Throughout this book, the author will argue that we need to take a very broad view of sustainable tourism; that means that we

should consider all of the issues outlined in Fig. 1.1 as being part of sustainable tourism.

## The Early Origins of Sustainable Tourism

Clearly, the debate about sustainable tourism is partly influenced by the general concept of sustainable development discussed above. At the same time, there has been a parallel debate going on for several decades that has led to the widespread acceptance of the concept of sustainable tourism. Figure 1.2 illustrates the process by which the debate in tourism has developed.

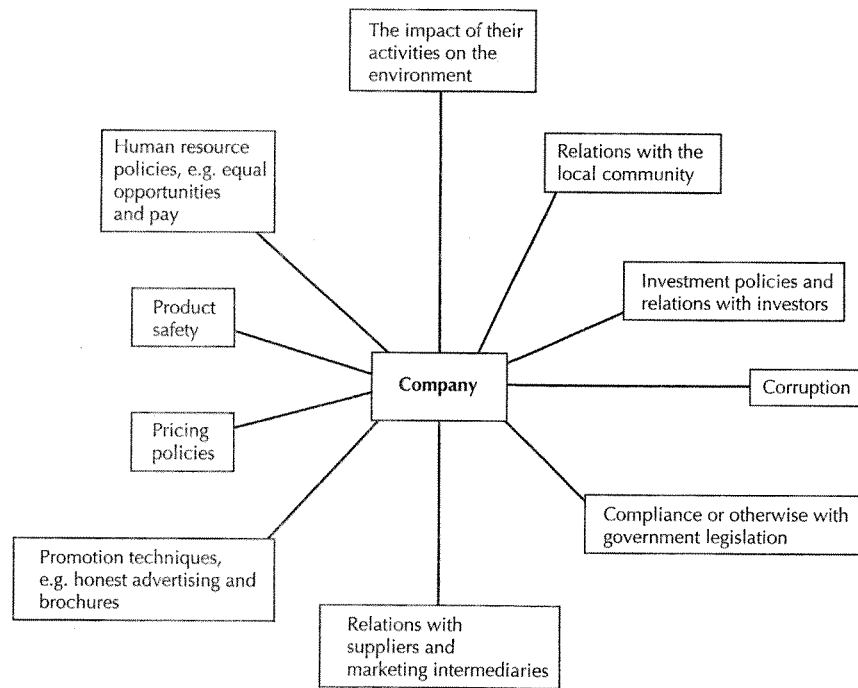


Fig. 1.1. Aspects of ethics and issues of social responsibility.

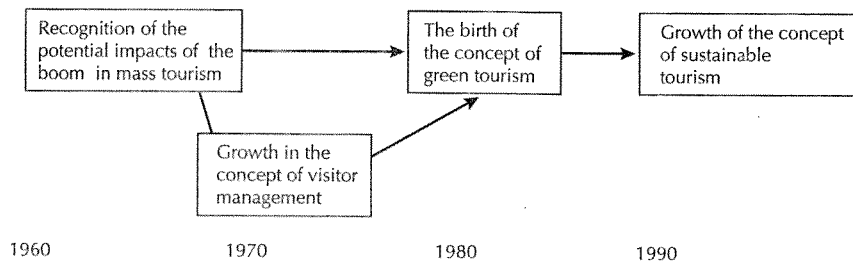


Fig. 1.2. The chronological development of the concept of sustainable tourism.

A number of key books have paved the way towards the concept of sustainable tourism, since mass tourism became a phenomenon from the 1960s onwards.

- In 1965, Michael Dowers' report, 'Fourth Wave – The Challenge of Leisure' alerted

society to the potential impact of the massive impending growth in leisure time and leisure activity.

- Young's book *Tourism: Blessing or Blight?* published in 1973, also drew attention to the negative potential impacts of tourism.

- *Tourism: Passport to Development*, published in 1979 by De Kadt discussed the role of tourism in the economies of developing countries.
- In 1982, the highly influential text *Tourism: Economic, Physical, and Social Impacts*, written by Mathieson and Wall, spelt out the worldwide impacts of tourism.
- The relationship between tourism and the host community was first discussed in detail by Peter Murphy in *Tourism: a Community Approach*, released in 1985.
- The Swiss writer Jost Krippendorff, looked at tourism and its impact from the point of view of the tourist in his work *The Holiday Makers*, published in 1987.

Several popular books were published in the early 1990s which attempted to influence directly the behaviour of tourists by making them aware of the negative impacts of some forms of tourism. Two of the most important such books were:

- *The Good Tourist* by Wood and House which dates from 1991
- *Holidays that Don't Cost the Earth* by Elkington and Hailes, published in 1992.

As the negative impacts of tourism were recognized, a series of initiatives were taken by public sector bodies to try to manage tourism through visitor management techniques. In general, tourism management initiatives were designed to ameliorate the worst excesses of tourism in the short term. They were generally small scale and did not seek to change the nature of tourism as a whole.

The term 'sustainable tourism' began to be used from the late 1980s, when tourism academics and practitioners began to consider the implications of the Brundtland Report for their own industry. However, the terms 'green issues' and 'green tourism' were at that time used more commonly. A major conference in Leeds in 1990 on what would now be termed sustainable tourism,

for example, was called 'Shades of Green'. The use of the term 'green tourism' reflects the rise of interest in environmental issues in the late 1980s and the growth of 'green politics' in the UK, Germany and France.

Green tourism was all about reducing the environmental costs, and maximizing the environmental benefits of tourism. This concept was highly influential in government circles. For example, in 1991, the English Tourist Board published its report 'Tourism and the Environment: Maintaining the Balance'. This was a set of guidelines for developing tourism in more environmentally friendly ways.

Since the early 1990s the term 'sustainable tourism' has become more common. It encompasses an approach to tourism which recognizes the importance of the host community, the way staff are treated and the desire to maximize the economic benefits of tourism, for the host community. This concept was recognized in the Green Paper on Tourism published in 1995 by the European Union.

In 1997 Clarke suggested that the development of the concept of sustainable tourism involved four approaches which are, in largely chronological order, as follows:

- **Polar opposites**, whereby sustainable tourism and mass tourism were seen as polar opposites. We had to renounce mass tourism if we hoped to develop sustainable tourism.
- **A continuum**, whereby sustainable tourism and mass tourism were no longer seen as polar opposites, but rather it was acknowledged that there were different shades of sustainable and mass tourism, which would merge at some point in the middle.
- **Movement**, an approach which suggested that positive action could make mass tourism more sustainable.
- **Convergence**, is the idea that all types of tourism can strive to be sustainable.

The author agrees with the idea of 'convergence' but it is clear that much of what

said today is still based implicitly on the idea of 'polar opposites'.

### The Rationale for Sustainable Tourism

Few people seem to think about a rationale for sustainable tourism, preferring instead simply to see it as a good idea. However, at the Globe '90 conference, in Vancouver, a list of the benefits of sustainable tourism was compiled as follows:

- Sustainable tourism encourages an understanding of the impacts of tourism on the natural, cultural and human environments.
- Sustainable tourism ensures a fair distribution of benefits and costs.
- Tourism generates local employment, both directly in the tourism sector, and in various support and resources management sectors.
- Tourism stimulates profitable domestic industries – hotels and other lodging facilities, restaurants and other food services, transportation systems, handicrafts and guide services.
- Tourism generates foreign exchange for the country, and injects capital and new money into the local economy.
- Tourism diversifies the local economy, particularly in rural areas where agricultural employment may be sporadic or insufficient.
- Sustainable tourism seeks decision-making among all segments of the society, including local populations, so that tourism and other resource users can coexist. It incorporates planning and zoning which ensure tourism development appropriate to the carrying capacity of the ecosystem.
- Tourism stimulates improvements to local transportation, communications and other basic community infrastructures.
- Tourism creates recreational facilities which can be used by local communities as well as domestic and international visitors. It also encourages

and helps pay for preservation of archaeological sites, and historic buildings and districts.

- Nature tourism encourages productive use of lands which are marginal for agriculture, enabling large tracts to remain covered in natural vegetation.
- Cultural tourism enhances local community esteem and provides the opportunity for greater understanding and communication among peoples of diverse backgrounds.
- Environmentally sustainable tourism demonstrates the importance of natural and cultural resources to a community's economic and social well being and can help to preserve them.
- Sustainable tourism monitors, assesses and manages the impacts of tourism, develops reliable methods of environmental accountability, and counters any negative effect.

### The Tourism Industry and Sustainable Tourism

Since the 1980s the tourism industry has begun to take green issues and the idea of sustainable tourism seriously. The hospitality industry has been at the forefront of the development of environmentally friendly operations management. Following work particularly by the Inter-Continental chain, the International Hotels Environmental Initiative was set up. This industry-sponsored organization provides advice for hoteliers on how to make their operations greener including energy conservation measures, recycling and waste reduction. All of these measures tend to also reduce the hotels costs. As yet, the industry has shown little real interest in the social side of sustainability in terms of their human resource management policies, for example.

Transport operators have also focused on the environmental side of sustainability. Airlines, for example, have sought to introduce quieter, more fuel-efficient aircraft as part of an industry-wide agreement on environmental practices. While most visitor attractions have also focused on the environmental

dimension, some have also considered their local community. For instance, they may try to purchase supplies from small local businesses wherever possible.

Some tour operators, particularly the specialist ones, have taken a broader view of sustainable tourism than businesses in any other sector of tourism. They have endeavoured to develop products which minimize the negative socioeconomic impacts of tourism, and maximize the economic benefits for the host community. A number of destinations have also sought to attract more sustainable forms of tourism that minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of tourism for the local population. These have been stimulated either by the public sector or local community groups.

The apparent growing interest of tourism organizations in sustainable tourism has been fuelled by the advocacy of:

- professional bodies
- pressure groups such as Tourism Concern, Green Flag and the Campaign for Environmentally Responsible Tourism
- the media.

### Tourists and Sustainable Tourism

There has been little evidence to date that tourists are very interested in the concept of sustainable tourism, beyond natural concern over the quality of the environment in their own holiday resort. There have been no boycotts of environmentally unfriendly air travel or demands for hotels to pay higher wages. Perhaps, tourists who may take sustainable development seriously in their everyday lives, believe that their annual vacation is the only time when they can behave hedonistically, without the need to be responsible. Why should tourists seeking to escape from their everyday routine take an interest in sustainable tourism?

### Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Development

So far we have separated sustainable development from sustainable tourism. Yet, in

recent years, we have seen government bodies trying to make use of tourism to help achieve the sustainable development of geographical areas. For example:

- In the USA and the UK, tourism has been used to try to regenerate old industrial cities and provide them with a new direction for the future. This has been seen particularly in places such as Baltimore and Liverpool, for example.
- The use of rural-based tourism to help achieve the sustainability of the rural economies and societies, and compensate for the decline of traditional agriculture. This phenomenon has been seen clearly in the countryside of France, Italy, Spain and Portugal.
- Attempts have been made to utilize tourism as a way to facilitate the sustainable development of economies in the developing world, particularly where other possible mechanisms for achieving the same end are limited. This is illustrated by Cuba, where tourism being used as an alternative now that Cuba no longer receives aid from the former Soviet Union, and impoverished countries like Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

At the same time, the challenge in many traditional resort areas is to find more sustainable forms of tourism, as the traditional 'bucket and spade' holiday declines. In those resorts where tourism is now the dominant element in the local economy, failure to do this will probably mean that the community has little or no future.

### Conclusions

We have seen that the concept of sustainable development has been around for several decades at least, but that sustainable tourism is a more recently accepted term. Perhaps this reflects the fact that tourism is a relatively new industry. At the same time, it is clear that while sustainability has environmental, social and economic dimensions, it is the former that has dominated in the

debates about both sustainable development and sustainable tourism until now.

Having looked at the historical development of the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism, we will now move on, in the next two chapters, to:

- outline what sustainable tourism means today
- offer a critique of current thinking about sustainable tourism.

### Discussion Points and Exercise Questions

1. Discuss the potential benefits and costs of sustainable development.
2. Choose any *two* of the books by Young, Mathieson and Wall, Murphy, Krippendorf, Wood and House which were

referred to in this chapter. How do each of them relate to today's debate about sustainable tourism?

3. Discuss the reasons why levels of interest in sustainable tourism may vary between different countries.
4. Evaluate the nature of the links between sustainable development and sustainable tourism.

### Exercise

Identify the implications of the 14 'sustainable development components' identified in Table 1.1 for tourism. Which ones are most relevant for tourism organizations and which are of little or no relevance to tourism?

## 2

# The Nature and Scope of Sustainable Tourism

### Towards a Definition of Sustainable Tourism

There is no widely accepted definition of sustainable tourism. It could, of course, be suggested that sustainable tourism should simply be about applying the Brundtland Report definition of sustainability to tourism. This could lead to a definition such as:

Forms of tourism which meet the needs of tourists, the tourism industry, and host communities today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It is usually thought vital that any definition of sustainable tourism emphasizes the environmental, social and economic elements of the tourism system. This might lead to a definition that sustainable tourism:

means tourism which is economically viable but does not destroy the resources on which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community.

Some commentators feel that trying to produce definitions of sustainable tourism is dangerous because:

[general definitions] can give the impression of simplicity in what is a complex area. Tight definitions might also

limit the range of issues to be covered under the heading of sustainable tourism ... Definitions tend to be irrelevant, misleading, and ever-changing. (Richards Bramwell *et al.*, 1996)

Conversely, the lack of widely known or accepted definitions can lead to some confusion over what sustainable tourism means. Richards, in a report about sustainable tourism education on an ATLAS project funded by the European Union, offered several examples of this phenomenon. The report contained examples of definitions offered by tourism academics and practitioners in Europe, including the following:

Sustainable tourism is tourism which develops as quickly as possible, taking account of current accommodation capacity, the local population and the environment... The development of tourism and new investment in the tourism sector should not detract from tourism itself... New tourism facilities should be integrated with the environment. (Richards in Bramwell *et al.*, 1996)

The same report also noted some other interesting difficulties involved in defining sustainable tourism, notably:

- it is not a 'concrete' enough concept for practitioners; it sounds too scientific and technocratic



Fig. 2.1. The relationship between sustainable tourism and other terms.

- many languages, notably French, do not have an appropriate phrase that summarizes the concept of sustainable tourism.

At the same time, the existence of other words which are often deemed as acronyms for sustainable tourism are an added complication. While they are all related to sustainable tourism in some way, none of them are synonymous with it. Some of these terms are identified in Fig. 2.1.

### The Principles of Sustainable Tourism Management

If we cannot easily define sustainable tourism, it is perhaps possible to propose a set of principles that should underpin any approach to sustainable tourism management. One set of some principles is illustrated in Box 2.1. While such principles are very useful, it is important to recognize that they are concerned largely with processes rather than outcomes. They say relatively little about what sustainable tourism might actually look like 'on the ground', in reality, in particular locations. They relate to how sustainable tourism might be achieved and what the implications of sustainable tourism could be, without necessarily focusing on what would distinguish sustainable from non-sustainable tourism.

Table 2.1 contrasts sustainable with non-sustainable tourism development based on the work of a number of authors. This approach includes the tourist in the equation, something which many definitions and approaches to sustainable tourism often fail to do. If they do consider the tourist they are

Table 2.1. Sustainable versus non-sustainable tourism development. Adapted from Krippendorf (1982), Lane (1989, 1990) and Godfrey (1996).

Sustainable	Non-sustainable
<i>General concepts</i>	
Slow development	Rapid development
Controlled development	Uncontrolled development
Appropriate scale	Inappropriate scale
Long term	Short term
Qualitative	Quantitative
Local control	Remote control
<i>Development strategies</i>	
Plan, then develop	Develop without planning
Concept-led schemes	Project-led schemes
All five landscapes concerned	Concentrating on 'honey-pots'
Pressure and benefits diffused	Increase capacity
Local developers	Outside developers
Locals employed	Imported labour
Vernacular architecture	Non-vernacular architecture
<i>Tourist behaviour</i>	
Low value	High value
Some mental preparation	Little or no mental preparation
Learning local language	No learning of local language
Tactful and sensitive	Intensive and insensitive
Quiet	Loud
Repeat visits	Unlikely to return

Box 2.1. Principles behind sustainable tourism management. Source: Bramwell *et al.* (1996).

- The approach sees policy, planning and management as appropriate, and, indeed essential responses to the problems of natural and human resource misuse in tourism
- The approach is generally not anti-growth, but it emphasizes that there are limitations to growth and that tourism must be managed within these limits
- Long-term rather than short-term thinking is necessary
- The concerns of sustainable tourism management are not just environmental, but are also economic, social, cultural, political and managerial
- The approach emphasizes the importance of satisfying human needs and aspirations, which entails a prominent concern for equity and fairness
- All stakeholders need to be consulted and empowered in tourism decision-making, and they also need to be informed about sustainable development issues
- While sustainable development should be a goal for all policies and actions, putting the ideas of sustainable tourism into practice means recognizing that in reality there are often limits to what will be achieved in the short and medium term
- An understanding of how market economies operate, of the cultures and management procedures of private sector businesses and of public and voluntary sector organizations, and of the values and attitudes of the public is necessary in order to turn good intentions into practical measures
- There are frequently conflicts of interest over the use of resources, which means that in practice trade-offs and compromises may be necessary
- The balancing of costs and benefits in decisions on different courses of action must extend to considering how much different individuals and groups will gain or lose

usually seen as the problem, because of the impact they have. Many commentators talk about the responsibility which tourists should have but not their rights as paying customers.

Conversely, such an approach also polarizes the debate so that there are only sustainable (good) and non-sustainable (bad) forms of tourism. However, we know that in reality things are rarely black and white, but rather various shades of grey. Nevertheless, this table is valuable because it represents much mainstream thinking in the sustainable tourism debate.

It is also important to recognize that there are many subjective value judgements implicit in the table, about the value of vernacular architecture and the learning of local languages by tourists for example.

### The Scope of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is clearly a broad, ill defined area that encompasses many of the elements of the tourism system. This breadth is illustrated in Fig. 2.2.

In the rest of this chapter, we will look a number of aspects of sustainable tourism including:

- the stakeholders of sustainable tourism
- sustainable tourism and different type of environment
- different types of tourism and sustainable tourism
- sustainable tourism and different type of tourism organizations
- different sectors of tourism and sustainability

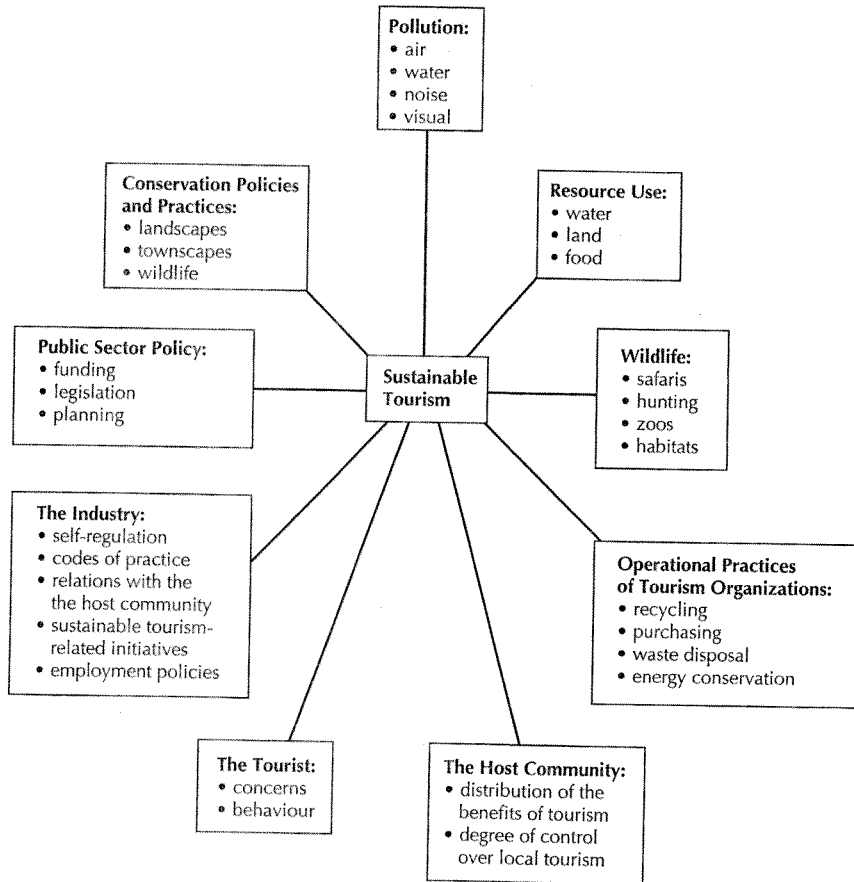


Fig. 2.2. The scope of sustainable tourism.

- sustainable tourism and functional management
- differences between regions of the world in relation to the idea of sustainable tourism

Each of these issues will be taken up in later chapters.

### Sustainable Tourism – the Key Stakeholders

There are many stakeholders in the field of sustainable tourism. The major areas are

illustrated in Fig. 2.3. With such a complex web of stakeholders, it is not surprising that it is difficult to reach a consensus on what sustainable tourism means and how it can be achieved. The issue of the stakeholders is covered fully in Part 3 of this book.

### Sustainable Tourism and Different Types of Environment

The debate over sustainable tourism tends to revolve around five types of environment. In other words, we talk about sustainable tourism development, and:

- coastal tourism
- tourism on islands
- tourism in the countryside
- mountain region tourism
- urban tourism.

Each type of environment has its own distinctive characteristics and their own tourism management problems.

In recent years we have also seen the growth of a sixth type of environment, marine tourism, namely tourism which takes place at sea such as whale-watching.

In all six types of environment, the emphasis in relation to sustainable tourism is often on managing existing tourism demand in established destinations, and balancing its negative and positive impacts. Alternatively, it involves learning lessons from established destinations that might be applied to new, emerging destinations. These types of environment are covered in Part 4 of this book.

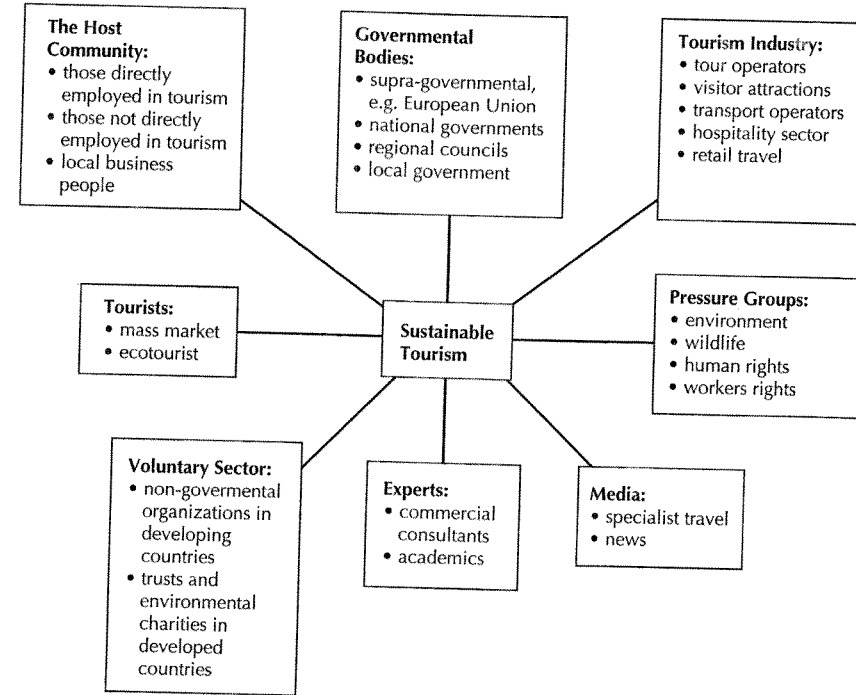


Fig. 2.3. The key stakeholders in sustainable tourism.

### Sustainable Tourism and Different Types of Tourism

In the debate over sustainable tourism, it appears that certain types of tourism are viewed as being inherently more sustainable than others.

There appears to be a commonly held view that mass market coastal-based tourism is not compatible with the concept of sustainable tourism. At the same time, the growing phenomenon of ecotourism is seen by many commentators as being more in keeping with the idea of sustainable tourism. Table 2.2 illustrates the perceived differences between the two types of tourism which may lead to this perception, although we need to recognize that these are perceptions and are therefore subjective and do not necessarily reflect reality. The apparent distinction between 'good' alternative tourism and 'bad' mass tourism is also illustrated in

**Table 2.2.** Mass market coastal tourism versus ecotourism.

	Mass market coastal tourism	Ecotourism
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large scale, inappropriate to location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small scale, in keeping with ability of destination to absorb tourists without damage</li> </ul>
Impact on the physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New, aesthetic unattractive buildings</li> <li>Over-building of the infrastructure leading to pollution and traffic congestion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little new building</li> <li>Little extra demand on infrastructure</li> </ul>
Host community relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formalized relations</li> <li>Little contact with local people who are not involved in the tourism industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informal contact</li> <li>Interaction with all types of local people</li> </ul>
Sociocultural impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transforms local culture</li> <li>Immigration of labour from outside the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor impact on host culture</li> <li>Labour needs are wholly met from the local community</li> </ul>
Economic impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Much tourism income is lost to enterprises based outside the destination</li> <li>Tourism becomes the dominant economic activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most tourist income is retained in the local economy</li> <li>Additional income from tourism complements traditional economic activities</li> </ul>
The importance of the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can take place anywhere with sea and good weather</li> <li>The specific location is not important</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The specific location offers a unique experience that cannot be found elsewhere</li> </ul>
Quality of the experience for the tourist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short-term relaxation and sun tan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning about places brings long-term understanding of where and how other people live</li> </ul>
Tourist behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insensitive to local culture and traditions</li> <li>Indifference to life of local people</li> <li>Hedonistic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensitive to local culture and traditions</li> <li>Interested in life of local people</li> <li>Responsible</li> </ul>

Table 2.3. However, in both cases, such distinctions are based on subjective judgements rather than empirical evidence.

As we will see in Chapter 3, the view of ecotourism is over-rosy and is perhaps just a function of the fact that it is a new phenomenon. If it grows to a mass scale, as it has in Kenya with the safari business, then it may start to exhibit many of the characteristics of mass market coastal tourism. In other words, ecotourism is not, perhaps, inherently more sustainable than other forms of tourism.

Nevertheless, there are still apparently

generally held views that some forms of tourism are more sustainable than others. Some of these currently held principles are outlined in Table 2.4. However, this is clearly a very simplistic view that is not based on facts, but rather on subjective judgements. Nevertheless, these ideas combined in Table 2.4 do reflect what is written in many texts on sustainable tourism.

This idea that some forms of tourism are inevitably more sustainable than others is a major issue in the sustainable tourism debate. It may make those who offer those

**Table 2.3.** Attributes of mass and alternative tourism. Source: Hunter and Green (1994), adapted from Himmetoglu (1992).

	Mass tourism	Alternative tourism
General features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rapid development</li> <li>Maximizes</li> <li>Uncontrolled</li> <li>Short term</li> <li>Sectoral</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slow development</li> <li>Optimizes</li> <li>Controlled</li> <li>Long term</li> <li>Holistic</li> </ul>
Tourist behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large groups</li> <li>Fixed programme</li> <li>Tourists directed</li> <li>Comfortable and passive</li> <li>No foreign language</li> <li>Nosy</li> <li>Loud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Singles, families</li> <li>Spontaneous decisions</li> <li>Tourists decide</li> <li>Demanding and active</li> <li>Language learning</li> <li>Tactful</li> <li>Quiet</li> </ul>
Basic requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holiday peaks</li> <li>Untrained labour</li> <li>Publicity clichés</li> <li>Hard selling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staggered holidays</li> <li>Trained labour force</li> <li>Tourist education</li> <li>Heart selling</li> </ul>
Development strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unplanned</li> <li>Project-led</li> <li>New buildings</li> <li>Outside developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned</li> <li>Concept-led</li> <li>Re-use of existing buildings</li> <li>Local developers</li> </ul>

**Table 2.4.** Sustainable tourism and different types of tourism.

Types of tourism which are highly compatible with the concept of sustainable tourism	Types of tourism which are largely incompatible with the concept of sustainable tourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecotourism (see Table 2.2)</li> <li>Cultural tourism which involves visitors learning about the history and culture of an area</li> <li>Urban attractions which provide new uses for derelict sites</li> <li>Small-scale rural 'agro-tourism' which brings income to farmers</li> <li>Conservation holidays where tourists do conservation work during their vacations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mass market coastal tourism (see Table 2.2)</li> <li>Activity holidays which have a negative impact on the physical environment such as skiing, off-road vehicle driving and mountain biking</li> <li>Sex tourism which leads to the spread of infection such as HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases</li> <li>Hunting and fishing holidays, particularly where the activity is unregulated</li> <li>Visiting very fragile environments such as rain forests and the Antarctic</li> </ul>

types of tourism which are perceived to be more sustainable, complacent, while it may at the same time discourage those who offer less sustainable forms of tourism from doing

anything because they may believe they cannot succeed. Perhaps we need, therefore, to think that *all* forms of tourism can be made sustainable, or at least more sustainable.

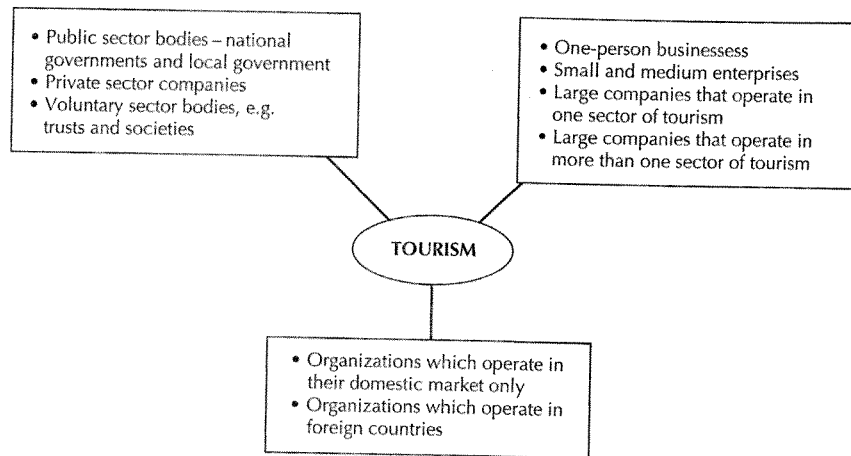


Fig. 2.4. Different types of organizations in tourism.

### Sustainable Tourism and Different Types of Tourism Organizations

Tourism involves a range of types of organization as can be seen from Fig. 2.4. The existence of these different types of organizations in tourism has various implications in terms of sustainable tourism, including the following:

- public sector bodies tend to be those which develop tourism strategies for destinations but it is the private sector organizations which are responsible for most of the tourism products which tourists buy. In other words, those who set the strategies must try to persuade those who dominate the supply side of tourism to go along with their plans
- it is large organizations, often based outside the destination, which are seen to be the villains in the sustainable tourism debate. They are accused of showing little long-term commitment to any destination for they can simply move elsewhere if things get difficult. Conversely, most one-person businesses, and small- and medium-sized enterprises, are locally owned and have a long-term commitment to the destination which is also their home area
- transnational enterprises that sell their

products in foreign countries must take into account sustainable tourism issues in each of these countries, not just in their own country.

It is therefore important for the future of the concept of sustainable tourism to recognize the growth in tourism of large-scale, transnational companies.

### Sustainable Tourism and the Different Sectors of Tourism

Each sector of tourism has its own issues in relation to sustainable tourism, as illustrated in Fig. 2.5. There is also the question of business tourism and sustainable tourism. Business tourists, who generally travel more frequently than leisure tourists, clearly have a greater impact than the average pleasure tourist. The business tourism sector will be looked at in greater detail in Chapter 32. In the meantime, the roles of the different sectors of tourism are covered in Chapters 24–28.

### Sustainable Tourism and Functional Management

Every area of functional management has a role to play in the search for more sustain-

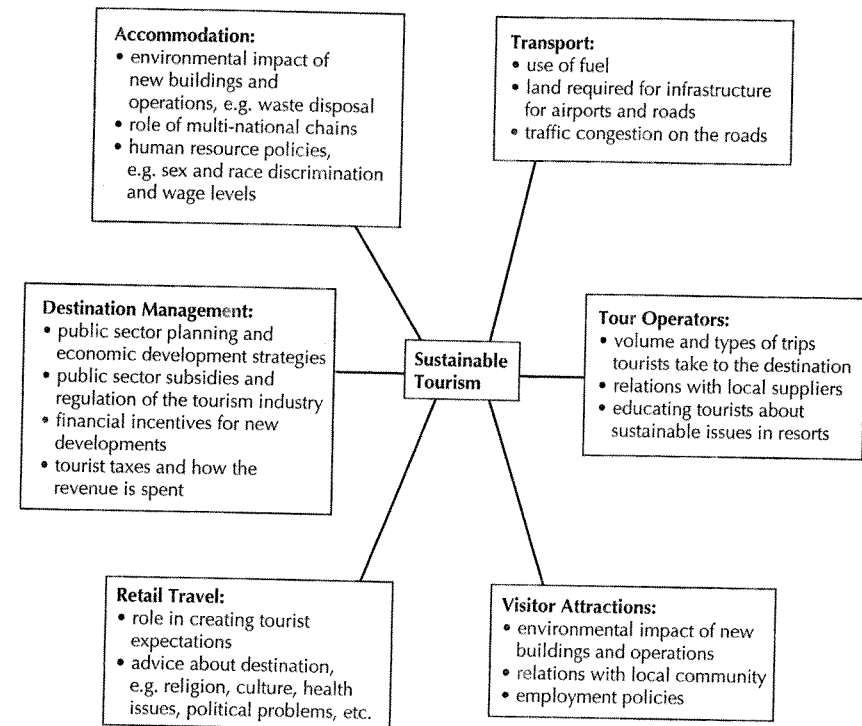


Fig. 2.5. Sustainable tourism issues and the different sectors of tourism.

able forms of tourism. The links between the different types of functional management namely marketing, human resources, finance and operations, are illustrated in Fig. 2.6. In other words, sustainable tourism should rightly be the concern of every person in an organization, regardless of their job title or department. The issue of functional management and sustainable tourism is the subject of Part 5 of this book.

### The Concept of Sustainable Tourism in the Different Regions of the World

Interest in the idea of sustainable tourism is greatest in those countries where there is a high level of interest in sustainable development in general, notably Germany and Scandinavia. There is also above average interest in Canada, while in the USA, there

is a similar debate although it is often debated as if ecotourism and sustainable tourism were one and the same thing.

The UK has been a leading player in the development of the concept of sustainable tourism, through both academics and pressure groups such as Tourism Concern.

It is interesting to note that, in general, interest in sustainable tourism has been higher in these developed countries which have traditionally been generators, rather than receivers, of international tourism trips.

To date, there has been little tangible interest in, or action about, sustainable tourism in the less developed countries of the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and Asia. Here the priority has been short-term economic development, rather than longer term resource conservation. However, slowly, the issue is becoming a major point of debate

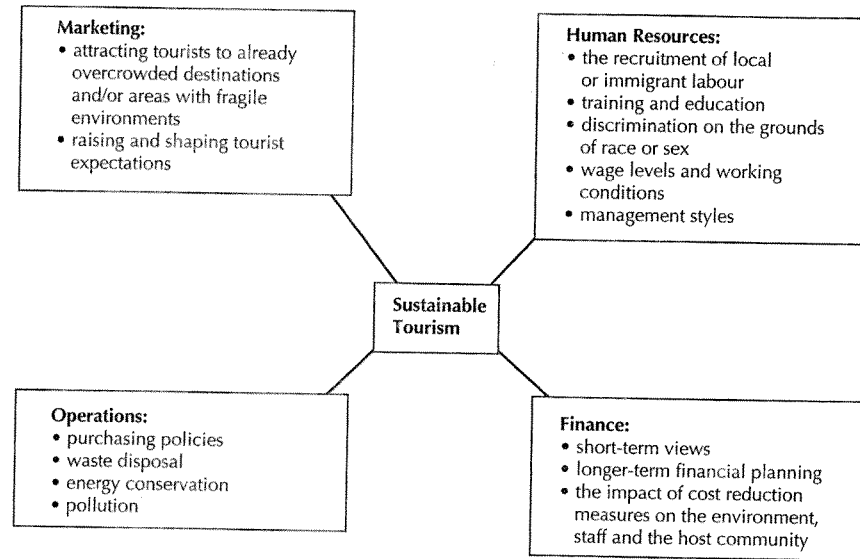


Fig. 2.6. Sustainable tourism and functional management.

worldwide, largely as a result of the work of supra-governmental bodies such as the World Tourism Organisation.

### Conclusions

In this chapter, we have looked at the nature and scope of sustainable tourism. We have looked at difficulties in sustainable tourism and seen how difficult it is to find any simple, single definition which works. At the same time, we have identified the stakeholders in the sustainable tourism debate. We have also looked at the links between sustainable tourism and:

- different forms of tourism
- different types of tourism organization
- different sections of tourism
- the various areas of functional management.

However, as Pigram states:

Sustainable tourism has the potential to become a tangible expression of sustainable tourism development. Yet it runs the risk of remaining irrelevant and inept as a feasible policy for the real world of tourism development, without the development of effective means of translating the idea into action. (Pigram, 1990)

In Chapter 3, we will critically evaluate current theory and practice in sustainable tourism to help explain why the situation outlined by Pigram has arisen.

### Discussion Points and Essay Questions

1. Discuss the relationship between sustainable tourism and the other terms outlined in Fig. 2.1.
2. Critically evaluate the principles of sustainable tourism management featured in Box 2.1.
3. Evaluate the extent to which cultural tourism trips and activity holidays can be sustainable forms of tourism.

### Exercise

Carry out a small survey to test public perceptions of the concept of sustainable tourism, in terms of:

- what 'sustainable tourism' means

- the level of public awareness of the concept of sustainable tourism.

Your findings should be presented in the form of a report. The report should also note the problems experienced in carrying out the survey.

## 3

## A Critique of Current Thinking in Sustainable Tourism Management

We saw in Chapter 2 that sustainable tourism is a broad, complex subject which has very blurred edges. Nevertheless, in recent years, a number of ideas have developed which are often seen as pre-requisites for sustainable tourism such as community involvement. Likewise, a range of techniques have been developed as tools for helping to achieve sustainable tourism, like carrying capacity.

While little empirical data exists to support any of these ideas and techniques, they appear to have become part of conventional wisdom in tourism, and are rarely questioned.

A number of these ideas and techniques are illustrated in Fig. 3.1. The author believes that the apparently unquestioning acceptance of ideas, in a field which is still at a very early level of development, is not desirable. It has created

- 'sacred cows', in other words ideas which are apparently so widely accepted that they are rarely questioned
- 'cash cows' where the label of 'sustainable' or 'green' is being used to simply boost profit margins or attract new market segments
- 'mad cows', a rather strong term for ideas which appear to be either unrealistic or which would bring problems

with their implementation which would be worse than the situation they are intended to alleviate.

In this chapter we will look at each of the issues outlined in Fig. 3.1 and critically evaluate them. The aim is not to denigrate these ideas and those who propose them, but rather to show that there are no easy answers and that the subject is more complex than it might at first appear. Hopefully this will stimulate debate and further research that will help to refine the concepts and techniques, which in turn will increase the likelihood of developing more sustainable forms of tourism. Let us now consider each issue in turn.

### Value Judgements and the Lack of Factual Evidence

The whole sustainable tourism debate often appears to be based more on value judgements than on empirical research or other factual evidence. For example, two of the most influential books on the subject in the UK in the early 1980s are entitled *The Good Tourist* (Wood and House, 1991) and *Holidays That Don't Cost the Earth* (Elkington and Hailes, 1992), both heavily value-laden phrases. Inside they are packed with judge-

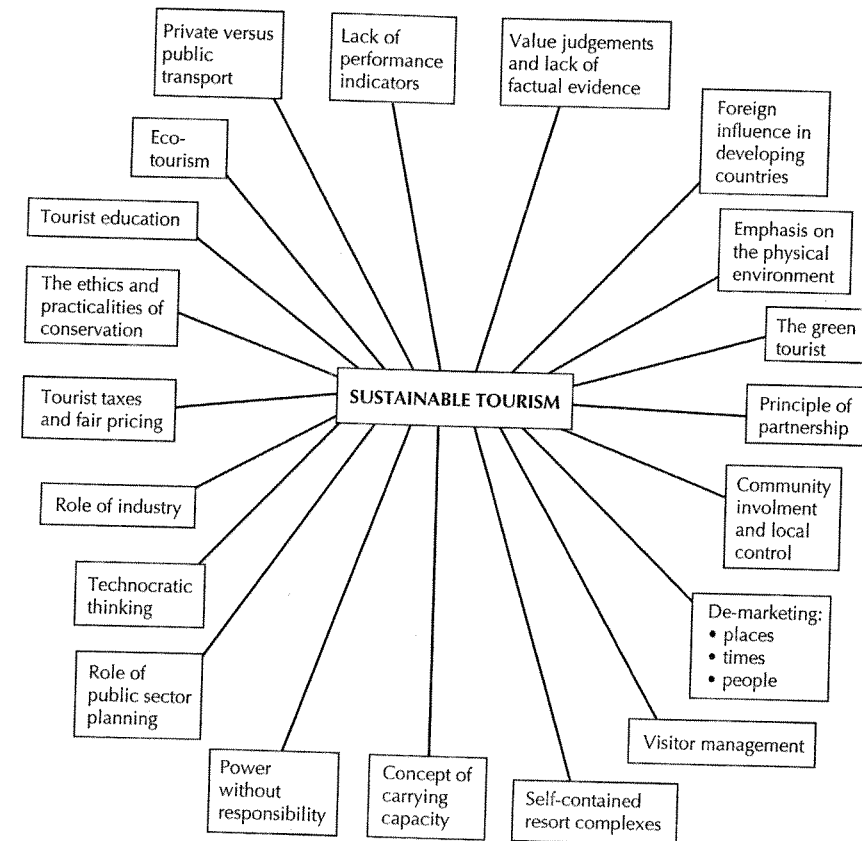


Fig. 3.1. The key issues in the sustainable tourism debate.

ments that appear to have little hard evidence underpinning them.

Commentators have written as if certain opinions and attitudes are proven facts. For example, there seems to be an implicit belief that:

- large high-rise coastal resorts around the Mediterranean represent a less sustainable form of tourism than ecotourism holidays in Central America
- independent travel is more sustainable than package holiday tourism
- small-scale tourism is always better than mass tourism

- cultural tourism is more sustainable than hedonistic tourism.

Yet there appears to be little if any evidence that these are true. Indeed, it could be argued that, providing it is well managed and the infrastructure is adequate, mass seaside resort tourism is a very sustainable form of tourism. It:

- provides jobs for a large number of people
- satisfies the needs of a large number of tourists so that they do not take trips to more fragile environments, further afield

- does not cause the negative sociocultural impacts that tourists mixing with local people can cause because there is little contact between both groups, and there are often relatively few indigenous local people living in the resort.

Perhaps, therefore, what is happening is that commentators are supporting those forms of tourism that they themselves prefer. The educated middle classes who comprise the majority of such commentators often seem to prefer cultural holidays to sun, sand, sea and sex trips, and they tend to make up a large part of the independent travel market. Thus a significant proportion of the literature that has appeared may be at least partly instigated by a desire to justify the author's own behaviour and that of their peer group.

The lack of empirical evidence in the sustainable tourism field is also making it difficult for us to evaluate the scale of some of the problems with the negative environmental impacts of tourism. Furthermore, the combination of this and the value judgements of commentators who have a partisan view on the subject, may be resulting in us getting some problems out of proportion. Two examples will illustrate this point, as follows:

- the pollution caused by coastal tourism in the Mediterranean is probably only a minor cause of the problems being experienced in that sea, compared to manufacturing industry, agriculture and the waste produced by residents
- rural planners are greatly concerned by footpath erosion at a time when British upland areas are suffering agricultural decline, rural poverty and unemployment that threaten their long-term survival.

Finally, given that sustainability is about the future, we seem rather arrogantly willing to feel that in spite of the lack of hard evidence, we know what is best not only for today, but also for tomorrow.

### The Green Tourist

Much discussion on sustainable tourism seems to be based on what is described as the 'rise of the green tourist'. Yet there appears little evidence of the rise of this tourist as a real force in the tourism market. Unlike the consumer boycott of products containing CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) seen in the late 1980s there seems to be no such consumer action in the tourism field. There is little evidence that tourists are:

- switching from the use of private cars to public transport for their holiday trips
- demonstrating against the environmental impacts of new theme parks
- insisting that hotels recycle their waste.

It is perhaps better therefore to talk in terms of 'shades of green' tourists, in other words the fact that the market is divided into groups which vary from being very dark green to not being green at all. The differences between these different shades of tourist opinion are illustrated in Fig. 3.2. It is clear from this argument that dark green/ totally green tourists are a small niche only, in the UK at least.

Some argue that the situation is different in other countries, like Germany, where consumers seem to be far more concerned with environmental issues. Certainly a BAT-Leisure Research Institute report of 1993 claimed that, "of ten criteria for a quality holiday listed by consumers, seven related to the environment" (Horner and Swarbrooke, 1996). However, on closer examination it appears to be more about the vested interests of these consumers in the environment as a key determinant in the quality of their holiday experience, than their concern with the environmental impacts of tourism in general.

Even these limited examples of environmental concerns on the part of tourists, are not typical of the world as a whole. In some of the more recently economically developed regions of the world, even a modest

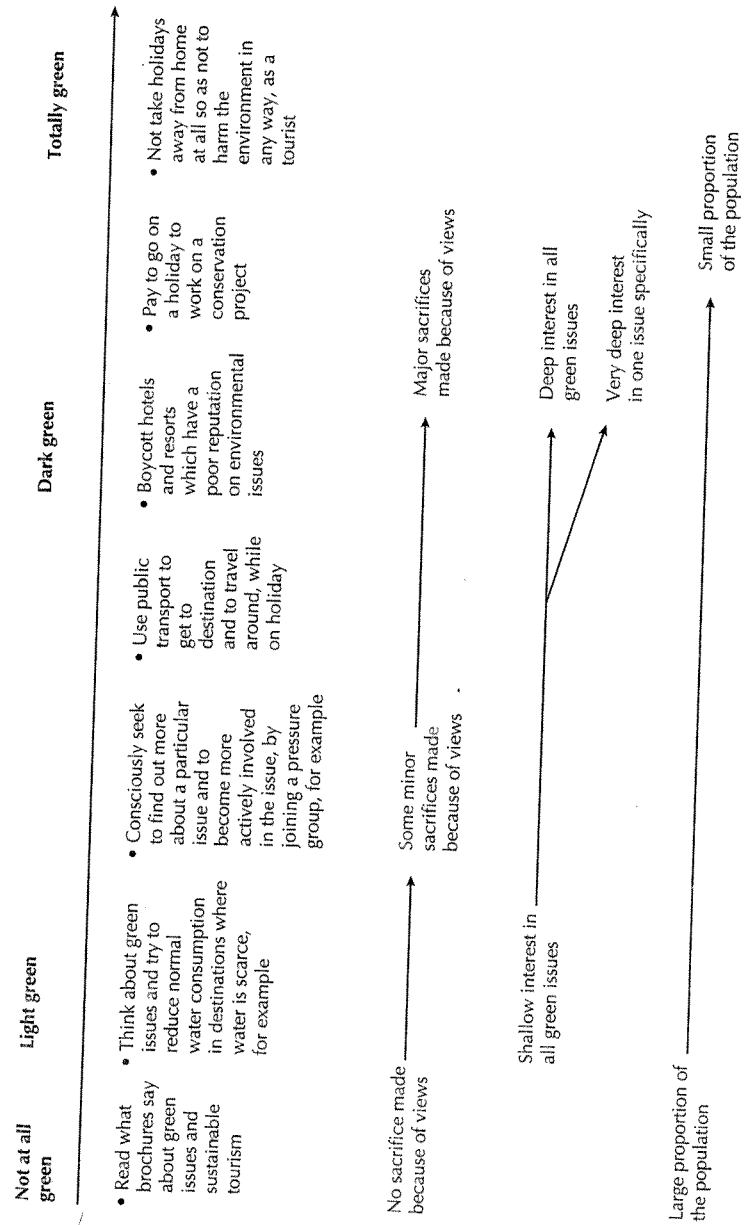


Fig. 3.2. "Shades of green" tourist.

level of concern appears to be largely absent. Indeed there appears to be evidence that interest in the environment amongst tourists is low, and may even be falling, at least in the UK.

Research conducted by MORI (Martin, 1997) has indicated that:

- In 1996, 21% of consumers believed too much 'fuss' was being made about the environment, compared to 11% in 1992.
- In the UK only 3% of people felt the environment was the most important problem facing the UK in 1996, whereas the equivalent figure in 1992 was 11%.
- Only 11% of tourists questioned in the mid-1990s said environmental problems in a destination would make them decide to not to return to the destination.
- In 1995, just 16% of tourists said it was very important for them to deal with a tourist organization that took environmental issues into account, while 18% said it was not at all important.
- Only 6% of people questioned in 1995 believed tourism caused major damage to the environment while 30% thought it caused no damage or involved no damage.

So far we have focused on the 'green tourist' who one would expect to be concerned with purely environmental issues. There is even less evidence of the existence of a 'sustainable tourist' who is also concerned about the long-term social and economic impacts of tourism. Few tourists appear to be demanding to pay a higher price to provide more economic benefits to host communities. Likewise there seems to be no evidence of tourists demanding better pay and working conditions for tourism and hospitality industry employees.

If one believes in the concept of customer-led, market-led marketing, then the tourism industry should not be taking much interest in the concept of sustainable tourism.

## Ecotourism

The rise of ecotourism has been a controversial issue in the context of the debate over sustainable tourism. This was well summed up by the book edited by Cater and Lowman, *Ecotourism: a Sustainable Option?*, which was published in 1994.

The tourism industry clearly wants clients to feel that ecotourism is less harmful and more sustainable than mainstream mass tourism, perhaps because it thinks that this will make tourists feel good about buying such products. This argument is seen time and again in brochures for a range of holidays, including:

- treks in the Himalayan range
- expeditions in the jungles of Central America
- whale-watching holidays from California to the Arctic
- sledge tours in Lapland
- river trips by canoe in South-East Asia.

The claim of such ecotourism products to be sustainable is usually based on the following characteristics:

- the desire of participants to learn more about their destination than the average tourist
- the attempt to maximize contact with indigenous people
- the small size of most groups.

Nevertheless, it is arguable whether ecotourism can be viewed as sustainable tourism. The ecotourists are not primarily motivated by a desire to protect the environment but rather by a desire to see the native ecosystem at first hand.

Likewise if 100 people buy and enjoy an ecotourism product this year, and tell their friends, this could rise to several thousands in 3 years. Certainly, some ecotourism tour operators have grown in recent years to become medium-sized operations. It is therefore not inherently small scale.

If ecotourism were to grow in an area, without regulation, it could easily become as harmful as other forms of mainstream tourism. Indeed because it tends to take place in areas with rare and fragile ecosystems, it could be even more harmful. This is particularly true because ecotourists are always looking for new destinations ever more off the beaten track than the last one, whereas many mainstream tourists are happy to holiday in established resorts. Thus, ecotourists may not be content until they have visited – and brought the mixed blessings of tourism – to every area of the world.

## The Concept of Carrying Capacity

The concept of carrying capacity is a common one in the sustainable tourism literature. There are several types of carrying capacity, including:

- **physical** capacity, the number of tourists a place can physically accommodate
- **environmental or ecological** capacity, the number of tourists that can be accommodated before damage begins to be caused to the environment or ecosystem
- **economic** capacity, the number of tourists that can be welcomed before the local community start to suffer economic problems, e.g. increased housing values and land prices
- **social** capacity, the number of people beyond which social disruption or irrevocable cultural damage will occur
- **perceptual** capacity, the number of people a place can welcome before the quality of the tourist experience begins to be adversely affected.
- **infrastructure** capacity, the number of tourists that can be accommodated by the destination infrastructure.

However, in terms of developing sustainable tourism, all six types share one criticism, namely, even if you can measure the capac-

ity, how do you put it into practice? Elsewhere in this chapter we will see that one means of implementation, de-marketing, is fraught with problems.

Furthermore, some concepts of carrying capacity, such as social and perceptual are very subjective, and no two observers will agree on the actual figure. At the same time they are generally rather unrealistic in that they suggest that damage will occur at a particular point when a specific number of tourists are present, in a certain place. The process of tourism-related damage is almost certainly slower and less clear cut than this. It is a progressive, rather than a sudden phenomenon.

As each locality is totally different in terms of geography, ecosystem, social structure and economy, it is unlikely that the carrying capacity will be the same in any two places, so its application in any place is very difficult to forecast.

While carrying capacity is a useful concept, it is very problematic to use in a practical way to help develop sustainable tourism. Finally, however, it is clear that carrying capacity can be modified by visitor management schemes, in other words, they are not absolute or inevitable.

## De-marketing

Some proponents of sustainable tourism appear to place great faith in the concept of de-marketing. This involves manipulating the marketing mix or 'four Ps' to discourage rather than attract tourists to visit destinations which are thought to be over-visited. While carrying capacity is a useful concept it is very problematic to use in a practical way to help develop sustainable tourism. To date, this has largely meant simply reducing the amount of brochures which are produced to promote certain destinations. For example, the local authority in Cambridge took a decision several years ago to stop printing brochures about the city as a tourist destination.

However, this is clearly a longer term strategy and cities like Cambridge are famous the world over, and even then this

may prove to be ineffective, for the following reasons:

- many tourists become aware of destinations from sources other than promotional literature produced by the destinations themselves. These other sources include:
  - friends and relatives
  - the media
  - the tourism industry such as coach operators
- repeat visitors are already aware of the destination
- business tourists do not choose their destination, it is determined by the demands of their jobs, whether it be a visit by a sales person to a potential client or a lecturer attending a specialist conference.

Perhaps, therefore, de-marketing can only work if a more radical approach is taken that uses all the four Ps. In the case of Venice, for instance, demand might be reduced by:

- raising prices. However, for a unique product like Venice, higher prices might not reduce demand significantly, as many people will want to see it once, so they will be willing to pay the price. At the same time, such a policy could be seen as morally unacceptable as it discriminates against those on lower incomes
- only allowing a certain number of people into the city per day through a 'ticket' system. It would have to be pre-booked or else people taking a special trip to visit Venice would be very disappointed or angry!

However, these approaches would require an expensive system of implementation even in a city like Venice where there are relatively few entry points. Nevertheless, such limited numbered ticket schemes do operate successfully at some attractions and in certain American National Parks.

It is likely, though, that in a city like Venice, where so many people are employed directly or indirectly in tourism, that any

attempt to reduce visitor numbers would be unpopular. Thus any attempt to introduce de-marketing would probably have to come from external pressure and could be opposed by local people. This would clearly make it an ethically questionable course of action.

Ironically, one of the few ways in which the industry might divert some demand from honey-pot destinations is by using new products and prices to encourage repeat visitors to a country to visit other areas. These tourists could be told that other areas represent the 'real' character of the country while special interest holidays in these areas might be offered to help these tourists 'learn more about the country'.

Before too much time and money is spent on de-marketing, we need to be sure the problem merits such drastic action. Often it is outsiders who think the number of tourists in an area is the problem, as it affects the quality of their holiday experience, or the place they have chosen to retire to. But providing that the infrastructure can cope and the benefits are distributed fairly to local people, perhaps the problem is not serious enough to merit such action.

In some cases it is not the total volume of visitors that a destination receives that is the problem, but rather when they visit. Most destinations have clear peak seasons which can last for just a few weeks each year. In these cases perhaps, the challenge is to de-market peak times, not the place as a whole. This means developing new products and offering prices that will tempt people to visit at quieter times of the year instead. However, there are also problems with such an approach. For example:

- some people are tied to taking their holidays at certain times of the year because of their job or their children's school holidays
- most destinations have times of the year when the weather is not good enough to make them attractive to the majority of tourists.

One of the main ways of attracting tourists in the off-peak season is through organizing

special events and festivals or offering themed breaks. In many cases, these will simply attract new customers rather than diverting demand from the peak season. This is particularly true as we see the growth of people taking second or even third holidays each year.

Perhaps it is better to have a quiet season when resorts can be refurbished and local residents can enjoy a more normal life style, albeit for just a few months. Finally, we are seeing the growth of a third form of de-marketing, namely the de-marketing of people. Many destinations increasingly talk of wanting to attract 'quality tourists' which often translates as higher spending, older tourists who are quiet and well-behaved.

Some resorts are consciously trying to de-market the so-called 'lager-louts' to make them more attractive to the 'quality tourist'. This often means changing the physical environment of the destination together with stricter policy and controls on behaviour, for example. However, such a policy will be unpopular with bar owners in these resorts, who make a living from the young 'hedonistic' tourists. The labelling of people as 'quality tourists' or 'lager louts' is also laden with prejudice, and is morally questionable.

We have seen that all three types of de-marketing are problematic in both practical and moral terms. However, even if it were a desirable activity, changing tourist behaviour is a massive challenge that would require an enormous budget. Yet many of the organizations that seek to practise it are public sector organizations with limited budgets.

### Tourist Taxes and Fair Pricing

It is sometimes suggested that we should use tourist taxes to help develop sustainable tourism, in two main ways:

- charging tourist taxes that are high enough to discourage some tourists from visiting certain places, thus reducing demand, and the problems which

flow from over-use

- using the funds generated by tourist taxes to help pay for the maintenance and development of the local tourism infrastructure.

Clearly, the first application is more radical and is about influencing demand, while the latter will simply help manage existing demand more effectively. However, implementing the former approach has a number of potential pitfalls, including the following:

- To reduce demand at unique destinations such as Venice or the pyramids in Egypt, would require a high tourist tax, and this could be seen to be discrimination against lower income tourists.
- We would need to know far more than we do currently about tourists' willingness to pay a particular tax levy for a specific resort. Otherwise, the tax could be set too high, and severely reduce a destination's visitor numbers with serious economic costs as a result.
- The mechanism for implementing the tax would be complex and costly. In areas where day-trippers are the majority of the market, it could even involve stopping cars on the road into national parks, as it would not be possible to collect the tax via accommodation establishments. On busy days, in the Peak District National Park in the UK, this could cause horrendous traffic congestion. However, perhaps this fact would discourage people from taking a trip and thus help reduce demand indirectly!
- It assumes that all tourists are equal in terms of their impact and does not encourage responsible behaviour or penalize anti-social behaviour. Instead it simply seeks to reduce overall numbers.
- Given our inadequate understanding of carrying capacities how do we know which ideal visitor number we are aiming for in the first place, when we try to

use taxes on tourists to manipulate demand?

- In a highly seasonal market, we would need to be constantly changing the rate of the tax levied to ensure that we were dampening demand at the times of most overcrowding but not at times when destination capacity was underutilized.

The second use of tourist taxes is specifically designed to get tourists to pay more of the real costs of meeting their needs, rather than the whole burden falling on the local population. A good existing example of such a tax is the 'Taxe de Séjour' which certain recognized resorts in France are allowed to levy. The product of the tax can be spent on infrastructure which is used by tourists but the tax has three main problems:

- As it is largely only collected in hotels, tourists using other forms of accommodation such as self-catering, cottages and campsites, generally do not pay it, although they still make use of the infrastructure.
- The collection of the tax is often seen as an imposition by the hoteliers and the collection rate often falls well below 100%.
- As the rate is very low, typically 2–5 francs per person, it is not a major source of revenue.

### Visitor Management

Over the years great confidence has been placed in the use of 'visitor management' techniques to manage tourism in areas where it is seen to be having a negative impact. This usually involves trying to divert demand away from 'honey-pot' areas, and involves initiatives like:

- using interpretation techniques to try to direct demand to less heavily used areas of the region
- closing roads from time to time and/or siting car parks, so that visitors cannot

drive into already overcrowded or environmentally fragile areas.

The hope is that this inconvenience will dissuade tourists from visiting the site.

Alternatively, visitor management techniques can be used to reduce the negative impacts of the existing level of demand. This could involve re-surfacing footpaths with material that is more resistant to the erosive power of walking boots, or park-and-ride schemes that keep cars out of the heart of villages, town centres, or fragile environments.

Visitor management can be effective, but it is also quite costly. It can also have a negative effect. For example, if a site is well known to tourists, improved interpretation of other less well known sites could simply increase overall demand and result in new pressures being placed on previously little used sites, as well as continuing pressure on the already popular site.

### Private versus Public Transport

For several decades, the private car has been seen as the enemy of sustainable tourism, particularly in the countryside and historic cities. Having at first liberated the tourist, it is now seen as a monster that imprisons them in traffic jams, and causes untold harm to the physical environment. Many writers also lament what they see as the negative impact the presence of cars has on the ambience and aesthetic quality of destinations.

The conventional wisdom is that we need to encourage tourists to leave their cars at home and use public transport instead. In spite of the money and effort that has been put into such schemes, particularly in the national parks of the UK, it is clearly a losing battle, because:

- tourists enjoy the flexibility and freedom which using their own car offers
- public transport systems are often inconvenient because of the need to travel to a pick-up point and the fact that consumers have to fit in with the operator's timetables

- in a number of countries, subsidies for public transport have been declining in recent years, which is taking away any price advantage it might have over the private car.

As attempts to encourage tourists to change their preferred mode of transport from the car to public transport have largely been unsuccessful, the only solution may be to forbid the use of cars in certain places. Clearly, this would be a very difficult decision for politicians to take, given the political influence of car owners and the car industry.

It would also have to be managed carefully so as not to inconvenience the host community, who would still need to use their cars for their business and leisure activities.

Before any such action is taken we should also be realistic about some of the negative environmental impacts of public transport, such as its energy consumption, and the pollution it causes. For example, in the UK, de-regulation of bus transport is leading to problems which make bus travel less environmentally friendly, including:

- the fact that competition is in some cases leading to buses travelling with fewer passengers
- more older buses being on the road which are, apparently, worse in terms of pollution than modern buses.

### Tourist Education

Some commentators appear to speak blandly about the need to 'educate tourists' to make them more concerned about the environmental impacts of tourism and the principles of sustainable tourism. However, an observer could be forgiven for taking a rather cynical view of this idea, for two main reasons, as follows:

- We are not even sure yet what sustainable tourism is, so how can we provide guidelines that, if followed by tourists,

would help develop more sustainable forms of tourism?

- The evidence from other well-meaning education campaigns – such as those relating to sex and drugs – appears to show that their impact is severely limited, unless the audience wants to hear the message.

Even if we did know what sustainable tourism was, it would still not be an easy message to sell to tourists if it involved making any sacrifice on the part of the tourist. In any event, attempting to influence the well established behaviour patterns of millions of people would be an expensive activity that would take a long time to take effect.

Finally, one could argue that if we are to spend time and money on educating tourists about anything, then we should focus on vitally important issues such as the link between tourism and HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.

### Community Involvement and Local Control

One of the most widely accepted principles of sustainable tourism appears to be the idea that tourism can only be sustainable if the local community is involved in tourism planning and management. However, even where attempts have been made to achieve this aim, there have been problems. These include:

- communities rarely, if ever, speak with one voice. There are many interest groups and individual viewpoints and there is no easy way of reconciling these to reach a consensus
- the mechanisms that are used to elicit the views of the community provide an opportunity for a minority of self-appointed community spokespeople, or people with strong views to dominate the process. The views of the so-called 'silent majority' can therefore be ignored
- professionals can sometimes under-

value or even ignore local views that are the opposite of their own. This can particularly occur when 'public participation exercises' are held to legitimize decisions which have already been taken, to some extent

- conflicts that debate causes within communities can be serious and can continue for a long time after the debate ends.

Even if a community could speak with one voice, its ability to control local tourism development would be limited by a number of factors, including:

- the power of the tourism industry. For example, tour operators are largely foot-loose, and if a destination tries to control their activities they may simply move on to somewhere where they will not face similar constraints
- central government policies and funding may over-rule local preferences. For instance, a community may wish to limit the growth of tourism in an area but the government may want to maximize the attraction of foreign tourists to the destination to help the balance of payments of the country
- externally based organizations may already have a strong voice in the area because of their ownership of local businesses. An example of this would be resort complexes and hotels owned by national hotel chains or transnational companies.

Even if communities could control their local tourism industry, this might not always be a desirable state of affairs. It could lead, for example, to tourism being used as a vehicle for nationalistic aspirations. Tourists of certain nationalities could be excluded from resorts, and heritage attractions could be used to spread propaganda about different nationalities. This could be a problem in certain regions of Eastern Europe for example, where different national groups live in close proximity to each other, with a long history of conflict between them.

### Role of Public Sector Planning

Many commentators assume that public sector tourism planning will play a major role in the development of sustainable tourism. Yet, in Europe at least, central state planning appears to be in retreat, for a variety of reasons including the following:

- Scepticism about state planning and its alleged lack of achievements. In the UK for example, there has been urban planning for 50 years yet the country has many examples of dysfunctional and visually unattractive towns and cities.
- The climate of de-regulation and privatization, which has been reinforced by the European Union's attempts to create a Single Market in Europe.
- The dislike of planning in Eastern Europe where it is seen as a reminder of the doctrinaire old communist regimes.
- The growing power of transnational corporations whose area of influence extends beyond the geographical boundaries of any government.

In any event, it is difficult to see what state planning can achieve in the tourism area, given that public sector bodies do not own or control many of the key elements of the tourism product, including:

- accommodation units
- the tour operation function
- visitor attractions except in the heritage sector
- bars, night clubs, taxis and coach operators.

It is for this reason that the concept of partnership has grown in popularity in recent years.

### The Role of Industry

Interestingly, as noted earlier in the section on the 'green tourist', industry often appears to be more concerned with sustainable tourism than consumers. It also seems to be doing more in terms of concrete initiatives

than governments. The following two brief examples illustrate these points:

- The International Hotels Environmental Initiative, which has sought to encourage hoteliers around the world to make their operational practices 'greener'.
- The sponsorship of sustainable tourism award schemes like the 'Tourism for Tomorrow' award by British Airways.
- Conferences on sustainable tourism organized by local tourism industry bodies such as the 'Ecological Conferences' arranged by the Halkidiki Hotel Association in Greece.
- The 'Thomson Holiday Code', a set of guidelines for clients of the tour operator.

Cynics may argue that this interest by industry is more about marketing hype than an altruistic belief in sustainable tourism. However, this may be unfair given that there appears to be little explicit concern with sustainable tourism on the part of most tourists. Perhaps therefore, we have to look at some more subtle motives for the attitudes of the industry, including:

- convincing governments that the industry is capable of regulating itself to prevent the threat of governments introducing legislation to control the activities of the industry
- taking initiatives that reduce costs, and therefore improve financial performance and competitiveness
- attempting to impress the media given that today, the media plays a vital role in influencing consumer behaviour.

Conversely, a number of small specialist tour operators in tourism, run by individual entrepreneurs, appear to be embracing sustainable tourism as a core element of their business. They try to attract customers, partly at least, through their contention that their product and operations are complementary with the ideas of sustainable tourism, such as being small scale, and encouraging contact with local people. This is true of many of the members of AITO, the

Association of Independent Tour Operators for example, in the UK, particularly those which offer ecotourism products.

It could be argued that for these small operators, which focus on a narrow niche market, the emphasis on sustainable tourism helps them to differentiate themselves from the large mass market operators, with which they cannot compete on price. It is likely that the relatively affluent clients who tend to make up the majority of the market for specialist tour operators, will be darker green than the average tourist and will respond well to this message.

However, ironically if the specialist operators do attract customers because of their more sustainable approach to tourism, they may well grow and become more commercial and ultimately, less sustainable!

### The Principle of Partnership

There has clearly been a growing recognition that sustainable tourism cannot be achieved by public sector policy alone. Most public bodies lack the budget or expertise to have a significant impact on the tourism industry and its activities. In crucial areas like accommodation and tour operation, the public sector is not a player of any significance. Its only influence comes via regulation and legislation but this tends to be more about preventing worst practice rather than encouraging good practice.

This has resulted in the concept of partnerships in tourism which have taken a number of forms, including:

- The Visitor and Convention Bureaux, funded by both the public and private sectors, that market tourist destinations
- Government encouragement of industry to take the issue of sustainability more seriously, via reports and conferences, for example.

However, in a competitive, commercial market like tourism, industry can only go along with public policy objectives in the tourism field, providing they are not required to do

anything that will increase their costs, or otherwise reduce their competitiveness.

One way around this problem has been for governments and pressure groups to persuade the private sector that the sustainable development of tourism resources is a key interest of the tourism industry. The problem with this approach is that the private sector can generally only afford to have a short-term perspective, based on the financial year, and annual marketing plans. It is therefore naive to expect people in industry to take a long-term view.

Perhaps, a final obstacle for the partnership is that both parties often appear to speak different languages! Although progress has been made, there still often seems to be a communication gap, with industry and academics not understanding each other's needs and constraints.

### Technocratic Thinking and Jargon

Academics and policy-makers know that achieving sustainable tourism will mean influencing tourists and the industry. Yet, at times, one could be forgiven for thinking that this was not the aim for much of the work of both groups of people tends to:

- be unrealistic in the context of a competitive and largely commercial market
- not take account of the political dimension of sustainable tourism, in terms of who would gain from it and who would pay, and the making of decisions about the resources on which tourism depends
- use jargon which may exclude non-specialists, with the use of terms like carrying capacity, holistic approaches and host communities.

In return, the same two groups also often complain about the fact that, as they see it, the tourism industry does not pay enough attention to their views. However, given that they are trying to sell a set of ideas to the industry, the onus is on these groups to make their message more accessible to the industry.

### Power without Responsibility

One of the dangers of the sustainable tourism debate is that it can involve people seeking to have power over the lives of other people, without necessarily having any responsibility towards these same people. For example, some decision-makers or would-be decision-makers want to:

- stop other people visiting particular places without having to offer them any alternative
- force the industry to change its practices in varying ways without having any responsibility for the people who will ultimately pay the price, whether it is the customer or the staff who are made redundant as a consequence of a resulting increase in costs.

This criticism is particularly appropriate, perhaps, for some voluntary sector pressure groups in the UK who seek to change the industry radically yet are elected by no one and have no mandate from the population as a whole.

### Self-contained Resort Complexes

One of the most controversial areas of the sustainable tourism debate has been the growth of self-contained resort complexes, from the Caribbean to South-East Asia, South Africa to the UK, with brand names like Sandals, Club Med, Center Parcs and Sun City. The conventional view would normally be critical of such complexes because of the lack of contact between tourists and local people. Indeed, it is true to say that they can actively take away the rights of the local population to use beaches they have used for generations.

Furthermore, the fact that all tourist needs are met on site by the resort operator, means there can be little opportunity for small local businesses to benefit from the presence of visitors through the purchase of meals, souvenirs and taxi services, for example.

They can also be criticized because they are often large and can be aesthetically unattractive. At the same time, they are often owned by outside entrepreneurs or corporations with little commitment to the area.

Conversely, if one believes that tourism can be a form of sociocultural pollution, then the fences around them are protecting local people from such pollution. Some small complexes have even been commended as examples of sustainable development, such as the Center Parcs complexes in the UK. Their design is sensitive, new wildlife habitats have been created during their construction, and supplies are sourced locally wherever possible.

Perhaps, therefore, well-managed self-contained resort complexes could play a positive role in the development of sustainable tourism.

### The Ethics and Practicalities of Conservation

It appears to be generally accepted that there is a strong link between conservation and sustainable tourism, for the latter is about conserving current resources so they can support tourism in the future. We therefore, have to ask ourselves some questions about what we are conserving, the ways in which we are conserving it, and the methods used.

In the UK, perhaps, we are too concerned with conserving certain parts of our heritage while we do not do enough to conserve other aspects of our heritage which are also important for the development of sustainable tourism. In the UK, we allocate substantial resources, for instance, for conserving stately homes, industrial heritage and works of art. However, we seem to be doing little to protect our heritage in the areas like food and drink, popular culture and sport. All of these could be key elements in the development of dynamic, popular forms of sustainable tourism in the UK.

At the same time, our planning system, in relation to listed buildings for instance, has been rather negative and perhaps counter-productive. It has stopped aesthetically or

architecturally inappropriate changes from being made to these buildings, but has done little to find viable new uses for such buildings. It could also be argued that we are trying to conserve too much of our heritage and that our emphasis on heritage is preventing us from looking to the future. We appear to be giving little attention to developing good quality modern architecture; instead we are conserving past buildings or copying traditional architecture styles. Surely sustainable development means innovation and imagination as well as just conservation.

### Emphasis on the Physical Environment

While the concept of sustainable development clearly has social and economic implications, the emphasis in the debate still tends to focus largely on the physical environment. In some ways this is understandable, because the impacts of tourism on the environment are highly visible and we know that the environment is a finite resource. However, it is clear that as the physical environment is shaped by the action of man, any attempt to manage environmental impacts must encompass economic systems and the needs of society in general and individual communities, in particular.

On the positive side, there is now considerable attention being paid to host communities, in terms of the impact of tourism upon them and their role in its management. At the same time, the continued emphasis on the physical environment is preventing enough attention being paid to other aspects of sustainable development, namely:

- the human resource management problems of tourism enterprises in terms of equal opportunities, pay and training, which are vital to both the well-being of employees, and ultimately, the sustainability of the tourism industry
- the economic viability of tourism enterprises



have expressed concern at the parochiality of the sustainable tourism debate. Too often tourism is seen as a self-contained world in its own right. However, as we have seen when discussing the issue of sustainable development, tourism is just part of the wider sustainability debate. We need to recognize and study the links between tourism and other industries and activities if we are to fully understand sustainable tourism.

### Conclusions

This chapter has highlighted some of the author's concerns over current thinking on sustainable tourism. Many of the ideas and techniques discussed clearly have a role to play in sustainable tourism management. However, the problems we have identified will need to be resolved or ameliorated before they can make a full contribution to managing tourism in a more sustainable manner. Many of these ideas and techniques are therefore examined in more detail later in the book to see how they might be refined and further developed. In the meantime, we will move on to look at some of the principles we should perhaps adopt to guide our approaches to sustainable tourism, based upon the critique of current thinking in this chapter.

### Discussion Points and Essay Questions

1. Discuss the practical and moral problems involved in implementing the concept of de-marketing.
2. Critically evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of self-contained resort complexes for destinations which wish to develop more sustainable forms of tourism.
3. Discuss the factors which will determine whether or not the 'dark green tourist' market segment will grow or decline in the future.

### Exercise

Choose a destination with which you are familiar, and imagine you have been employed as a consultant. Your brief is to devise a workable scheme for a tourist tax for all visitors to the destination. You are required to:

- outline the scheme you are proposing
- suggest the benefits the destination would gain from the introduction of your scheme
- highlight difficulties that might be experienced in trying to implement your scheme
- suggest how the tax revenue might be spent.

## 4

# Towards a New Approach to Sustainable Tourism Management

Following on from the critique of current thinking in Chapter 3, some principles are now put forward that could constitute a new approach to sustainable tourism management. These principles are briefly outlined below but many of them will be considered in more detail later in this book.

- There is a need to recognize that **sustainable tourism is, perhaps, an impossible dream**, and the best we can hope for is to develop more sustainable forms of tourism. This may be because tourism is inherently non-sustainable or may be due to the fact that unforeseen future political, economic, social and technological change may make current approaches to sustainable tourism management obsolete.
- We must **endeavour to introduce more objectivity into the sustainable tourism debate**. It is the author's belief that too much current thinking is judgemental and prejudiced about certain forms of tourism, with little real firm evidence to support these judgements and prejudices. The polarization of tourism into 'good' and 'bad' is divisive and unhelpful.
- It is important for us to recognize that **sustainable tourism is an overtly political subject**, in that it is about the distribution of resources, now and in

the future. The fact that some people will gain and some people will lose as a result of sustainable tourism means that it is inherently political. Technocratic solutions will fail if they ignore the political dimension.

- The political nature of the sustainable tourism debate means that **sustainable tourism is about who has the power** – host communities, governments, the industry and tourists – and how they use the power. We need to recognize that definitions of sustainable tourism and devising strategies to try to achieve it will normally reflect who has the power in any particular situation.
- This brings us to the idea that **sustainable tourism is about stakeholders** whose interests have to be balanced.
- We should accept that the idea of **community involvement as a cornerstone of sustainable tourism is fraught with problems**. It is necessary for us to recognize that:
  - (i) communities are rarely homogeneous, taking a single homogeneous view on any issue. There is a need to develop mechanisms for arbitrating the conflicting views that will emerge over tourism in any community
  - (ii) tourism management should not

allow articulate minorities to dominate the process to the exclusion of other citizens

- (iii) in some instances, the community may wish to pursue policies which are anti-sustainable tourism. We cannot assume, therefore, that community involvement will automatically ensure more sustainable forms of tourism.
- The **emphasis needs to shift from strategy generation to implementation** for there are many sustainable tourism strategies in destinations, but as yet few examples of successful initiatives.
- Accepting that in most countries **while public sectors can help facilitate the growth of more sustainable forms of tourism in many ways, ultimately, the key determinants of what happens will be the market**, in other words, tourist demand and industry responds to this demand. This means that **public sector policy must focus on developing partnerships** with both tourists and the industry, based on an understanding of how the tourism marketing actually works.
- Instead of concentrating on the tourism industry **the emphasis should be on the tourist**, for it is their desires, choices and behaviour which ultimately determine the impact which the tourist has on the world.
- At the same time we need to **recognize that tourists have rights too**. They spend their hard earned money on vacations to destinations which have often worked hard to persuade them to go there. They are there as invited guests not invaders.
- We need to acknowledge that **well-managed tourism can bring great social, economic and environmental benefits** as well as being the cause of problems if it is poorly managed.
- It is also important that we always remember that **sustainable tourism is not just about the environment**, it is also about social equity, and economic viability.
- We have to be **careful to avoid the temptation to introduce draconian measures that are out of proportion to the scale of the problem**. In an era when freedom of movement is accepted as a basic human right we must only ever consider restricting access to sites and places as an absolute last resort.
- We should **accept that there are 'shades of green' tourism** and that currently very few tourists are dark green.
- There is a need to **clarify the relationship between ecotourism and sustainable tourism** and be clear that they are not the same thing.
- Future **research on carrying capacities should involve consideration of how the results can be represented**. There is little point in learning that a woodland can only accommodate 500 tourists per square kilometre at any one time if we cannot then introduce measures to restrict usage to this level or below.
- While the concept of **de-marketing does have great potential in relation to sustainable tourism, we have to recognize that it has limitations**. For example:
  - (i) changing established behaviour patterns in tourism is a very sophisticated marketing challenge that will take time to achieve and will require huge budgets
  - (ii) de-marketing will rarely reduce overall demand, instead it will merely channel it in another direction
  - (iii) de-marketing is highly political because it may reduce income from businesses in some destinations and it is a form of social engineering, seeking to manipulate tourist behaviour.
- **Tourists should pay a fair price for their holiday experience**. They should not be subsidised by local people who do not gain financially from tourism.
- The **most sustainable forms of tourism may be those where tourism is 'fair traded'**, in other words, where local communities sell directly to the tourist, cutting out the tour operator and travel

agent in between. This may mean more of the tourists' spending will go to the local community. However, given the power of the tourism industry and the high cost of entering the tourism destination network, this may be as difficult to achieve in tourism as it has been in relation to commodities such as coffee and tea.

- **For destinations, particularly those in developing countries, to gain a fair share of the benefits of tourism, they will probably need to work together** to increase their joint power *vis-à-vis* the tourism industry in developed countries which are the generators of most international tourist trips. However, such an approach could be seen as a cartel and anti-competitive in an era when free trade and de-regulation is the order of the day.
  - There will almost certainly have to be **more restrictions on the use of private car transport** for in many developed and newly developed countries, the car has gone from being the liberator of the tourist to being the tourist's jailer, preventing tourist mobility through congestion. Voluntary experimental schemes for encouraging people to leave their car behind and use public transport have generally not worked, even on the limited scale on which they have been attempted.
  - We **should not place too much faith in 'educating tourists'** until we are sure of what the educational message should be at a time when we are still rather vague about what sustainable tourism means.
  - **If we want the industry to behave in a more sustainable way, we must accept that it may do so for commercial motivations rather than altruistic reasons**. Provided that their activities are positive, we should not, perhaps, worry too much about the motives of the companies.
  - **At a time when there is a growing number of pressure groups in the sustainable tourism field, we should not let them have power without responsibility**. If such groups influence
- tourism policy they may affect other people's lives, e.g. causing a reduction in their income, yet they are not currently asked to take responsibility for their actions, which is unfair.
- We could also perhaps adopt the slogan **'sustainable tourism begins at home'**. In other words, commentators from developed countries should focus on their own country and the behaviour of its own tourists, rather than telling people in developing countries how they should manage their tourism.
  - **There is a need for more clear thinking in relation to what we seek to conserve and how we conserve it**. If we try to conserve too much we retard the evolution of new building styles, landscapes and life styles. This could result in fossilization; sustainability should be about managed change, not stopping change.
  - There is a **need for us to develop good performance indicators** for sustainable tourism so that we can monitor our progress and recognize where we are failing.
  - **It would also be helpful if a system of official standards or sustainable tourism labels** could be developed to help those consumers who wish to purchase more sustainable tourism products.
  - **We have to recognize that sustainable tourism is inextricably linked with the question of sustainable development in general, and other industries such as agriculture**.
- ### The Need for More Research
- All of these points imply a much greater role for research and the wider dissemination of research findings. This should include:
- comparable work on the impacts of tourism that helps us to develop standard common ways of assessing these impacts
  - research on the workings of the tourism industry that increases our understanding of how it might be managed to achieve desired outcomes

- more empirical work on the behaviour of tourists so we gain a better understanding of their motivations and the processes through which they make decisions
- longitudinal studies of both tourism in individual destinations, and the behaviour of the market segments.

The results of this research must be disseminated widely in a readily understandable form so that it can illuminate the whole sustainable tourism debate. If we cannot find funding for such research, it does not augur well for our ability to develop more sustainable forms of tourism.

### Changes in the Concept of Sustainable Tourism Over Time

We have to accept that the concept of sustainable tourism will change over time. We can, therefore, never allow our ideas of sustainable tourism to become too fixed, so that they cannot be changed as the world and social attitudes change. If we look at the debate over sustainable development in general, as we did in Chapter 1, we can see that the nature of public concern has changed over time from:

- urban living conditions in northern European cities in the 19th century *to*
- Third World development in the 1960s *to*
- over-population and pollution in the developed world in the 1970s *to*
- global warming in the 1980s and 1990s.

The sustainable tourism debate has also moved on from the concern with the environment and 'green issues' to the wider subject of sustainable tourism. It is likely, therefore, that our level of interest in sustainable tourism, and the issues which concern us in relation to tourism, will be

very different in 10, 20 or 30 years from now.

Ironically, given the definition of sustainable development, we must ensure that we do not do things today which mean that future governments do not have the freedom to tackle sustainability in the best way for them at the time.

### Conclusions

This chapter suggests a set of guidelines that might underpin a new approach to sustainable tourism management, building on the critique offered in Chapter 3. We have now set the scene for the rest of the book which will concentrate on how we might put the principles of sustainable tourism into practice.

### Discussion Points and Essay Questions

1. Discuss the contention that, 'sustainable tourism is, perhaps, an impossible dream'.
2. Evaluate what the concept of 'fair trading' in tourism might mean for tourists, the tourism industry and the host community.
3. Critically evaluate the idea that, 'sustainable tourism is an overtly political subject'.

### Exercise

Select a book *or* major article on sustainable tourism, with which you are familiar. Compare what they say about sustainable tourism with what the author has said in this chapter. Identify and discuss any differences between the views of the different authors.

## Conclusions to Part One

In Part One the scene has been set for the rest of the book.

We have seen that sustainable tourism is simply an extension of the concept of sustainable development, and that this concept is far from new. The idea that urban development, for example, should be sustainable dates back many centuries. However, sustainability has only become a major issue in recent years in relation to industry in general, and tourism specifically.

In Chapter 2, we noted that the term, 'sustainable tourism' is a broad and ill-defined concept, that is open to a number of interpretations. We are still not certain that we know which forms of tourism are the most sustainable.

In Chapter 3 the author offered a critique of current thinking in sustainable tourism that criticised conventional ideas on the grounds of both their feasibility as well as their desirability.

Finally, in Chapter 4, a number of guidelines were suggested that should underpin what the author described as a new approach towards sustainable tourism management.

# Part Two

## The Three Dimensions of Sustainable Tourism

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In Part Two, we look at the three dimensions of sustainable tourism, namely:

- the environment, both natural and built
- the economic life of communities and companies
- social aspects of tourism, in terms of its impact on host cultures and tourists, and the way in which those employed in tourism are treated.

While it is the former element – the environment – which usually receives most attention, it is the author's contention that all three are equally important. It is also the author's belief that sustainable tourism management can only be successful if the inter-relationships between all three dimensions are fully recognized.

# 5

## The Environmental Dimension

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To many people sustainability is about the environment, primarily the natural, physical environment, and its protection. However, as we will see in this chapter, there is far more to the environment than just the natural landscape. The author will argue that the development of more sustainable forms of tourism will require us to:

- think in terms of ecosystems rather than 'the environment', and recognize that man is an important and valid element within the ecosystem
- take a far more critical view of the concept and practice of conservation, and accept that conservation can lead to fossilization and prevent the natural evolution which has given us those townscapes and landscapes which we treasure and seek to conserve today.

But firstly, we need to identify just what we mean by the environment. Figure 5.1 illustrates the scope of the term in relation to tourism. We know, of course, that whilst useful, this distinction is partly artificial, and that there are strong links between them. For example inshore coastal waters can be transformed by the creation of fish farms, and agricultural systems tend to dictate the pattern of human settlement and the form of villages.

We also need to recognize that the environment, all five types of environment, are

currently changing, as are our perceptions of them. It is also important to understand that:

an important characteristic of the interaction between tourism and the environment is the existence of strong feedback mechanisms: tourism often has adverse effects on the quantity – and quality – of natural and cultural resources, but it is also affected by the decline in quality and quantity of such resources. (Coccosis, 1996)

Let us now move on to look at the five aspects of the environment.

### The Natural Resources

Tourism makes use of a range of natural resources, and in many cases, the core attraction of a destination's product may be natural resources, such as:

- clean, pure mountain air
- land
- the mineral waters which have healing properties and are the focus of spa development
- the water in lakes and seas, if it is relatively warm and clean, and therefore suitable for bathing.

Yet, while tourism can provide an economic rationale for protecting such resources, it

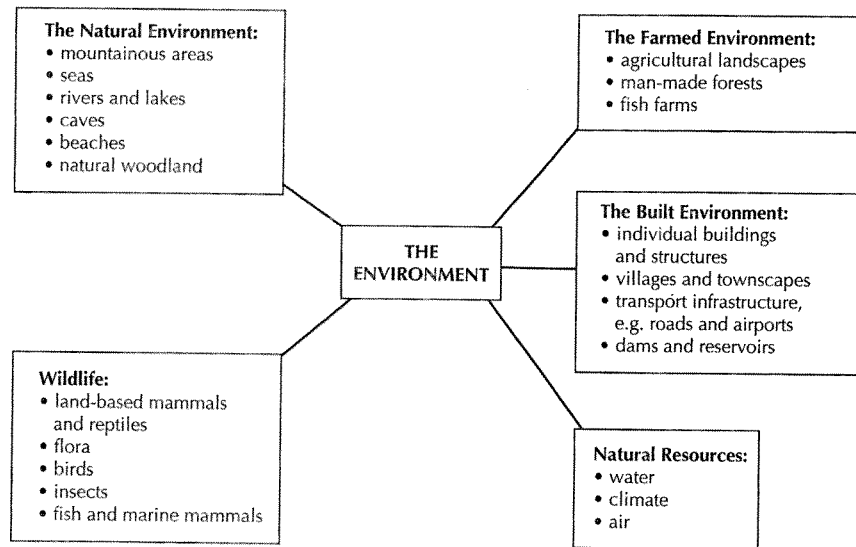


Fig. 5.1. The scope of the concept of the environment.

can also be a threat to their survival. Tourists make great use of water resources for their baths and swimming pools and their sewage can pollute the seas if not adequately treated.

The easiest way to think about the impact of tourism on natural resources is to think about the growth of a new resort complex on the coast in an arid coastal region. The development could:

- divert water from the local community to fill the swimming pool, provide showers and irrigate the golf course
- pollute the sea with sewage and fuel from the boats in the marina
- mean building on land, thus destroying the vegetation and disrupting the wildlife which was previously found on the site.

### The Natural Environment

We need to recognize that:

- there are few 'natural' landscapes or

wilderness areas left in the world. Almost all 'natural' landscapes have been affected to some extent, by the actions of man through the centuries

- tourism is only one industry or activity which changes landscapes, and it is probably less significant in its impact than other industries, such as agriculture and forestry, and mining and quarrying, for example
- the natural landscape represents the core of the tourism product in many areas including:
  - (i) natural forests like the Amazonian rain forest
  - (ii) regions which attract tourists because of their rivers and lakes such as the Rhine in Germany, and the Lake District in the UK
  - (iii) mountains which are perceived to be particularly beautiful such as the Alps and the Rockies
- the natural landscape can also be an obstacle to the development of tourism. For instance, hills behind a resort can stop it growing or can force it to develop vertically through high rise buildings.

Table 5.1. Some major potential impacts of tourism on the natural environment. Source: Hunter and Green (1996).

Impact aspect	Potential consequence
Floral and faunal species composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption of breeding habits</li> <li>• Killing of animals through hunting</li> <li>• Killing of animals in order to supply goods for the souvenir trade</li> <li>• Inward or outward migration of animals</li> <li>• Trampling and damage of vegetation by feet and vehicles</li> <li>• Destruction of vegetation through the gathering of wood or plants</li> <li>• Change in extent and/or nature of vegetation cover through clearance or planning to accommodate tourist facilities</li> <li>• Creation of a wildlife reserve/sanctuary or habitat restoration</li> </ul>
Pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water pollution through discharges of sewage, spillages of oil/petrol</li> <li>• Air pollution from vehicle emissions, combustion of fuels for heating and lighting</li> <li>• Noise pollution from tourist transportation and activities</li> </ul>
Erosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compaction of solid causing increased surface run-off and erosion</li> <li>• Change in risk of occurrence of land slips/slides</li> <li>• Change in risk of avalanche occurrence</li> <li>• Damage to geological features (e.g. tors, caves)</li> <li>• Damage to river banks</li> </ul>
Natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depletion of ground and surface water supplies</li> <li>• Depletion of fossil fuels to generate energy for tourist activity</li> <li>• Change in risk of occurrence of fire</li> <li>• Depletion of mineral resources for building materials</li> <li>• Over-exploitation of biological resources (e.g. overfishing)</li> <li>• Change in hydrological patterns</li> <li>• Change in land used for primary production</li> </ul>
Visual impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities (e.g. buildings, chairlift, car park)</li> <li>• Litter</li> <li>• Sewage, algal blooms</li> </ul>

### Tourism and the Sustainability of the Natural Environment: Friends or Foes?

In many regions of the world we have seen that tourism can be an enemy of the natural environment, as illustrated in Table 5.1.

At the same time, tourism can be beneficial to the natural environment by providing a motivation for environmental conservation. Without the financial incentive for conservation which tourism represents, many public sector bodies would probably pay less attention to the

protection of the natural environment.

Mathieson and Wall, in their seminal work on the impact of tourism, suggested that:

Tourism can also be credited with extending environmental appreciation. (Mathieson and Wall, 1982)

It has made people more knowledgeable about the environment. Nevertheless, overall, it is difficult not to come to the conclusion that tourism generally has a negative impact on the natural environment.

## The Farmed Environment

The farmed environment can cover a diverse range of agricultural systems, including, for example:

- intensive crop-rearing such as the grain-growing areas of eastern England, and the Mid-West of the USA and the rice fields of South-East Asia
- traditional mixed farming such as that seen in the Mediterranean region with the wine, citrus fruits and olives being cultivated alongside the grazing of sheep and goats
- monocultural cash crops such as the vines of the Herault area of France, and bananas of some Caribbean islands
- nomadic communities of people engaged in livestock-raising such as the Maasai people in Africa
- areas where timber is farmed such as northern Scandinavia, South-East Asia and parts of Canada.

In this era of the growth of 'pisciculture' we should also add to our list the fish farm, which contributes its own distinct structures to the shores around Ireland and Scotland, for example.

It is generally held that tourism has a negative impact on the farmed environment, including the following:

- tourists can trample crops, or light fires in woodland that get out of control
- new tourism developments eat up farmland and use water that is required for agriculture
- the jobs offered in tourism may tempt young people to give up farming.

However, it is also important to recognize that tourism can also be beneficial to the farmed environment. Tourist spending on farm-based accommodation, for example, can help maintain the viability of marginal farms. In France, the government has used gites and fermes-auberges deliberately as part of a tourism policy designed to provide extra revenue and social benefits for farmers.

## Wildlife

In the context of this chapter, the issue of wildlife has a number of dimensions, as follows:

- Areas where wildlife is a major attraction for tourists, including:
  - (i) the big game of Kenya, Tanzania and Botswana
  - (ii) the bird life of the Danube Delta, or Ireland and Cyprus in the winter
  - (iii) natural woodland and unusual flora, in the Amazon Basin
  - (iv) unusual creatures such as the giant turtles of the Galapagos Islands.
- Marine life which attracts tourists to take trips on the sea to view it, such as the whales of New England, Iceland and New Zealand.
- Tourism which is based on hunting wildlife including fishing trips.
- Visitor attractions such as zoos, wildlife and aquaria, where creatures in captivity are a major draw for tourists.
- Traditional events which tourists are invited to attend which involve wildlife, notably bull-fighting in Spain.
- The exploitation of animals to 'entertain' tourists like the 'dancing bears' of Turkey.

Tourism can clearly be very harmful to wildlife through:

- the destruction of habitats
- affecting feeding habits
- disrupting breeding patterns
- fires in woodlands
- people picking rare plants.

Conversely, tourism can benefit wildlife by giving it an economic value, which in turn provides a motivation for its conservation. There is little doubt that without tourists there would now be fewer lions or elephants in the world.

However, conserving wildlife for the benefit of tourists brings its own problems. There are ethical dilemmas, notably:

- Is it right for us to 'play God' and interfere in the process of 'evolution'?
- Should we affect the livelihoods of some humans to protect animals?
- Could it not be argued that preserving species so they can be viewed by tourists is simply self-indulgent exploitation?

## The Built Environment

The built environment exists at no less than three levels:

- individual buildings and structures
- small-scale settlements such as villages
- large-scale settlements, e.g. towns and cities.

We also need to recognize that, in terms of tourism, there are also several dimensions to the built environment as follows:

- Those historic villages, towns and cities where the built environment is, in terms of its age, aesthetic appearance and historical interest, a major attraction for tourists, and is the core of the tourism product. This category includes a wide variety of settlements from the honey-coloured villages of the Cotswolds in the UK, through the hill towns of Tuscany, to whole cities like Venice and Jerusalem.
- Individual historic buildings which are major attractions for tourists, within otherwise rather unspectacular townscapes like the Taj Mahal in Agra.
- Historic townscapes which have been conserved in their entirety, almost as museums, such as Colonial Williamsburg in the USA.
- Spectacular examples of modern architecture such as Gaudi's 'cathedral' in Barcelona and the Antigone development in the French city of Montpellier.
- The conversion of old buildings or areas which were not built for the purpose of tourism. For example, the old docklands of New York, San Francisco and Liverpool being turned into visitor

attractions, and the conversion into hotels of the Paradores in Spain.

- Modern purpose-built tourist resorts like Ayia Napa and Protaras in Cyprus.
- Individual buildings and structures, particularly accommodation establishments and visitor attractions.
- Tourism infrastructure, notably airports.

As can be seen from Table 5.2, tourism development can have a major impact, both negative and positive, on the built environment.

## The Five Aspects of the Environment: Some General Comments

It is clear that tourism can be very harmful to any aspect of the environment. Conversely, we have seen that it can also be a positive force in relation to the environment. It can:

- provide a motivation for governments to conserve the natural environment and wildlife because of its value as a tourism resource. Without this motivation, particularly in developing countries, even more damage might be done to the environment and wildlife by industrial and residential development
- raise tourist awareness of environmental issues and lead them to campaign for environmental protection based on what they have learned while on holiday
- keep farms viable by providing a vital extra income for agriculturists, thus preventing the 'desertification' of farmed rural landscapes
- provide new uses for derelict buildings in towns and cities, through the development of new visitor attractions.

## Towards a More Sustainable Relationship between Tourism and the Environment

Tourism and the environment are inextricably linked and interdependent. If tourism

**Table 5.2.** Some major potential impacts of tourism on the built environment. Source: Hunter and Green (1996).

Impact aspect	Potential consequences
Urban form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in character of built area through urban expansion or redevelopment</li> <li>• Change in residential, retail or industrial land uses (e.g. move from private homes to hotels/boarding houses)</li> <li>• Changes to the urban fabric (e.g. roads, pavements, street furniture)</li> <li>• Emergence of contrasts between urban areas developed for the tourist population and those for the host population</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overload of infrastructure (e.g. roads, railways, car parking, electricity grid, communications systems, waste disposal, buildings, water supply)</li> <li>• Provision of new infrastructure or upgrading of existing infrastructure</li> <li>• Environmental management to adapt areas for tourist use (e.g. sea walls, land reclamation)</li> </ul>
Visual impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth of the built-up area</li> <li>• New architectural styles</li> <li>• Litter</li> <li>• Beautification</li> </ul>
Restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-use of disused buildings</li> <li>• Restoration and preservation of historic buildings and sites</li> <li>• Restoration of derelict buildings as second homes</li> </ul>
Erosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damage to built assets from feet and vehicular traffic (including vibration effects)</li> </ul>
Pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air pollution from tourists and tourist traffic</li> <li>• Air pollution from non-tourist sources causing damage to built assets</li> </ul>

continues to grow, we have to find ways of improving the relationship between the two and making it more sustainable. This might involve the following.

#### **Holistic Thinking: the Concept of Ecosystems**

Too often, in tourism, we fall into the trap of thinking about the environment in terms of self-contained compartments such as wildlife or rain forests, or mountains. However, the environment is a complex phenomenon, made up of a set of inter-relationships between the physical environment and flora and fauna species, and human beings are one of those species. To manage the link between tourism and the environment more effectively, we need to recognize this concept of 'ecosystems' and plan accordingly.

#### **Regulation of the Negative Impacts**

There is a clear need for legislation and a system of land-use planning and building

control to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment. However, we must recognize that while regulation can help prevent negative outcomes, it can do little to stimulate the creation of positive outcomes.

#### **Encouraging Good Practice**

It is more pro-active and positive to encourage good practice rather than merely preventing bad practice. In relation to the built environment this could mean, for example, ensuring that all new development is:

- built on an appropriate site, in terms of the existence of on-site services and infrastructure
- of a suitable scale for the site and locality
- constructed of recycled and locally sourced materials, wherever possible

- designed to be energy-efficient
- developed in a way that minimizes the use of resources like water, and the disruption of wildlife habitats.

#### **Keeping a Sense of Proportion**

We need to ensure that our level of concern and action is in proportion to the scale of the problem. There is no point in taking draconian, expensive measures to tackle a problem which is not very serious. For instance, minor footpath erosion is not a big enough problem to merit widespread closure of footpaths and/or expensive visitor management techniques.

#### **Raising Awareness amongst Tourists and the Industry**

Some of the damage caused to the environment by tourism is not unavoidable while much of it is not deliberate. Better knowledge on the part of the industry and tourists would help reduce some of the negative environmental aspects of tourism.

#### **Paying a Price that Covers the Environmental Costs of Tourism**

Tourism causes environmental problems which cost money to ameliorate or solve. The prices paid by the industry for services they buy, and the tourists for their holiday, must be high enough to ensure that money is available to cover the environmental costs of tourism. Otherwise either the local population will have to subsidize the tourist or the environmental problems will not be tackled.

#### **Maintaining a Balance Between Conservation and Development**

We need to find a balance between conserving the environment as it is today and the development which is needed to provide jobs and social benefits.

#### **The Dangers of Conservation**

It is important to recognize that conservation is a relatively modern phenomenon.

Only in recent years have widespread attempts been made to conserve landscapes, buildings and wildlife, across the world.

Conservation has been most in evidence in developed countries where the pace of economic and social change has led to great changes in the environment. This has stimulated attempts to conserve – or 'preserve' – the status quo, almost out of a sense of nostalgia.

There is a clear link between tourism and conservation, for:

- the destruction of the environment caused by large-scale tourism has often stimulated demands for conservation
- the recognition that the environment is a major attraction of tourists has given an economic motivation for conservation
- many conservation projects are wholly or partly funded by income from tourism.

Conservation is now evident throughout the areas visited by tourists and is generally seen to be a very positive concept. Yet, the author believes that it involves dangers which are not always recognized, and which in themselves, threaten the long-term sustainability, of both tourism and host communities. These include:

- The tendency to believe that everything old is worthy of conserving or 'saving' or 'preserving'. This can lead to us spreading resources too thinly to be effective as we try to conserve everything.
- Sometimes we place the conservation of wildlife or landscapes above the welfare of humans, particularly those who lack political power. Nomadic people in East Africa are therefore having their traditional life styles disrupted to protect the wildlife on which the local tourism industry depends. Nearer to home, local young people in the national parks of the UK suffer a lack of job opportunities, partly at least, because of planning policies which are unsympathetic to industrial development.

- The apparent obsession with conserving all old buildings means there is a danger that new building styles will not be developed or valued. If imaginative modern architecture is not encouraged to develop, what will people in the future choose to conserve as symbols of our age?
- Tastes and preferences change over time so the next generation may not appreciate the results of today's efforts to preserve life styles and environments. Instead of seeing it as an asset it may see the results of our conservation as an unwanted liability.
- tourism can have both negative and positive impacts on the environment, but on balance it has a negative impact on the environment
- there is a set of principles that might make tourism more environmentally friendly
- environmental conservation has some inherent dangers.

A range of issues relating to the environmental dimension of the sustainable tourism debate have been briefly discussed. Many of these issues will be re-visited later in the book, for they underpin many of the key aspects of the concept of sustainable tourism.

### Discussion Points and Essay Questions

1. Critically evaluate the idea that tourism and the environment are enemies rather than allies.
2. Discuss the extent to which legislation and regulation can safeguard the environment from the negative impacts of tourism.
3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of attempting to conserve one of the following:

- traditional landscapes
- historic buildings
- indigenous wildlife.

### Conclusions

This chapter has been, by necessity, rather short, simplistic and superficial. Nevertheless, it has highlighted some key issues, including the following:

- the environment has five elements

### Exercise

Select a tourist destination with which you are familiar, or one for which you can gather data without too much difficulty. For your chosen destination, you should produce a report which highlights the problems and benefits which tourism has brought to the local environment.

### Case Study: the Environmental Impact of Declining Levels of Tourism in UK Seaside Resorts

Most studies of the environmental impact of tourism focus upon the impacts of tourism on the environment in new and developing destinations. However, given that there are now many established resorts which are experiencing decline, we must also look at the environmental effect of decline in resorts.

Cooper, in 1997, published an interesting study of the environmental consequences of decline in UK seaside resorts. Cooper identified the following problems:

- the traditional, and often attractive, features of the resort townscape have either deteriorated or disappeared altogether. This includes the grand old hotels and Victorian piers, together with theatres and promenades. They have often been replaced by poor quality amusement arcades and fast food outlets
- poor levels of maintenance of open spaces
- neglect of maintenance in small- and medium-sized accommodation establishments
- many accommodation units have been either converted to other uses, or, in some cases, have become derelict
- townscapes have been blighted by the construction of new roads and by car and coach parking facilities.

The English Tourist Board noted in 1991, that:

The environmental consequences of long-term market decline in the resorts has produced a spiral of decline which has put in jeopardy the quality of life of those who live, work, and holiday in resorts . . . Market shifts have produced a negative cycle of falling product quality, lower profitability, lack of investment even for refurbishment, and further decline in the quality of the experience provided in resorts. (English Tourist Board, 1991 quoted in Cooper, 1997)

Resort decline is clearly a threat to sustainability so sustainable tourism also means re-juvenating and re-generating existing resorts as well as simply ensuring the new resorts are planned with sustainability in mind.

### Case Study: the Environmental Impact of Uncontrolled Small-scale Tourism Development in Malaysia

Hamzah has shown that even small-scale tourism development can have negative environmental impact if it is not adequately controlled. He explained that small-scale tourism in Malaysia grew around picturesque fishing villages near beaches or on offshore islands. In the early days, the tourism involved informal tourism with drifters or 'hippies' spending long periods in the villages.

However, between the 1970s and the 1990s these small-scale resorts developed dramatically. Many settlements experienced a growth in accommodation of up to 2000% between 1970 and 1990. On one island alone accommodation increased by 500% over just 2 years between 1988 and 1990 (Hamzah, 1997).

The small resorts have grown in an unplanned manner. As a result Hamzah was able to identify several negative impacts as follows:

- Conflict over limited resources, such as water, grazing land, and rights of way.
- The depletion of marine habitats and ecosystems. As Hamzah noted:

Uncontrolled development has mainly caused the depletion of corals and the deterioration in water quality, and, to a lesser extent, the depletion of mangroves. In 1984, more than half of the corals at Pulau Tioman were found to be damaged by boat anchors (Ridzwan, 1994). In 1995, between 20% and 40% dead corals were found in the waters fronting the popular tourist spots on the island, mainly due to sediment (World-wide Fund for Nature, Malaysia, 1995). Also, the *E. coli* content in the coastal water exceeded the prescribed standard by 92 times (Voon, 1994). (Hamzah, 1997)

- Environmental damage has been caused by the construction of new accommodation units, including the process of site clearing and back filling which was carried out on such a scale that resulted in the killing of many of the mature trees on the sites.

Hamzah summarized that there is a need for tourism planning and for statutory local plans which should provide strict guidelines for future tourism development. He also suggested the need for a planning manual that would give positive advice on the sensitive development of sites so as to minimize the negative environmental impacts of such development.

However, in common with a number of developing countries, Hamzah recognized that the expertise needed for effective tourism planning was not available in the local authorities concerned.

Malaysia is also a good example of the link between socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism development through the role of local entrepreneurs, and the lack of benefits from tourism for most members of the community.

In relation to both environmental and socio-economic impacts, therefore, it appears that the priority should be planning for the public good rather than allowing private gain to be the main motivator of development.

## 6

### The Economic Dimension

In the debate over sustainable tourism, the economic dimension is often given relatively scant attention compared to the environmental issues. Yet tourism is an economic phenomenon of great potency worldwide. It:

- is the major industry and foreign currency earner in many developing countries
- is the basis of the growth of many transnational corporations
- accounts for a significant proportion of the annual disposable income of many people in the so-called developed countries
- swallows up billions of pounds every year in public sector infrastructure investment.

This chapter looks at a range of issues relating to the economics of tourism in terms of sustainability.

#### The Economic Impacts of Tourism

Figure 6.1 illustrates the economic impact of tourist spending, based on a model discussed by Murphy and modified by Page. It originally related to urban areas but the principles apply in any geographical context. This diagram shows the complexity of the economic impacts of tourism in a particular locality.

#### The Economic Costs and Benefits of Tourism

As we can see from Table 6.1, tourism brings both economic benefits and economic costs.

##### Cost-Benefit Analysis

When evaluating the economic costs and benefits of particular projects or events, use is often made of cost-benefit analysis. This technique seeks to identify, if possible, all the associated costs and benefits so that a rational decision can be made. While useful, cost-benefit analysis does have certain limitations. For example, it is:

- difficult to quantify social costs and benefits which arise from tourism developments such as crime, social alienation and the erosion of traditional cultures
- not always easy to evaluate short-term versus longer term impacts
- not usually sophisticated enough to take account of the fact that the costs and benefits are different for different people.

A project may benefit the region as a whole but may bring great costs to a small section of the community. Nevertheless, cost-benefit analysis can be a valuable tool in

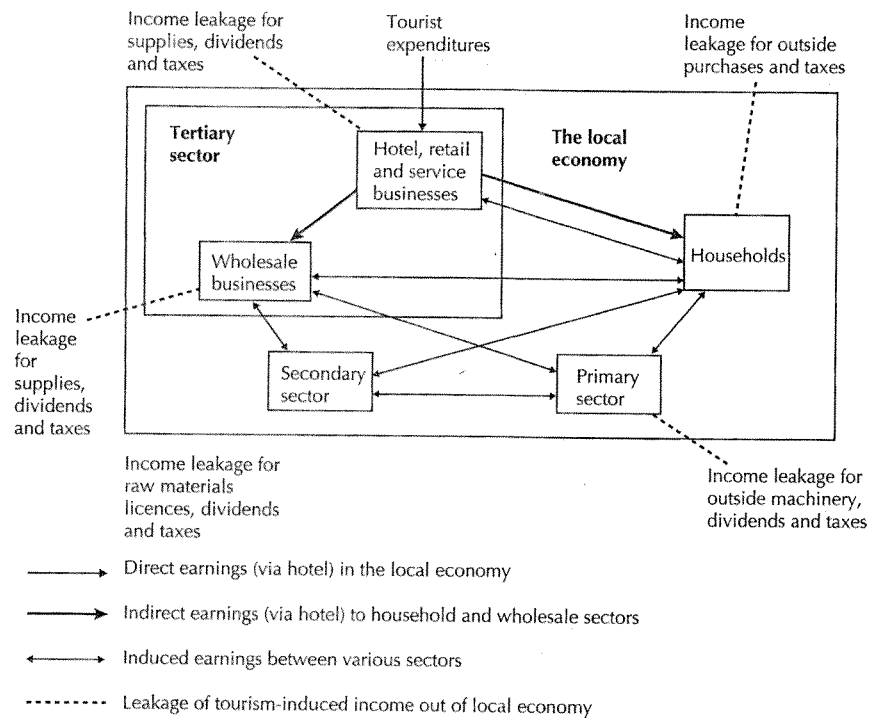


Fig. 6.1. The economic impact of tourist spending.

helping make decisions on tourism development project proposals.

#### Types of Economies in Tourist Areas

When looking at the costs and benefits of tourism, we have to be aware that the economic impact of tourism is dependent partly on the nature of the economy in question. Some of the commonest types of local economy found in tourist destinations are illustrated in Fig. 6.2.

The economic impact of tourism will vary significantly between these different types of economies, in terms of levels of tourist spending, who will be employed in tourism, wage rates and the degree of leakage of tourism income from the local community. This issue of leakage now leads us on to a brief discussion of the multiplier effect.

#### The Multiplier Effect

When considering the costs and benefits of tourism to the local economy, much attention is paid to the principle of the 'multiplier effect'. This means the idea that every pound, dollar or mark spent by the tourist circulates around the local economy in a series of waves.

Figure 6.3 offers a simplified clear view of the concept of the multiplier effect. In terms of sustainable tourism, the aims are to maximize tourist spending and then to minimize the leakages of tourism income from the local economy. It is important to recognize that the multiplier effect varies between different economies, as can be seen in the case study on the multiplier effect at the end of this chapter.

The type of economy influences the level of the tourism multiplier and the extent to

Table 6.1. The economic benefits and costs of tourism.

Benefits	Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job creation</li> <li>• Injection of income into the local economy through the multiplier effect</li> <li>• Helping keep local businesses viable</li> <li>• Regeneration and restructuring of the economies of towns and cities where other industrial activities are in decline</li> <li>• Stimulates inward and industrial investment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many jobs are low paid and/or seasonal</li> <li>• Opportunity costs, i.e. money invested in tourism that cannot then be used for other purposes</li> <li>• Congestion</li> <li>• The need to invest in expensive infrastructure which may only be required for part of the year</li> <li>• Over-dependence on tourism which makes the host economy vulnerable to changes in the tourism market</li> </ul>

which leakage will take place. Leakage is high, for example, in those economies where local suppliers cannot, do not or are not allowed to meet the needs of the tourist, so that their needs are met by externally based organizations.

Table 6.2 illustrates, in general terms, which types of economy are likely to experience high and low leakage of tourism income. While basically sound, this is a very simplified picture and ignores the impact of factors such as state intervention and the role of major foreign tour operators in established destinations.

#### The Consumption of Resources

Tourism makes great demands on resources as we can see from Table 6.3. Tourism also clearly makes demands on fragile natural resources such as beaches and wildlife. It also exploits intangible resources such as an area's cultural heritage. As we will see in the next section, the tourism industry and the tourist do not pay the full cost of the resources they consume. This is clearly unfair and at odds with the concept of sustainable tourism.

#### Towards a Fair Price for the Tourism Product

Given the social equity dimension of sustainable tourism it is important to ensure

that tourists pay a fair price for their holiday experience. At the moment many tourists pay less than the true cost of their holiday because:

- the perishability of the tourism product leads to last minute discounting by tourism organizations so that late purchasers pay an unrealistically low price
- central government may subsidize transport infrastructure and state-owned visitor attractions
- local government and local taxpayers fund the cost of local tourism-related infrastructure.

These latter two naturally lead us to a consideration of the role of the public sector in tourism development, and the economic impact of this involvement.

#### The Ethics of Government Support for the Tourism Industry

There are many reasons why public sector bodies become involved in tourism for the sake of society as a whole. Tourism can:

- contribute to improving a country's balance of payments situation
- provide employment
- bring income to local communities

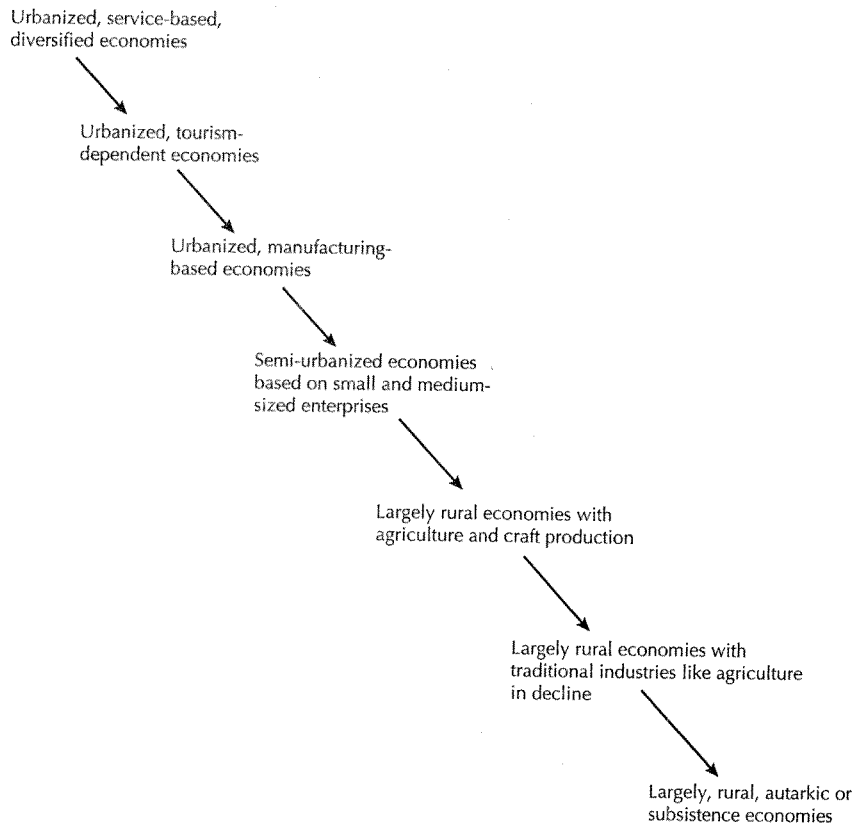


Fig. 6.2. The range of local economies in tourist destinations.

- generate tax revenue for public sector bodies
- stimulate rural and regional development, regenerate urban areas, and diversify local economies.

Public sector organizations intervene in tourism in a number of ways which have an economic impact. These ways are illustrated in Fig. 6.4.

The active involvement of the public sector raises several ethical issues:

- The idea that it is wrong for taxpayers as a whole in an area or country to be asked to pay for destination marketing activities when it is the private sector which

gains from such activities. When a local council promotes weekend breaks using public money, the main economic benefits go to the local hotels. Most residents who have paid for the promotion of the short breaks usually gain little or nothing from the tourist's expenditure.

- State subsidy of certain tourism organizations can create unfair competition. On a large scale they can involve state-owned, subsidized airlines being given an unfair advantage over smaller, non-subsidized privately owned airlines. On a smaller scale it may be a case of publicly owned subsidized visitor attractions being unfair competition for privately owned attractions. While

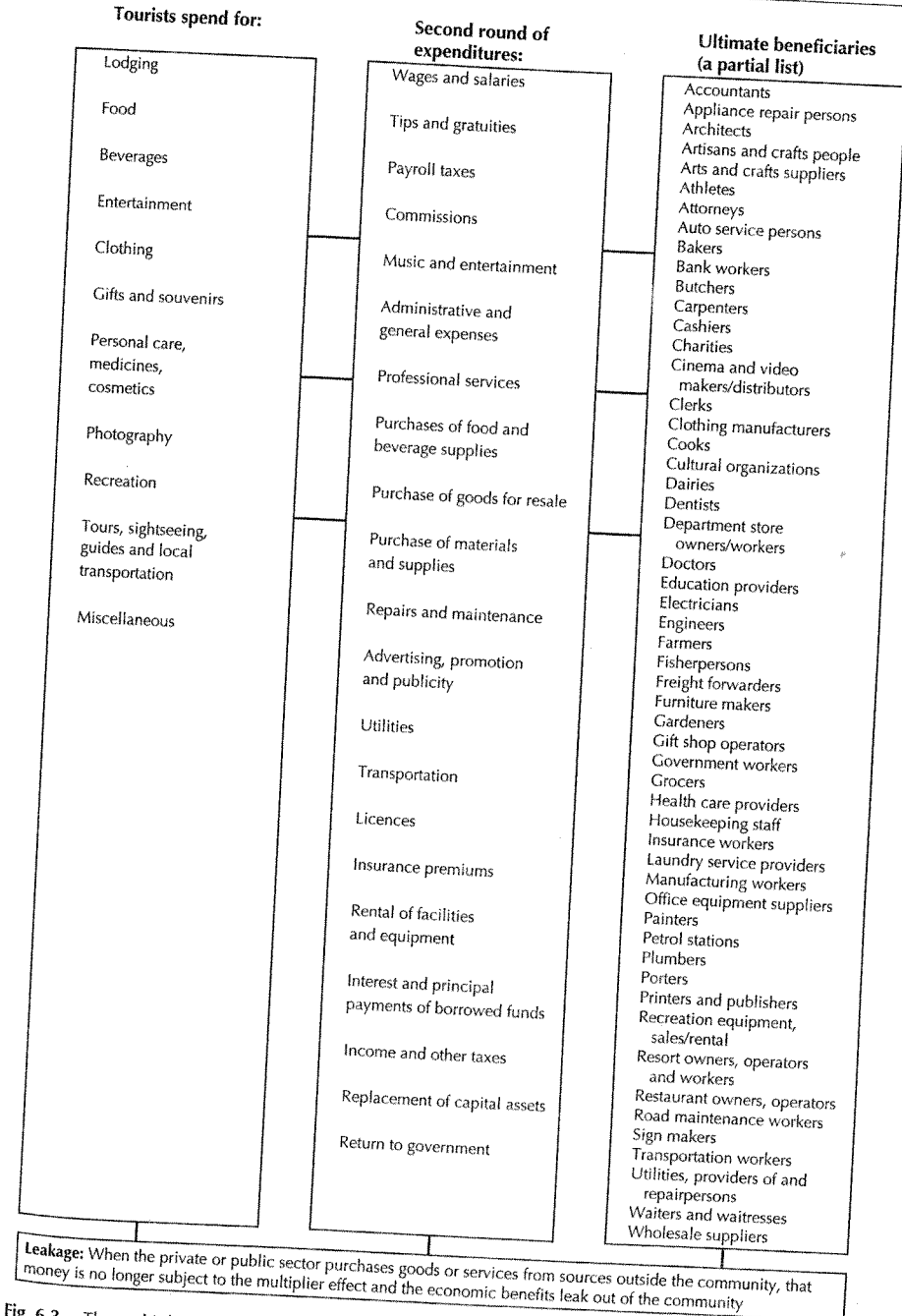


Fig. 6.3. The multiplier effect in tourism.

**Table 6.2.** Differences in leakages between different types of economy.

High leakage	Low leakage
Areas in developing countries with economies based largely on primary production such as agriculture, where tourism is a relatively new phenomenon	Well-established major tourist destinations in developed countries

persuasive arguments can be advanced to support the use of subsidies in some cases, overall one is left with a feeling that too often they are unfair and act against the ultimate interest of consumers.

- The money spent by the public sector on tourism represents an opportunity cost. In other words, this money could be spent on other things like education and health, which could bring benefits to more people in the country concerned.

Having looked at how government action can be in conflict with the principles of sustainability and fairness let us look at one way in which it could act that may be more complementary to sustainable tourism: the role of tourist taxes.

### Tourist Taxes

We saw in Chapter 3 that there are many problems with the way tourist taxes are being used at the moment. However, instead

of using tourist taxes just to manage demand, or alleviate some of the burdens of tourism on local people, perhaps we should instead start thinking in terms of fair pricing of the tourism product, from the beginning. In other words, we should try to ensure that whoever gains must pay more and vice versa. The implications of this are far-reaching and might include:

- An end to the use of public money to subsidize private sector tourism interests, such as the use of public money to promote weekend breaks in cities where the bulk of tourist money goes on privately owned hotels, restaurants and shops. Surely it is fair for the private sector to fund such campaigns wholly. Unless they do, local tax payers, even those who do not gain at all from tourism, are subsidizing private businesses.
- Tour operators may have to be forced to pay a fair price to their suppliers, such as hotels, to ensure that the latter can pay good wages to their staff.
- We need to do far more research on the hidden economic costs and benefits of

**Table 6.3.** Resources called on by travel and tourism. Source: Bull (1996).

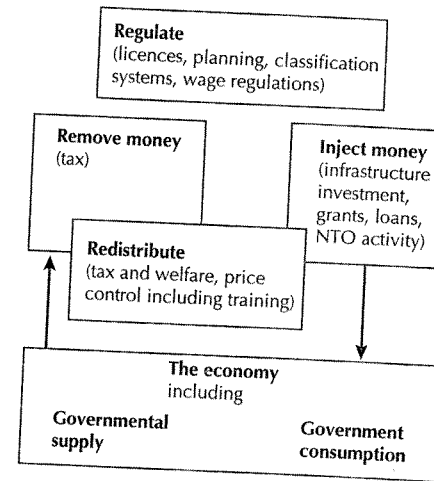
In generating areas	In destination areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer incomes</li> <li>• Consumer time</li> <li>• Labour for selling/marketing/transport</li> <li>• Capital: investment in transport equipment</li> <li>• Fixed capital investment</li> <li>• Business travel time/expenditure</li> <li>• Selling enterprise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land</li> <li>• Property/buildings</li> <li>• Labour for lodging/destination services</li> <li>• Foodstuffs</li> <li>• Marketing expenditure</li> <li>• Lodging and operational enterprise</li> </ul>

### Seasonality and Sustainability

In terms of the effective use of resources the seasonality of the tourism market can be viewed as either negative or positive. Depending on one's view, seasonality can either:

- lead to the under-use of infrastructure which is economically inefficient or
- allow over-used resources a period of time during which they can recover before the next season.

More detailed research is required to allow us to decide which view is the nearest to reality.



**Fig. 6.4.** The roles of government in tourism.

tourism so we can know what a holiday really costs.

- We need to recognize that some people in a destination gain considerably from tourism while for others it is a net cost. Should this not be reflected in some way in terms of taxation?

Perhaps what we need is a universal tourist tax everywhere, applied to all tourists, to ensure that they pay the full cost of their tourist trip. Or better still, and certainly less bureaucratic, we might make the tourism industry responsible for managing its own impacts to an officially approved standard. It would then have to pass on the cost to its customers or bear the costs itself. The former may well be the most appropriate as it is the consumers' demands which create the problem, and local people would probably suffer job losses and wage cuts if the latter approach were to be adopted.

Conversely, the second idea is more appealing than the tourist tax in that the tax would be a bureaucratic nightmare to collect. Such a tax could also tempt governments to divert the product of the tax to non-tourism-related spending priorities, so that the local community and local industry would not benefit from the revenue.

### Economic Trends – Friend or Foe?

The problem for sustainable tourism is that several current economic trends are not compatible with the concept of sustainability, including:

- The trend towards globalization which is leading to product standardization and a reduction in the influence of national, regional and local cultural and geographical differences. This is threatening the diversity which is implicit in the concept of sustainability.
- The rise of multi-national enterprises (MNEs) is also a potential threat to the idea of sustainability in tourism. Based on the work of Dunning and McQueen in 1982, Bull (1995) has identified five possible areas of concern for local host economies from the growth of MNEs. They are as follows:
  - (i) control over the structure and development of the tourism industry, or particular subsections of the industry
  - (ii) control over tourist markets and tourist flows
  - (iii) prices obtained for host economy tourism products
  - (iv) the destination of factor and input payments
  - (v) competition with locally owned

enterprises and the demonstration effects of production techniques.

In the case of both trends the fundamental issue is the loss of local control, something which is often seen as one of the guiding principles of sustainable tourism.

### Towards More Economically Viable Forms of Tourism

Developing more sustainable forms of tourism will involve several main priorities in economic terms:

- developing forms of tourism which optimize the economic benefits of tourism while minimizing its economic costs
- ensuring that the benefits of tourism are spread as widely as possible throughout the host community, particularly amongst the most economically disadvantaged sections of the local population
- making sure that the tourist pays a fair price for their holiday experience
- taking action to share the costs of attracting and meeting the needs of tourists fairly between the tourism industry and the government agencies in the destination
- protecting local businesses from unfair competition from larger, externally owned enterprises which have little commitment to the destination
- reducing leakages from the local economy.

However, it is important that in seeking to implement these ideas we do not go too far. Too extreme an application of these ideas could lead to protectionism and a near monopoly which would give too much power to local businesses *vis-à-vis* the tourist. This could result in poor service and high prices and ultimately a reduction in tourist numbers. There is clearly, therefore,

a balance to be struck between local control, a free market and consumer choice.

### Conclusions

We have seen that tourism can bring both economic benefits and costs, the exact nature of which varies between different destinations. The main economic issues in relation to sustainability, the author believes, involve whether or not the price tourists pay is a fair reflection of the cost of their holiday, and the extent to which the tourism industry is subsidized by the public sector. We have also seen that the economic trends of globalization and the rise of MNEs are both a threat to sustainable tourism. Clearly, there are obvious links between the economic dimension of tourism and its social impacts. It is therefore appropriate that we should now move on to the social dimension of sustainable tourism in the next chapter.

### Discussion Points and Essay Questions

1. Critically evaluate the extent to which globalization is a threat to the development of more sustainable forms of tourism.
2. Discuss the relevance of the concept of the 'multiplier effect' to sustainable tourism.
3. Discuss the contention that tourists do not currently pay a fair price for their holiday.

### Exercise

Select a holiday package at random from the brochure of a leading tour operator. For your chosen holiday, identify *all* the occasions when the tourist could be said to be being subsidized by public sector agencies. Finally, estimate what the cost of the holiday might be if no such subsidies existed.

### Case Study: the Multiplier Effect

As we saw in the chapter, the concept of the multiplier is based on the idea that:

Money spent by the tourists is re-spent by the tourism operators on suppliers and labour, who in turn spend their income on other items. Hence the tourist dollar is being turned over several times as it ripples through the economy. (Oppermann and Chon, 1997)

In Exhibit 1 are estimates of the multiplier effect for a number of selected destinations based on the work of a range of authors. These figures, while they are only estimates, indicate that the multiplier effects are closely linked with the rate of leakages. Where leakage is high, particularly on small islands, the multiplier effect is much lower than that of larger islands and mainland countries with lower leakage rates.

These figures focus upon the income multiplier but there is also an employment multiplier, which measures the employment created by tourism spending. Oppermann and Chon discussed the study by Archer and Fletcher in 1995, conducted on the Seychelles, which showed that:

Tourists from different origin countries have a varying employment multiplier effect although their income multipliers differed only slightly. (Oppermann and Chon, 1997)

**Exhibit 1.** The income multiplier effects in selected developing countries. Source: various authors quoted in Oppermann and Chon (1997).

Country	Income multiplier
Turkey	1.96
Egypt	1.23
Jamaica	1.23
Dominican Republic	1.20
Cyprus	1.14
Hong Kong	1.02
Mauritius	0.96
Seychelles	0.88
Bahamas	0.79
Vanuatu	0.86
Tonga	0.42
Nieu	0.35

### Case Study: the Economic Impact of Tourists in Two UK Rural Tourism Destinations

In 1997, Slee, Far and Snowdon published a paper on the economic impact of tourism on two rural destinations in the UK: Exmoor in south-west England and Strathspey in Scotland. The survey was conducted in summer 1994. The authors' findings were as follows:

- In Strathspey the income generated by tourists staying in farm- or forest-based accommodation was higher than that in commercial accommodation with ten or more units. However, in Exmoor the figures were similar for both types of accommodation.
- Tourism in both destinations created between 2.6 and 4.8 full-time equivalent jobs per £100,000 of tourist expenditure.
- The income multiplier effect in Exmoor and Strathspey varied between 0.20 and 0.27.
- The employment multiplier, in terms of direct employment varied in the destinations between 2.2 and 2.9 while that for indirect employment ranged between 0.7 and 1.3.
- It was estimated that in the 'core areas' of both destinations the following amounts were spent by tourists:
  - (i) in Strathspey, around 107,000 tourists spent approximately £3.8 million
  - (ii) in Exmoor, a little over 68,000 tourists spent approximately £1.9 million.
- The total number of jobs resulting from tourism in the core areas amounted to 614 in Strathspey and 289 in Exmoor.

The authors also found that 'soft' (farm- or forest-based tourism accommodation) businesses were often more beneficial than 'hard' (commercial non-farm or forest-based accommodation) enterprises, because they:

- employed more people per unit of visitor spending
- generated more income per 100,000 days of visitor spending.

As Slee *et al.* concluded:

The promotion of small-scale soft rural tourism may thus constitute a legitimate element of agency actions to support the more integrated development of rural economies and to provide an alternative source of well-being for households that are likely to experience diminishing returns from their land-based activities (such as farming or forestry). (Slee *et al.*, in Stabler, 1997)

## 7

### The Social Dimension

The social dimension of tourism has been given less attention in the sustainable tourism debate, than the environmental impact of tourism. Perhaps this is because the socio-cultural impacts of tourism usually occur slowly over time in an unspectacular fashion. They are also largely invisible and intangible. Yet the social impact of tourism is usually permanent with little or no opportunity to reverse the change once it has taken place.

When the social impact of sustainable tourism has been considered the focus has normally been upon the 'host community'. There has been an almost paternalistic desire to 'protect' host communities from the excesses and negative effects of tourism. This issue is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 11.

However, the author believes that we need to take a broader view of the social aspects of sustainable tourism. Furthermore, we need to acknowledge that *all* the stakeholders in tourism have both rights and responsibilities that need to be recognized.

At the same time, it is also the author's contention that any discussion of such issues in tourism must also become more 'political', reflecting the overtly political nature of tourism planning and development.

Figure 7.1 shows a model of what the author considers to be the scope of the social dimension of sustainable tourism. These

issues are taken up in more detail in Part 3 of this book and in Chapter 24. They are all clearly inter-related, and indeed, interdependent. This is clearly a very simplistic model but it does illustrate the range of issues involved and the complex inter-relationship of the key stakeholders in the social aspects of sustainable tourism in relation to international tourist flows.

We can perhaps best sum up the social dimension of the drive to develop more sustainable forms of tourism by talking about implementing the four Es:

- **Equity**, ensuring that all stakeholders in tourism are treated fairly
- **Equal opportunities**, for both the employees involved in the tourism industry and the people who want to be tourists
- **Ethics**, in other words, the tourism industry being honest with tourists and ethical in its dealings with its suppliers, and destination governments being ethical towards their host population and tourists
- **Equal partners**, namely, tourists treating those who serve them as equal partners not as inferiors.

The author argues that sustainable tourism must be socially equitable for all the players and suggests that we need to develop a concept of 'fair trade' in tourism, which was

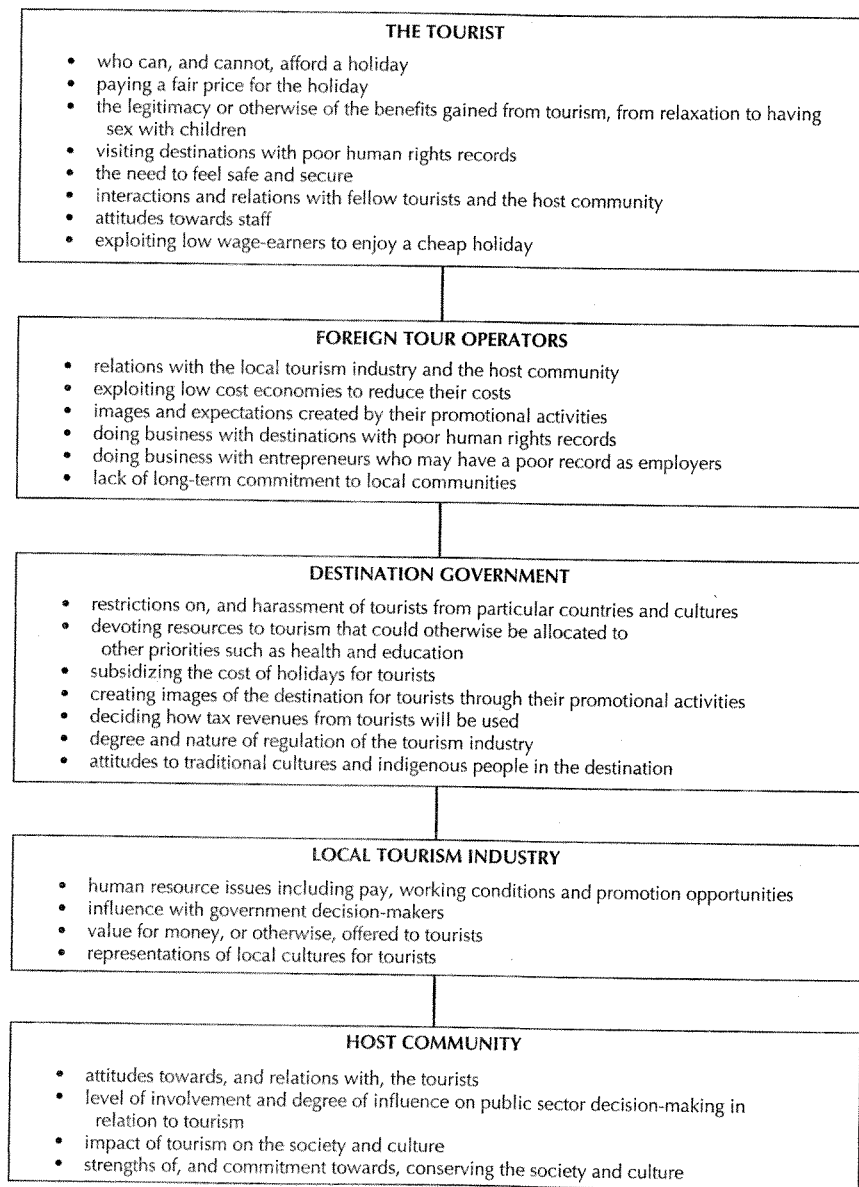


Fig. 7.1. The scope of the social dimension of sustainable tourism.

discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

In this chapter, we will explore several key issues in relation to the social dimension of sustainable tourism, most of which are discussed further in other chapters.

- relatively backward or
- politically at odds with the government.

### The Impact of Tourism on the Tourist

We should not under-estimate the impact of tourism on the tourists themselves. In the past three decades the growth in international holiday-making has changed many people's lives in the developed countries. It has:

- given them an opportunity to see new parts of the world and widen their horizons
- perhaps increased interest in the food of destinations like Greece and the USA
- led to many people buying second homes and retirement homes in tourist destinations so that they can spend part or all of the year, and even the rest of their lives, in a place they have discovered through tourism and which they prefer to their home country.

At the same time, tourism has provided a vital opportunity for people from industrialized, urbanized countries to:

- relax and unwind, as an antidote to the stresses of the modern way of life
- escape from humdrum or monotonous jobs
- get away from their everyday living environment which may be a small apartment in a polluted industrial town in a country where the sky is often grey.
- the strength and coherence of the local society and culture
- the nature of tourism in the resort
- the level of economic and social development of the host population in relation to the tourists
- the measures, if any, taken by the public sector in the destination to manage tourism in ways which minimize the sociocultural costs of tourism.

The major problems seem to occur in destinations in developing countries where the majority of tourists are from developed countries, and the government has little say in the development to tourism to local people. It is often even worse when people in the destination are living in areas where the local population is seen by central government as being either:

Holidays give many tourists something to look forward to in their everyday lives. They are a chance to be free from the constraints of daily life in one's own home community. Unfortunately, this can mean that tourists may be unwilling to act responsibly in line with the principles of sustainable tourism. They may see their vacation as their one chance of the year to behave irresponsibly. It may be difficult to convince them to curtail

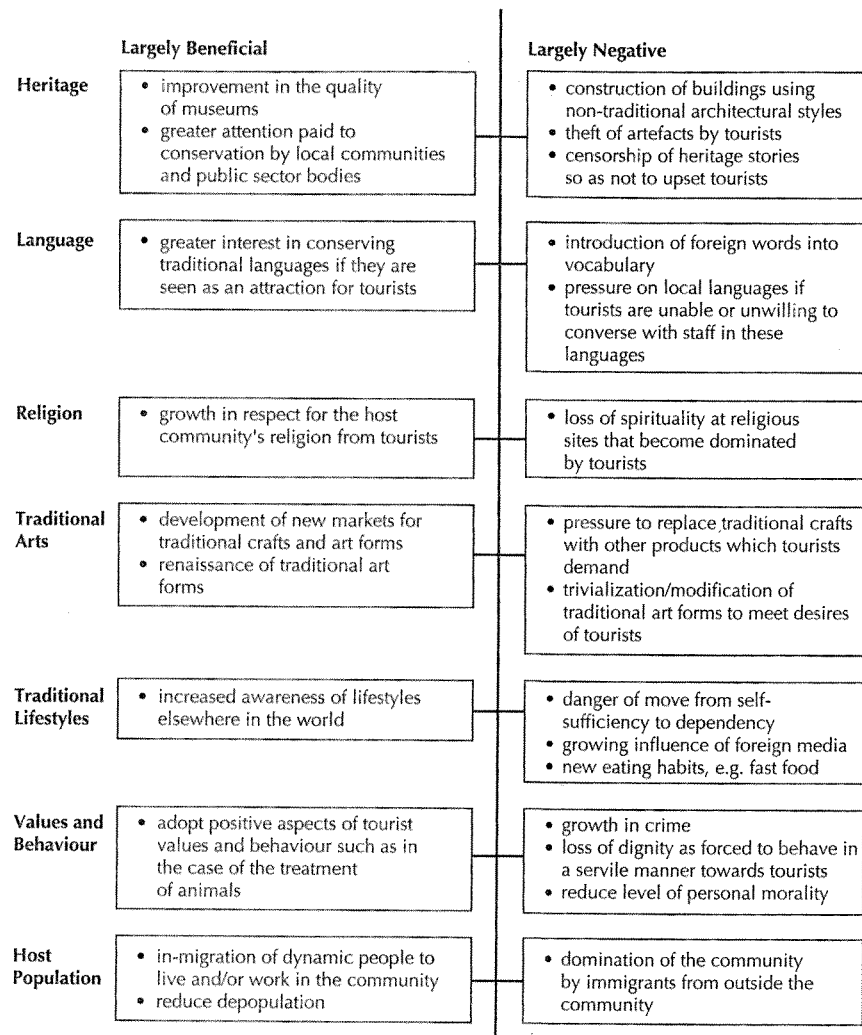


Fig. 7.2. The main potential impacts of tourism on host cultures and societies.

their natural desire for escapism, to behave sensibly for the sake of the rather abstract concept of sustainability.

The other issue in relation to the tourist in terms of the social dimension of sustainable tourism is the fact that not everyone is able to enjoy the benefits of tourism which are highlighted above. International tourism is still a luxury beyond the reach of many

people on the planet in Africa, South America and southern Asia. However, the number of participants in the tourism market is increasing, as travel opportunities become more available to the people of the relatively industrialized countries of South-East Asia.

This is creating one of the great dilemmas of sustainable tourism which is how we allow those who have not been tourists

before to enjoy the benefits of tourism that we have taken for granted for years, at a time when many destinations are already perceived as over-crowded. Similarly, we cannot deny these opportunities to be 'new' tourists but we must manage the implications of this development.

### Host-Guest Relationships – Key to Success or Disaster?

The key to the sociocultural impacts of tourism appears to be the relationship between hosts and guests. At this stage we will just deal with the key issues briefly as this subject is covered further in Chapters 11 and 24.

According to Mathieson and Wall, writing in 1982, the relationship between tourists and local people has five major features as follows:

- It is transitory or short term, in that each tourist is generally only around from between a day or two and a couple of weeks. By definition any relationships that develop tend to be superficial. A deeper relationship will only develop where the tourist returns to the same resort and accommodation frequently.
- Tourists are under pressure to enjoy a wide variety of experiences in a short time period which may make them very irritated if any delays occur. This fact may also lead to residents exploiting these time pressures under which tourists operate.
- Tourists are often segregated from local people and spend most of their time in and around tourism facilities with other tourists. They may rarely meet any local people other than those who are employed in the tourism industry.
- Host-tourist relations tend to lack spontaneity, they are often formalized and planned.
- Host-guest relations are often unequal and unbalanced in nature, in terms of both material inequality and differences in power. The tourist is in control and has the power to generally impose their

will on the hosts, who are seen as servers.

All of these characteristics can be seen as negative impacts in relation to the concept of sustainable tourism.

There is also a view that the quality of the relationship between hosts and guests worsens as tourism develops and the number of tourists rises. This idea is the basis of Doxey's influential Irridex model which is covered in detail elsewhere in this book.

We will now look in a little more depth at two important aspects of the relationship between hosts and guests, namely:

- the demonstration effect
- relative deprivation.

#### The Demonstration Effect

The demonstration effect is a broad concept which revolves around the idea that the presence of tourists and the exposure of local people to tourist life styles has an impact on the expectations and life styles of local people. In 1982, Mathieson and Wall stated that:

The demonstration effect can be advantageous if it encourages [local] people to adapt or work for things they lack. More commonly, it is detrimental and most authors indicate concern for the effects on foreign destinations of the industry and the impacts of tourists who parade symbols of their affluence to interested hosts. Alien commodities are rarely desired prior to their introduction into host communities and for most residents of destination areas in the developing world, such commodities remain painstakingly beyond reach. As a result discontent grows among the hosts. (Mathieson and Wall, 1982)

Therefore, particularly in developing countries, tourism can raise expectations that cannot be met for most residents which results in resentment of tourists.

However, there can also be problems when tourists misinterpret the life style of tourists, because they come from a different culture. For example, Rivers noted that:

... young Spaniards [became] convinced

that all female tourists were easy conquests. (Rivers, 1973 quoted by Mathieson and Wall, 1982)

Likewise, Cohen in 1971 reported that:

... fair-headed girls from Scandinavia were thought to be seeking sexual adventures in their travels and were sought by his study group of Arab boys. (Cohen, 1971 quoted in Mathieson and Wall, 1982)

The way in which the demonstration effect can undermine traditional values was highlighted by UNESCO in 1976 and reported by Mathieson and Wall in 1982, as follows:

The hosts quickly perceive the desire of tourists to spend money lavishly to gain experiences and acquire souvenirs of their stay... At the outset hosts may develop an inferiority complex which sets off a process of imitation. The weaknesses of the tourists are quickly perceived and are subsequently exploited. A dual pricing system often develops. (Mathieson and Wall, 1982)

However, we must also recognize that the demonstration effect works in both directions. Many tourists are deeply affected by what they see on holiday and this can result in them:

- becoming interested in particular cultures and wanting to learn more about them
- developing romanticized views of the local population that become stereotypical such as the idea of the 'simple' life in Ireland or the Greek Islands
- looking to some cultures such as the Hindus of India and the Buddhists of Thailand, for spiritual enlightenment that they cannot get in their own country.

As more and more residents of so-called developed countries become ever more discontented with their everyday lives, this aspect of the demonstration effect may grow. Tourists will want to imitate the life styles, or perceived life styles, of the host communities in destinations, to try to enrich their

own lives. This could either be a meaningful development in the quest for sustainable tourism, or it could prove to be superficial and may open the tourist up to further exploitation by the hosts.

### Relative Deprivation

One of the major elements in the resentment factor of some hosts is the concept of relative deprivation. This has been defined as:

Feelings of deprivation relative to a group with which an individual compares himself or herself... the theory holds that how people evaluate their circumstances depends upon whom they compare themselves to. (Giddens, 1993 quoted in Seaton, 1996)

In a very interesting study, Seaton has applied the concept of relative deprivation to different aspects of society. His conclusions are outlined in Table 7.1.

### Sex Tourism

This is perhaps the most controversial and condemned aspect of tourism. Traditionally sex tourism has meant men buying sex from female prostitutes; however, modern sex tourism is a more complex matter than this, as can be seen in Fig. 7.3.

In terms of sustainable tourism, where do we draw the line between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' sex tourism? All of these forms of sex tourism have disadvantages in relation to sustainable tourism, ranging from the risk of sexually transmitted diseases to the oppression and exploitation of powerless children.

To most people, sex with children is the most morally repugnant form of sex tourism yet control is difficult. Foreign governments have sometimes legislated to outlaw trips abroad by their citizens where the motivation is the desire to have sex with children. However, sometimes the demand for such experiences is domestic rather than just foreign.

Often, though, sex tourism is merely a new form of colonial-style exploitation.

**Table 7.1.** Intensity and effects of different kinds of relative deprivation (RD1, RD2, RD3) in four kinds of society. Source: Seaton, in Robinson *et al.* (1996).

Type of society	RD1	RD2	RD3
Developed socialist	Little or mild RD if tourists are seen as not much richer than hosts	Strong RD if state-provided privileges for tourists exist, since privilege conflicts with ideology of equality. Political dissent	Little RD if tourist employment is not seen as better paid than other kinds of employment
Developed non-socialist	No/little RD: Tourists not seen as very much richer, if at all, than hosts. Some crime against tourists by poor, subordinate groups within rich host countries	No RD because no special provision exists for use of tourists, denied to rest of population	No RD since tourism employment is not seen as better, but less well paid, than other employment
Less developed non-socialist	Strong RD because of highly visible contrast between wealth of tourists and hosts. Crime against tourists. RD not a political issue because system never promised equality. Some emulation since system encourages it	Medium RD. Special provision for tourists may be envied (e.g. luxury hotels) but seen as creation of market, rather than government. It may be fatalistically accepted as one of many inequalities deriving from economic 'realities', not political factors	Low/medium RD where tourism employment only seen as slightly better paid than other occupations, if at all
Less developed socialist	Strong RD because of highly visible contrast between wealth of tourists and hosts, but crime against tourists may be limited. Hostility to state. Little emulation	Acute RD. Special treatment of tourists seen as illegitimate in contrast to scarcity in host country. May provoke political dissent or even terrorism	Acute RD where tourism employment seen as better rewarded than other occupations. Political dissent. Attempted emulation in 'black' tourism economy

Tourists travel abroad to exploit the desperation of poor people in other countries to do things that are not available, or are illegal, in their own country.

In terms of sustainable tourism, sex tourism is a major challenge for such regions of the world as South-East Asia. We must, for instance, recognize that attacks on sex tourism will have major implications for the economies of these countries, for as Michael Hall has noted:

Tourism-oriented prostitution has become an integral part of the economic base in several regions of south-east Asia... Banning prostitution may be counter-

productive and may create even greater hardship for those who engage in it. (Hall, 1992)

We also need to finish by noting the growth of another variation in sex tourism, that is the rise of men from the West seeking brides amongst Asian women. According to the Philippine Women's Research Collective in 1985:

Promoted as meek, docile, submissive, home oriented and having tremendous capacities in bed, Filipino women have been sought by many Australian men through pen-pal links and mail-order bride

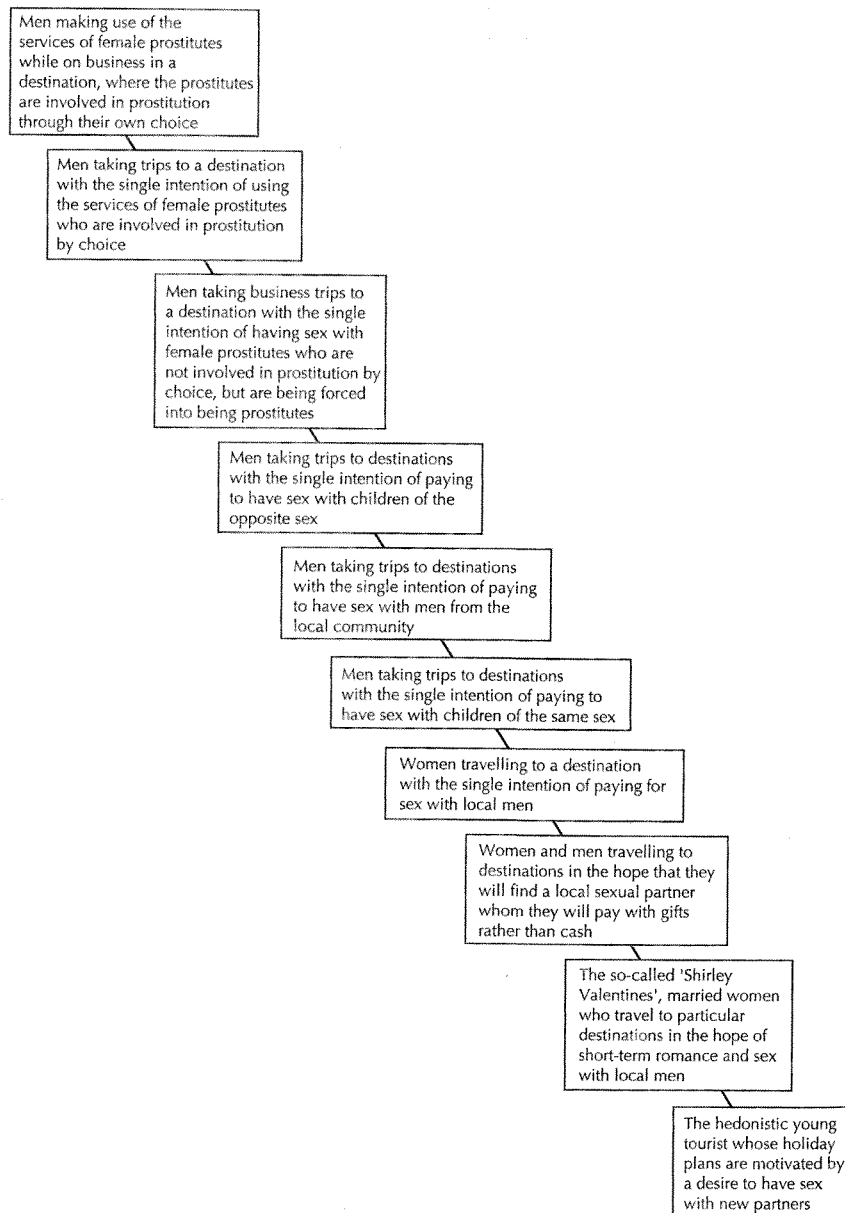


Fig. 7.3. The nature and scope of sex tourism.

business. (Philippine Women's Research Collective, 1985)

Often men travel to the Philippines to meet potential wives they have selected from brochures. This activity is also being seen in the former Soviet Union, and will be one of the future challenges, albeit a rather marginal one, of the social dimension of sustainable tourism.

### Animal Rights versus Human Rights

In Chapter 6 we looked at the issue of wildlife conservation and the impact it could have upon the rights of host communities. It is important for us to recognize that sometimes the protection of wildlife can have a massive social impact on indigenous peoples. Governments and developers who recognize the economic value of wildlife as a tourist asset are often willing to ride roughshod over local people who are seen to be of less value than the wildlife.

A special issue of *Tourism Concern* in 1997 gave two powerful examples of this phenomenon, in Myanmar and Tanzania.

#### Myanmar

In Myanmar (formerly Burma) the army has been clearing the Karen area, allegedly razing villages and killing people to help clear the way for the development of the largest nature reserve of its kind in the world. The government hopes it will attract millions of tourists, as it is meant to signal to the developed world the government's commitment to environmental conservation. When challenged on their apparent involvement in Myanmar, the Smithsonian Institute spokesperson stated that: 'We are there to do important conservation work. We may disagree with a regime but it is not our place to challenge it' (*The Observer*, 23 March 1997). A WWF spokesperson also stated that: 'Sometimes we have to deal with repulsive regimes. We have to weigh up whether the conservation benefit is worth the risk of being seen, directly or indirectly, to be supporting these regimes' (*The Observer*, 23

March 1997).

This separation of conservation and human rights appears, to the author, to be wholly unacceptable, in terms of sustainability. We cannot say host communities are all important, but ignore them if there is also wildlife in the area which outsiders say is very important, apparently more important than the rights of the indigenous population.

#### Tanzania

The Maasai people of Tanzania have been progressively moved off their traditional lands so that nature reserves could be developed, largely for the benefit of tourists. The irony is that the Maasai themselves lived alongside the animals and their activities and were no threat to the future of the wildlife. Few conservation bodies consulted the Maasai before making decisions that affected their lives. Officials often told the Maasai that their camps were unsightly to tourists while at the same time they were sanctioning the construction of unsuitably designed new lodges to accommodate tourists.

It is clearly not morally right to move powerless tribespeople off their lands to accommodate the demands of tourists who want to see wild animals. Perhaps the solution is for the Maasai to be permitted to become more actively involved in tourism so that they can gain more benefits from tourism as follows:

Some of the Maasai would like to organise walking safaris for tourists. These would not only allow them to see the wild animals in a new and more environmentally-friendly way, but might also lead the Maasai and the tourists to a better understanding of each other's point of view. (*Tourism Concern*, Spring 1997)

Conversely, perhaps we should think the unthinkable and suggest that the Maasai should come before animals and tourists, and we should

- remove 'natural reserve' status from the Maasai's traditional areas

- ask tourists to either not visit these areas or invite them to meet the Maasai rather than the animals.

### Towards More Socially Equitable Tourism

It is the author's contention that sustainable tourism means tourism which is socially equitable. Sustainable tourism cannot exist if we protect the environment but ignore the social needs of tourists and hosts. It can also not truly exist if the environment can only be protected by denying the human rights of groups of people. Sustainable tourism, therefore, means fairness which in tourism implies:

- all stakeholders in tourism being given fair treatment
- employees having equal opportunities irrespective of their age, sex, race or disability
- increasing the opportunities for everyone in the world who wants to take a holiday to be able to do so
- local people and staff being treated as equals rather than inferiors and servants in relation to the tourists
- managing tourism so the local people can maintain their dignity and sense of pride in themselves and their communities
- boycotting tourism in those countries where the local population is denied human rights
- the development of the concept of 'fair trade' in tourism, where tourists are required to pay a fair price for the holiday they take, and where the benefits of tourism are widely distributed around the host community.

These all require action by destination governments, tourists, the host community and the tourism industry. It also implies that host communities need more power to allow them to exert their rights in the tourism planning and development process.

### Conclusions

We have seen that the social dimension is crucial to sustainable tourism, particularly in relation to the sociocultural impacts of tourism and host-guest relations. The author has also suggested that we must recognize the beneficial effects of tourism upon the tourist and the rights of indigenous people as well as the rights of wildlife. It has been suggested that sustainable tourism means socially fair tourism and that this involves the four Es, namely: equity, equal opportunities, ethics and tourists and hosts being equal partners. There is a need to integrate the social dimension of tourism with the environmental and economic dimensions to allow us to take an holistic view of sustainable tourism.

### Discussion Points and Essay Questions

1. Evaluate the measures that can be taken by tourism planners to minimize the negative sociocultural effects, and maximize the positive sociocultural impacts, of tourism, on the host community.
2. Discuss the relationship between the 'demonstration effect' and sustainable tourism.
3. Discuss the implications of the nature and scope of sex tourism outlined in Fig. 7.3 for the development of more sustainable forms of tourism.

### Exercise

Conduct a survey of a small number of people who have taken a foreign holiday in the past few months, to ascertain the effect their holiday had on them. You should look at:

- why they took the holiday
- what they hoped to gain from the holiday
- if, and how, they felt better after their holiday
- to what extent, if at all, they are looking forward to their next holiday and how this anticipation helps to enhance their quality of life.

### Case Study: Southern Tunisia

In 1996, Bleasdale and Tapsell produced a study of the sociocultural aspects of tourism in the Tozeur region of southern Tunisia, an Islamic country. The research on which the study was based involved observing tourism over 5 years and interviews with local residents and public sector representatives.

The authors found that the national government in Tunisia had sought actively to develop tourism in the region since 1987 through a variety of means, including the building of a new airport. By 1994 the area was receiving 722,017 visitors with an average stay of 1.2 nights. The 62 local hotels had occupancy levels of around 35%.

The main results of the research indicated that tourism was having the following sociocultural impacts:

- Tourism had created around 1600 jobs between 1988 and 1994 in terms of direct employment and a further 4600 jobs through indirect employment. The higher paid jobs were filled by men while women were employed in lower paid jobs as cleaners and chambermaids. Unlike on the coast of Tunisia women were not found working on reception desks which may reflect stricter religious standards in the Tozeur area. Many of the industry jobs were in self-employment but the opportunities were almost inevitably taken by men.
- The authors found that the 'demonstration effect' was in evidence but largely only in relation to the people who had direct contact with tourists, who were mainly younger men. In the case of these young men, they adopted Western dress and habits.
- Many local people, particularly women, found the dress of tourists – shorts in particular – somewhat offensive.
- Local traders developed the ability to converse with tourists in a range of languages. They also seemed to view different nationalities of tourists as having different attitudes and spending potential.
- In general, restaurants were not willing to serve alcohol although the tourists' hotels did serve alcohol to tourists.
- Revenue from tourism has helped the town re-build its mosque that was damaged by flooding in 1988/1989. At the same time money from tourism had led to the restoration of many houses in the town.
- A visitor attraction was developed on the 'Arabian Nights' theme which was rather like a themed amusement park and was clearly aimed at tourists. It seems to have little to do with Tunisian culture and is therefore questionable in relation to the concept of sustainable tourism.
- While tourism has increased sales of locally produced crafts, the demand of tourists has led to a modification of traditional styles and designs. New colours have been added to woven products and camel designs have been added to the traditional symbolic, abstract designs.
- The authors found evidence of 'staged authenticity' in the Tozeur area. Hotels were offering shows featuring belly dancers and snake charmers as well as 'Bedouin feasts' and 'wedding feasts'. These events have little to do with Tunisian culture.
- The wealth accruing from tourism is giving young males more status in the community than they would have had traditionally. This is causing tension between older residents and the young men. Conversely, it appears that the role of young women had been little affected by tourism.

It will be interesting to see how these impacts may change over the next decade as tourism in the region develops.

### Case Study: Goa

Wilson, in 1997, produced a study that looked at lessons from Goa in relation to sustainable tourism, based on work carried out in 1996. He found that:

... international tourism in Goa has emerged as an unplanned *ad hoc* response to growing numbers of arrivals, and is at present undergoing rapid transformation into a major package holiday destination ... The state government has encouraged the expansion of up-market tourism as Goa acquires a reputation as the Riviera of the Indian sub-continent. There is a well-organized local anti-tourism lobby which argues that a more appropriate comparison is Benidorm. (Wilson in Stabler, 1997)

This lobby has also ensured that the negative aspects of tourism in Goa have been well publicized. According to critics, tourism in Goa has:

- led to hotels being given preference over local residents for scarce water resources
- restricted access to beaches for local people
- resulted in villagers being intimidated into leaving their homes by developers
- involved some low-cost budget travelling backpackers holding moonlight parties with drugs
- led to a growth of prostitution and paedophile activity
- corrupted local values.

However, there is a feeling that this criticism has both:

exaggerated these problems whilst ignoring other issues, such as government and police corruption, and the impact of domestic tourism, which has been estimated to account for 90% of the tourists. (Wilson in Stabler, 1997)

This raises the important point that tourists are often easy targets to blame for unpopular social change which is not wholly due to the tourist.

Tourism has led to several conflicts within the community in Goa, including:

- A dispute between local taxi drivers and coaches hired by the tour operators over business which had been traditionally taken by taxis but is increasingly being serviced by the coaches such as excursions and airport transfers. The coaches were guaranteed by the government that their rights to this business would not be removed which has left the large – too large – number of taxis with less business.
- Conflict between the government and enterprises over the 'shacks' which offer food and drink to tourists. The former wants to get rid of the latter and has even passed legislation to try to have them removed.

Goa offers a good example of the different problems associated with two distinctly different types of tourism, low-budget backpackers and upmarket hotel-based tourism. Any attempts by the government to reduce the former in favour of the latter will have serious consequences for those villages which rely on the budget tourist.

Wilson also draws attention to the importance of local perceptions of the value of tourism to their country when we are considering the impacts of tourism in local culture and societies:

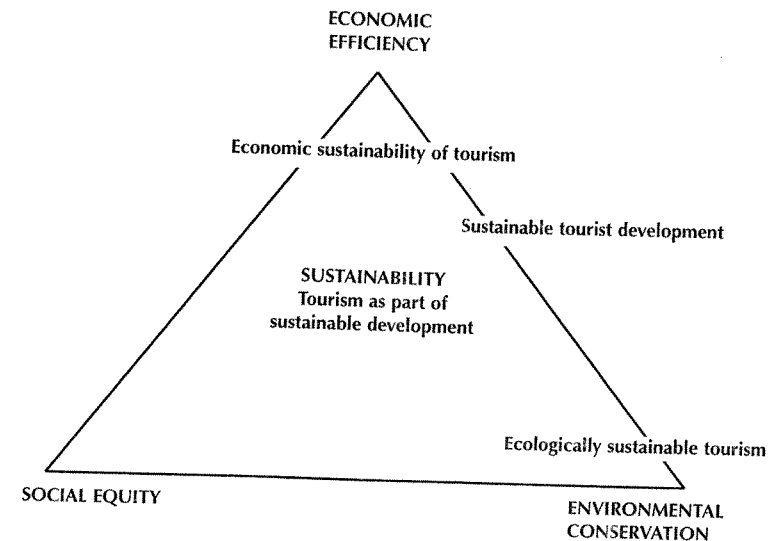
For tourism to be sustainable in the social and cultural sense, it must be wanted by the local inhabitants and it must be perceived as benefiting the majority of local people, not just an elite handful. It must be something which provides employment for the skilled as well as the unskilled and which generates opportunities for social and economic advancement. The jobs up-market tourism provides in Goa are mainly for menial low-paid jobs, such as waiters, room boys and ground staff, which do not allow local people to participate as petty entrepreneurs, establish their own competitive businesses and profit directly from the tourist dollar. Unlike in the Seychelles, up-market tourism in Goa is not wanted by many local people, not just the environmentalists, and this is another reason why continued large scale expansion of this sector would be unsuitable. (Wilson in Stabler, 1997)

The work of Wilson suggests that the conventional view that up-market tourism is more beneficial than low-spending tourism may well be wrong.

## Conclusions to Part Two

In Part Two, we have seen that tourism has environmental, economic and social impacts. Sustainable tourism is about maximizing the impacts which are positive and minimizing the negative ones.

On balance, it appears that the environmental impacts are negative, the economic effects positive, and the social impacts a combination of both. However, it is also important to recognize that there are clear links between the three aspects of tourism – the environmental, economic, and social dimensions – and these are illustrated below.



# 29

## Cultural Tourism

To many commentators, cultural tourism and sustainable tourism are seen as virtually synonymous. The former is seen as sensitive, soft 'intelligent' tourism that is complementary to the concept of sustainable tourism. However, there are several aspects to cultural tourism which mean it may well not be a sustainable activity in its own right, and may be incompatible with the principles of sustainable tourism.

Firstly, however, we must define what we mean by cultural tourism. Figure 29.1 illustrates the main types of cultural tourism resources. While not comprehensive, it is clear from Fig. 29.1 that the different types of cultural tourism resources are inter-related; for example, in the arts where resources can be a theatre, or a concert that takes place within it. Likewise, themed food trails will usually include visits to working food factories and food shops.

Cultural tourism is a multi-faceted subject, as we can see from Fig. 29.2.

There is clearly a cultural tourism system which is shown in Fig. 29.3. Within this system, the public, private and voluntary sectors all have a role to play. The public sector manages many cultural resources and promotes them through destination marketing. The private sector, as well as managing some cultural tourism resources, also makes up the vast majority of the intermediaries and suppliers of support services. The contribution of the voluntary sector is generally

seen in the management of certain types of cultural tourism resources, such as historic buildings and festivals.

Finally, it is interesting to note how cultural tourism varies between the different geographical areas. Urban areas are the heartlands of cultural tourism, with a focus on large-scale physical attractions, and the performing arts. In coastal areas, it is often the 'artificial' culture of established seaside resorts which is the attraction, while in rural and mountainous areas, cultural tourism focuses on observing traditional life styles.

### Threats to the Future of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism has grown dramatically around the world in recent decades, but its future is not guaranteed for it faces threats.

#### Pressures on Cultural Diversity

Firstly, it is threatened by pressures on cultural diversity due to the increasing homogenization of culture worldwide resulting from the effects of global popular cultures such as television, music and films. This reduction in cultural diversity may reduce the motivation of people to travel to experience other cultures. This process of homogenization has also been facilitated in other ways, notably:

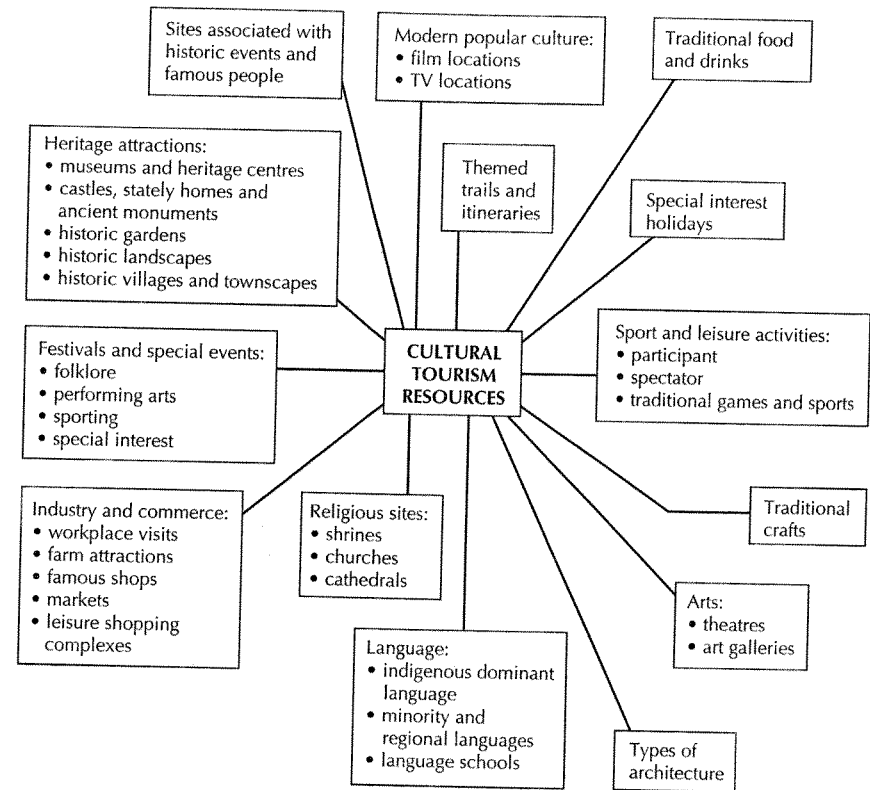


Fig. 29.1. Cultural tourism resources.

- the actions of major multinational corporations, who in order to grow must sell their products to consumers in other countries. It is easier to sell a standardized product than to customize it for each country. These organizations therefore devote much of their marketing budget to developing 'Euro-markets' so that people in Mannheim, Manchester and Malmo may well all be eating the same brands of cereal for breakfast and frozen pizza for dinner! This process threatens national, regional and local industries
- the failure of some governments to value and protect traditional cultures within their own countries. For example, the

UK government's failure to protect its traditional foods, so that while producers such as Roquefort cheese makers and Burgundy wine growers enjoy protection under French law, the label Cheddar is seen on cheeses purchased from Canada to New Zealand

- in some countries, regional and minority cultures have been suppressed rather than encouraged. Members of cultural minorities are encouraged to conform to the culture of the majority. Education systems have been used widely for the task, particularly in relation to minority languages. This has occurred in both western and eastern Europe.

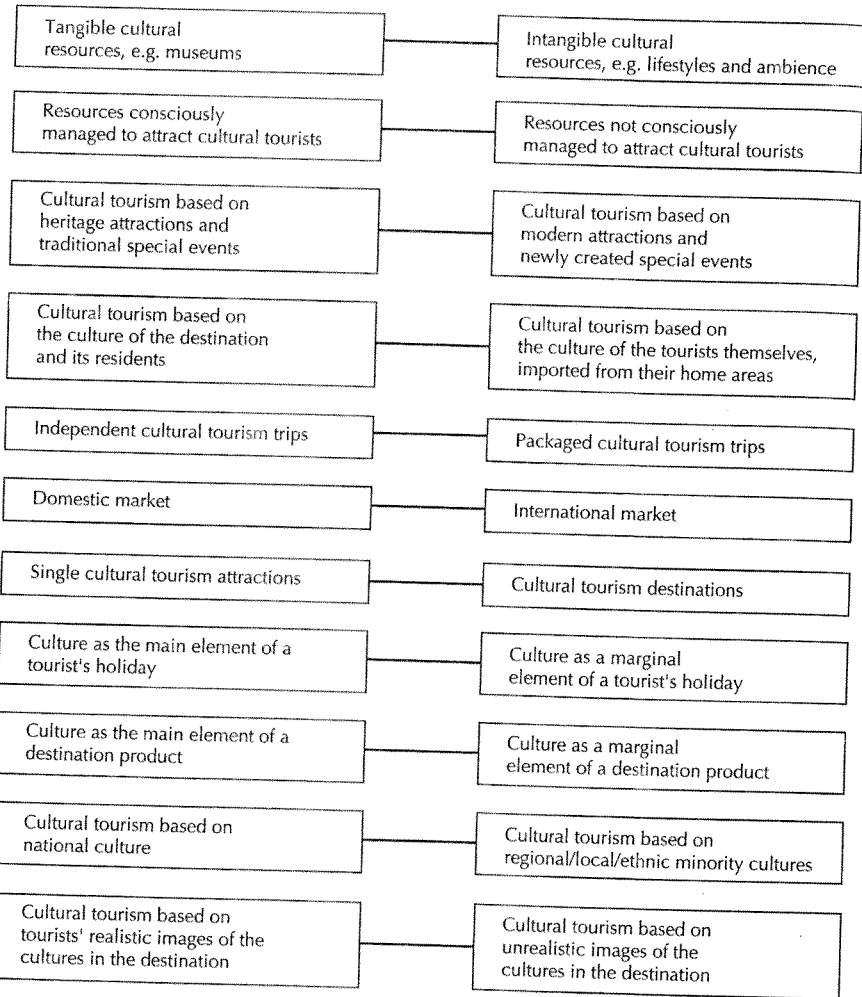


Fig. 29.2. Different aspects of cultural tourism.

*Changes in Education*

While it is generally agreed that education levels are rising across Europe, with more people progressing to higher and further education, the emphasis in education has moved generally towards the vocational and away from the purely academic. Children and students across many European countries are learning more about business and computers and less about the arts and his-

tory. Thus, it could be argued that the general citizen's knowledge of 'culture' as a subject may actually be falling.

*Preserving Old Cultures, not Encouraging New Cultures*

Much of the world at the moment is seeing widespread nostalgia in all aspects of its cultural life, for a variety of reasons. The manifestations of this nostalgia include:

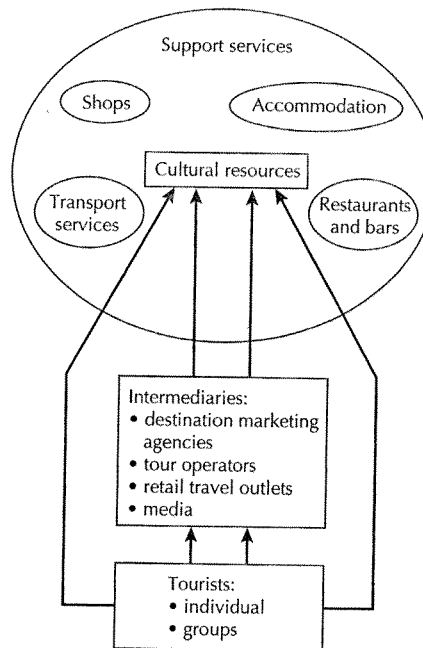


Fig. 29.3. The cultural tourism system.

- the use of old architectural styles in new housing developments in the UK
- the resurgence of traditional crafts in France and Norway
- the revival of Christianity in Russia.

Perhaps for the first time in our history, we are consciously trying to preserve or bring back old cultures and values. At its worst, this can impede the 'natural' evolution of new cultures.

*Social Change*

The process of social change, particularly in rural areas through de-population, is also a threat to culture within Europe. In some regions there may be no indigenous culture left as the original population disappears, to be replaced by a second home and seasonal holiday culture. This is true, for example, of parts of the west of Ireland, the Massif Central in France and large swathes of southern Europe.

**Pressures on the Future of Cultural Tourism**  
There are also the threats to the future of the cultural tourism 'industry'.

*Competition from Other Leisure Activities*

The development of new leisure products, and the impact of technological innovations such as virtual reality, are providing competition for cultural tourism, particularly in the important day trip market. In the case of virtual reality, if it continues to develop it may lead, to some extent, to the substitution of Virtual for real cultural tourism experiences. Why go to the Pyramids with the problems of over-booked internal flights, the heat and stomach upsets, when you can enjoy the virtual experience from your local high street or your own home? Likewise, why go to Milan for a Pavarotti concert, when you can pretend to be Pavarotti in your own living room? Clearly this is some way off in the future but it is perhaps nearer than we think. It may be that those who put forward such scenarios are ignoring the social dimension to travel and the status which is gained from visiting the real site or event.

*The Danger of Cultural Tourism Overload*

It now appears that every country, region, city and village is trying to attract cultural tourists. Vast sums of money are spent every year on building new theatres and museums, devising new cultural tourism itineraries, and organizing special events. One is left wondering how long this rapid growth can continue before a state of saturation is reached. This could result in under-use and obsolete infrastructure which could tarnish the reputation of cultural tourism, such as we have seen happen in the UK seaside resorts.

*Product Standardization*

The growth of cultural tourism products has been based largely on copying those which have succeeded elsewhere. This has resulted in a certain standardization of the product. Heritage interpretation must be a classic example of this, with a proliferation of live first-person interpretation and inter-

active computer programs. In an industry where customers seem to be always looking for novel products, this standardization could, in the longer term, be a threat.

#### *Poor Quality*

While much cultural tourism is of a high standard, there is sometimes a quality problem, where entrepreneurs have sought to gain short-term benefits from exploiting the market. This can be seen in terms of poorly trained guides at historic monuments, for instance. On a wider scale, rapid development of cultural tourism can lead to overcrowding and unmanaged growth. In this situation, the quality of the visitor's experience may be poor, so that they will not return nor will they recommend a visit to their friends and relatives.

#### *Safety and Security*

Cultural tourism, like all forms of tourism, only survives if tourists feel safe and secure. This is a problem for cultural tourism as many destinations are large cities with serious crime problems. Furthermore, cultural tourists, who tend to be relatively affluent, are a particularly attractive target for criminals. At the same time, terrorists are increasingly realizing that the best way to undermine a government is to damage its tourism industry. In many countries, this means attacking cultural tourism attractions and cultural tourists, as we have seen in Egypt. If this develops further, it could be a threat to cultural tourism across the world.

#### *Over-commercialization*

The commodification of culture is being widely used to bring extra income to public, private and voluntary organizations. If it goes too far, however, there may be a consumer backlash against what could be seen as over-exploitation. This may be stimulated so much by the cultural attractions themselves, but by the plethora of catering and merchandising operations that often accompany them.

### **The Non-sustainable Dimension of Cultural Tourism**

As well as the threats to cultural tourism, there are also aspects of cultural tourism which are not compatible with the principles of sustainable tourism.

#### *The Over-use of Sites and Places*

This is a particular problem with older forms of cultural tourism such as heritage tourism, but it can also be seen in newer forms such as leisure shopping. This over-use can result in both damage to buildings and landscapes and a poor experience for visitors. The problem can be caused by too many visitors in total, too high a proportion of consumers visiting at the same time or the wrong kind of visitors whose behaviour is not appropriate.

All of these are management problems, but often their solution may be beyond the skill or financial resources of those who own the cultural tourism resources in question.

#### *Lack of Local Control*

The stimulus and funding for the development of cultural tourism in any location often comes from outside the local area. Examples of this include:

- government economic development agencies developing existing or new facilities or special events
- schemes by urban regeneration bodies to convert derelict industrial buildings into cultural attractions
- national archaeological trusts opening up archaeological sites to visitors
- foreign tour operators creating cultural tourism packages to a destination.

In most cases, local people, and even local government, may have little say in the process, which is clearly at odds with the concept of sustainable tourism. It is perhaps especially a problem in the heritage field, where the story of a community is told to tourists by outside professionals rather than by local people. In any event, the lack of local control can often lead to situations where developments take place which are

inappropriate in their location, due to the lack of knowledge of the outside agencies. Furthermore, it can lead to some or most of the benefits of the development being exported from the local area.

#### *Trivialization or Loss of Authenticity*

The needs of the tourism industry, and the tastes of tourists, can lead to the trivializing of culture and a loss of authenticity. Traditional dances are shortened to meet the schedules of tour groups and traditional cuisine is internationalized to make it acceptable to the palates of visitors. For instance, the regionally diverse richness of Italian cuisine too easily becomes bland pasta dishes and the vast range of Spanish traditional dishes is represented often solely by paella. Likewise, folk songs are presented purely as musical entertainment rather than as part of the jigsaw of a complex traditional culture.

#### *Fossilization of Cultures*

The tourism industry and tourists have a vested interest in fossilizing cultures which are picturesque or interesting because of their novelty value, or the contrast with the tourists' own culture. Brochures are full of phrases like 'unchanged' and 'timeless'. Yet culture is always changing and it is probably impossible and undesirable to attempt to conserve cultures. It seems strange to speak emotionally and nostalgically of the need to conserve a traditional culture, which is already being rejected by local young people, keen to adopt the culture of the tourists' own country. There is a danger that our current interest in conserving the cultures of yesterday may ensure that the new cultures of tomorrow are rather artificial or lacking in dynamism.

#### *Controversial and Morally Difficult Tourism*

Most cultural tourism tends to focus on non-controversial subjects. Too often it chooses to ignore controversial or morally difficult issues such as the role of immigrant communities and the repression of minorities. This denies the human rights of these communities to have their story told, fairly.

The challenge is, therefore, to find ways of making cultural tourism more sustainable in itself, and be more able to contribute towards the development of sustainable tourism in general. It is to that challenge that we now turn our attention.

### **Potential Approaches to Developing More Sustainable Cultural Tourism**

There are many different potential approaches to the development of more sustainable forms of cultural tourism, of which we can only discuss a few here.

#### *De-marketing*

We need to de-market less sustainable forms of cultural tourism, which can mean de-marketing places, times and even people. Two examples may illustrate this point, in relation to places and times:

- the de-marketing of places such as cathedrals where the sheer volume of numbers can destroy the sense of place or the spirituality of the building
- discouraging tourists from visiting traditional events on specific days of the year when locals celebrating a festival as part of their religious observance may be swamped by tourists, insensitive to the religious significance of the festival.

However, while increasingly fashionable the concept of de-marketing does have its problems. Who decides when it should be practised and how it will be implemented? There are also doubts about how feasible de-marketing is in cultural tourism, where tourists are determined to visit cultural attractions which bestow status on visitors. Most of these attractions are so famous that it is very difficult to remove the desire to visit them or persuade tourists to 'forget' about them. Perhaps the most controversial area of de-marketing is the de-marketing of people. Until now, this concept has usually been related to so-called 'lager-louts', but it could theoretically be applied to cultural tourists. It could be said that only those who really understand the arts or history, for

example, should be allowed to visit those places which are currently over-used. Or high prices might be used to discourage less well-off tourists in destinations which want to maximize the economic benefits of cultural tourism. These are clearly very sensitive issues, both morally and politically.

#### Encouraging Local Initiatives

Local control is a key element of sustainable tourism ideology, so it is clear that locally generated initiatives should be applauded. An excellent example of a sustainable cultural tourism project is La Cinéscénie at the Ecomusée de la Vendée at Puy-du-Fou, in France. La Cinéscénie is a live interpretation of scenes from the history of the region. It is wholly performed by local volunteers in the grounds of an old chateau, and it is managed purely by the local community.

The income from the event is used to help protect the area's heritage, but also to support today's community and its cultural activities. In recent years, profits have been used to fund an archaeology club, set up a research centre concerning local traditions, support a school of popular dance, expand the Ecomusée, and finance a local radio station.

#### Innovative Public Sector Projects

The Futuroscope theme park in western France is an excellent example of a public sector project that has forwarded the cause of sustainable cultural tourism, and has helped promote the cause of modern popular culture. Futuroscope is a theme park dedicated to moving images, but it is also home to a high technology industrial complex and a range of educational institutions. It was developed by the local authority, the Conseil Général de la Vienne, and opened in 1977. Since then visitor numbers have grown from 220,000 to more than 2,000,000 per annum.

Futuroscope contributes to the goal of sustainable cultural tourism in several ways. It promotes the film, television, video and multi-media industries which are becoming a crucial element of cultural tourism, both as a product and as a means of

communicating with visitors. Furthermore, it provides spin-off benefits for the region as a result of the money spent by tourists visiting the theme park. Finally, visitors to the theme park are tending to spend several days in the area, during which they are visiting other cultural attractions, such as the Romanesque churches of the Poitou, and enjoying the artisan food products of the region.

#### Celebrating Emerging Cultures

Future cultural tourism will depend on us recognizing and promoting emerging modern cultures, rather than simply continuing to promote long-established cultural resources which have become the icons of modern tourism. This may mean being willing to embrace low-brow popular culture rather than just being concerned with high-brow cultural attractions and activities. This change of attitude should attract new younger people into cultural tourism as consumers, which in itself helps ensure the long-term sustainability of cultural tourism, rather than simply relying on older people. This change of attitude is illustrated by several examples relating to different types of destination in Table 29.1. The table illustrates another apparent development in cultural tourism, namely the growing emphasis on popular culture rather than physical cultural facilities.

#### Maximizing Local Benefits

This means consciously setting out to maximize the economic, social and environmental benefits of cultural tourism for the host community. Farm and gastronomic tourism in France are a good example of this phenomenon. In recent years, the public sector and the food industry have worked together to promote gastronomy in France in a way which maximizes the benefits for the local community, including:

- developing the 'fermes-auberges' scheme which allows farmers to add to their income by providing meals for tourists, based on locally produced foodstuffs

**Table 29.1.** Established cultural tourism attractions and modern emerging cultural tourism attractions, in selected destinations. Source: Swarbrooke (1996).

Destination	Established cultural tourism attractions	Modern, emerging cultural tourism attractions
Leeds and Bradford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victorian museums and art galleries</li> <li>• Parks</li> <li>• Industrial heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic cuisine such as Asian food in Bradford</li> <li>• New museums, e.g. Royal Armouries, in Leeds</li> </ul>
Montpellier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic buildings</li> <li>• Long-established museums, e.g. the Fabre art museum</li> <li>• Opera House</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern architecture, e.g. the Antigone quarter</li> <li>• Ethnic minority influences, e.g. African music and cuisine</li> </ul>
Dublin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following in the footsteps of great writers</li> <li>• Great museums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good leisure shopping opportunities</li> <li>• Modern Irish music</li> </ul>
Prague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restored buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lively arts scene</li> </ul>
St Petersburg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opera and ballet company performances</li> <li>• Great art museums such as the Hermitage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching cultural changes resulting from political change in Russia</li> </ul>

- creating themed trails linking food and drink producers and retailers such as the wine routes of Burgundy and the cheese routes of Normandy. These schemes help producers sell directly to customers without having to rely on intermediaries. They thus retain a higher proportion of the price the customer pays.
- The need to improve quality to ensure that cultural tourists will make repeat visits and make positive recommendations to friends and relatives.
- Attempting, wherever possible, to link past, present and future on a continuum, rather than simply focusing on the past. For example, in the industrial heritage field this might mean developing linkages between industrial heritage museums, factory or workplace visits, and economic development and inward-investment policies.
- Educating tourists, professionals and local residents about cultural tourism and the attitudes and needs of the other stakeholders in cultural tourism.
- Tackling sensitive and controversial issues openly rather than seeking to ignore them, whether they be ethnic or religious conflicts or traditions like hunting.
- Democratizing cultural tourism so that more and more people take an interest in it, rather than maintaining it as a rather elitist activity.

#### Ensuring Tourists Pay a Fair Price

It is important to ensure that tourists receive value for money, but it is also vital that tourists pay the full price of the product they enjoy. Otherwise cultural tourism cannot be sustainable, for either local people will become aggrieved at having to subsidize the visitors or insufficient income will be generated to support the cultural resources adequately. This may be a particular issue in the less affluent countries of Europe which have a wealth of cultural attractions, such as Greece and the countries of Eastern Europe, for example.

There are a number of other approaches which are worthy of mention, including:

**Table 29.2.** Sustainable cultural tourism: prerequisites and outcomes. Source: Swarbrooke (1996).

	Tourists	Destination	Host community	Tourism industry	Government	Cultural industries
<i>Pre-requisites</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Concern</li> <li>• Willingness to modify behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate infrastructure</li> <li>• Appropriate management structure and financial resources to manage initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong sense of identity and coherence</li> <li>• General agreement on aims and objectives</li> <li>• Well developed dynamic culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of problems</li> <li>• Viable businesses</li> <li>• Willingness to engage in debate and contribute to initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of problems</li> <li>• Clear objectives for tourism</li> <li>• Willingness to fund initiatives</li> <li>• Mechanisms for managing initiatives</li> <li>• Willingness to legislate to prevent major problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dynamic</li> <li>• Recognition of wider implications of cultural activities including their role in tourism</li> </ul>
<i>Outcomes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More interaction with hosts</li> <li>• Greater respect for local people, places, and traditions</li> <li>• Consciously seeking to behave in ways which maximize benefits for local people, e.g. buying goods at locally owned shops</li> <li>• Enhanced quality of visitor experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced negative environmental impacts caused by over-use of sites and infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger share of economic and social benefits of cultural tourism than previously</li> <li>• Satisfaction with level and type of tourism</li> <li>• Tourism aiding rather than threatening the development of local culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More interaction with local community in destination</li> <li>• Long term commitment to destination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing partnerships with host communities, tourism industry, cultural industries and tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism contributing more to the development of cultural facilities and activities</li> </ul>

Table 29.2 outlines some key prerequisites and projected outcomes in relation to the development of more sustainable forms of tourism.

### Conclusions

Cultural tourism and sustainable tourism are often perceived as being inherently compatible entities. Yet we have seen in this chapter that:

- it is far from certain that the future of cultural tourism can be guaranteed in the face of a range of threats
- cultural tourism has elements which conflict with the guiding principles of sustainable tourism.

However, we have also outlined some ways in which cultural tourism can be made more sustainable and can make a more positive contribution towards sustainable tourism.

### Discussion Points and Essay Questions

1. Discuss the obstacles which make it difficult to achieve the outcomes identified in Table 29.2.
2. Evaluate the contention that we are approaching the point of 'cultural tourism overload'.
3. Discuss the suggestion that cultural tourism and sustainable tourism are compatible forms of tourism.

### Exercise

Obtain the brochure of a tour operator which specializes in cultural tourism holidays. Select one of the holidays on offer and evaluate the extent to which it is in line with the principles of sustainable tourism. Suggest how it might be modified to make it more sustainable.

### Case Study: Hunting, Cultural Tourism and Sustainability

In the chapter we saw that there are many controversial and morally difficult aspects in the field of cultural tourism. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in relation to hunting.

Hunting takes many forms, including:

- the practice of shooting migrating birds in southern European countries
- fox and other hunting in the UK
- sea-angling and coarse fishing worldwide.

In the latter case, fishing holidays are a rapidly growing type of special interest tourism product.

All of these activities are deeply rooted in their respective cultures. It could easily be argued that any tourist indulging in them could simply be trying to immerse themselves in an authentic local cultural experience. Yet in most circumstances, such action would bring condemnation from those who promote the concept of sustainable tourism.

Hunting is usually attacked on the grounds that:

- it has a negative impact on the environment by reducing the wildlife
- it is not socially acceptable to many tourists who come from different cultures.

However, in other circumstances the proponents of cultural tourism would simply argue that tourists should respect local cultures. It could thus be argued that hunting should be accepted as one particular form of cultural tourism, providing that it is not illegal in the country concerned.

Certainly, hunting is associated with distinct subcultures which have their own cultural traditions such as traditional songs and, in many countries, hunting has shaped the features of the landscape we see today. It is also a source of employment and revenue for local people, particularly native people such as the Sami of Lapland.

It is therefore clear that one could argue that hunting is comparable with some aspects of the concept of sustainable tourism while conflicting with others.

### Case Study: the Commodification of Culture in Ireland

Ireland undoubtedly has a rich cultural heritage ranging from its native language and the prehistoric sites through its great castles to the world famous writers of the last few centuries.

The country has clearly used this heritage to help boost its tourist industry. Irish culture, both past and present, is a major attraction for tourists today. However, the way in which the country's heritage is 'sold' to tourists raises questions as to how far this 'commodification' of heritage should go. Some heritage products appear to be in danger of trivializing Irish history, such as the 'medieval banquets' and sentimental entertainments based on Irish folklore.

At the same time, many new 'heritage centres' have been developed, usually with European Union financial assistance. It has to be said that some of these centres are very 'thin' in terms of both the quantity and the quality of their exhibitions. Visitor numbers for many of these heritage centres also appear to be very modest, particularly in relation to the value of capital investment involved in their development.

The heritage-entertainment sector in Ireland received a jolt in the mid-1990s when the 'Celtworld' theme park ceased trading.

Conversely, some of the new centres appear to be attempting to provide an authentic view of local history in an entertaining manner. An example of this phenomenon is the 'Kerry the Kingdom' exhibition in Tralee. In a few cases, such as the Mizen Head Vision project, community-led institutions have helped develop cultural tourism products, which are more in keeping with the concept of sustainable tourism. A case study on this project is included elsewhere in this book.

On a very positive note, Ireland has been successful in promoting its modern culture as a tourist attraction rather than simply relying on its cultural heritage. Films such as *The Commitments* have been exploited as a cultural attraction, as has the *Riverdance* phenomenon and the current film and rock music scene.

The designation of Dublin as one of the earliest official 'European Cities of Culture' and the development of the Temple Bar quarter have helped establish the city as a major cultural tourism destination.

Ireland appears well placed to develop a balanced form of sustainable cultural tourism if it can control the excesses of its heritage industry and continue to encourage new dynamic cultural attractions.

# 30

## Ecotourism

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the sustainable tourism debate is the concept of 'ecotourism'. Some writers use the two terms interchangeably while others see the two phenomena as diametrically opposed. In this chapter, we will look at the pros and cons of ecotourism in relation to the idea of sustainable tourism, and see how the two might be brought closer together. However, firstly we must begin by defining 'ecotourism'.

### The Definition of Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a term which is widely used today, but is rarely defined. It is often used interchangeably with other terms such as soft tourism, alternative tourism, responsible tourism and nature tourism.

In simple terms, ecotourism simply means that the main motivation for travel is the desire to view ecosystems in their natural state, both in terms of wildlife and the indigenous population. However, ecotourism is often taken to be more than this with its proponents claiming that it is also concerned with a desire to see the ecosystems conserved and the lives of local people improved through the effects of tourism.

Even without this latter aspect, many people would see ecotourism and sustainable tourism as being closely related, as ecotourism is seen to be:

- inherently small scale
- more active than most other forms of tourism
- less reliant on the existence of sophisticated tourism infrastructure
- undertaken by 'enlightened' well-educated tourists who are aware of the issues of sustainability, and are keen to learn more about the issues
- less exploitative of local cultures and nature than 'traditional' forms of tourism.

However, as we will see later in this chapter, there is nothing inherently sustainable about ecotourism.

It is also interesting to note that most ecotourism appears to involve travelling to destinations in developing countries. Here there is a chance to see wildlife which is different to that in the tourist's own country, and indigenous people who may appear 'exotic', 'picturesque' or even 'primitive' to the tourist.

One of the problems of defining ecotourism is that it varies depending on who you are, as we will see later in the chapter. To the tourist, ecotourism is a fashionable, high status type of holiday that is often equated with quality tourism. For industry, ecotourism is a product which offers attractive profit margins and has a large and growing market. Meanwhile, to newly emerging destinations, ecotourism is high yield, low

volume tourism that allows them to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

The advantages of ecotourism for tourism organizations and destinations can, as we will see later, lead to the development of forms of 'alleged' ecotourism which are large-scale, exploitative and, in short, the opposite of the principles of ecotourism outlined earlier. This is the source of much of the confusion that surrounds ecotourism, namely, the gap between theory and practice, tourists' views and the supply side of tourism.

### The Ecotourism Market

As there is no clear definition of ecotourism, it is virtually impossible to produce statistics on the size of the ecotourism market. In 1992, Filion tried to quantify the market for ecotourism. Filion stated that between 40 and 60% of all international tourist trips were 'nature tourists', in other words, tourists using a destination to experience and enjoy nature. Filion also talked about wildlife tourists who were those people travelling to a destination specifically to view wildlife, and estimated that this group represented between 20 and 40% of all global tourism trips. In other words around half of the natural tourists were more specialist wildlife tourists. The figures are very vague but there are more figures that illustrate the size of the market, perhaps more realistically.

The United States Travel Department Center, in 1992, estimated that some 8 million ecotourism trips took place that year. Some 35 million Americans claimed they would be taking such a trip within the next 3 years. A 1994 survey reported by Wight also indicated that 77% of North American travellers had already taken a holiday that could be described largely as ecotourism in the broadest sense of the term.

Ecotourism is so vague a term that we perhaps should take a very broad view of what it means. With this in mind we can perhaps say there are different forms of ecotourists. The author has attempted to illustrate this in Fig. 30.1.

When looking at the motivations of ecotourists, Wight has also noted the overlap between culture tourists, adventure tourists and nature tourists. She has also looked at the difference between specialist and general tourists. Her model of ecotourism motivations is illustrated in Fig. 30.2. It is clear from this model that such 'ecotourists' are not very concerned about the issue of sustainability.

### The Case for Ecotourism

In spite of the reservations expressed by some authors, there is no doubt that there are aspects that are positive about ecotourism in relation to sustainable tourism. It:

- provides economic benefits for local people and can provide revenue for conservation projects
- tends to be quite small scale and carefully managed
- involves tourists who are well aware of the potential dangers of tourism and at least should behave more sensitively than many other tourists
- raises awareness of issues amongst the tourists because of their first-hand experience of the issues in the field. These tourists may then become involved in active campaigning on these issues when they come home. It is also a form of tourism which is very popular with tourists.

Nevertheless there are aspects of tourism which we need to seriously consider, and which may make it seem much less compatible with the concept of sustainable tourism, as we shall now see.

### The Case against Ecotourism

The author believes that, in spite of the positive aspects of ecotourism outlined above, ecotourism has several major negative aspects in relation to the concept of sustainable tourism. It is to these issues that we will now turn our attention.

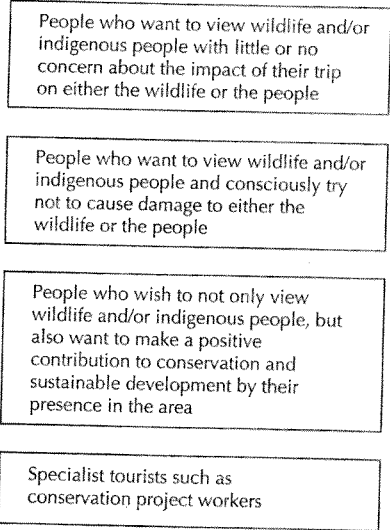


Fig. 30.1. The ecotourist continuum.

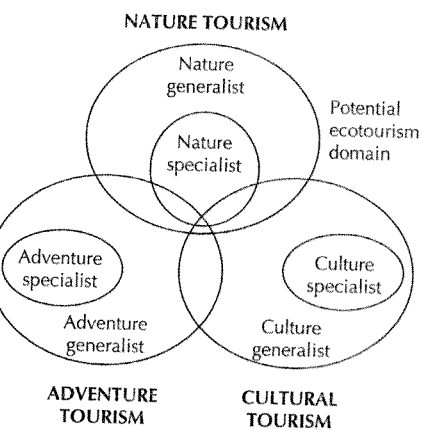


Fig. 30.2. Model of potential ecotourism motivations, with generalist and specialist dimensions.

challenging the motives of ecotourists themselves, and exposing the potential hypocrisies involved in ecotourism. For example, Wheeler has said that:

Ecotourism is synonymous with ego-tourism. [Ecotourism allows] the thinking tourists [to] behave much as before with a clear conscience – the blame still lies essentially with the mass tourist. Aren't we falling into the trap of automatically assuming that the more alternative, more custom designed, more up-market the product is, ... then the better it is in sustainable terms? ... This is the ego trip-product demand acceptably correct for the environment, for as we all know, the traveller is at one with nature. The ecotourist, so concerned to ostentatiously behave sensitively in the vulnerable destination environment is not generally concerned about the danger to the overall environment they cause in actually reaching the destination. Here convenience takes precedence over conscience – a car to the airport and a jumbo jet are hardly paradigms of virtue in the environmental stakes. A number of ... supposedly ecofriendly holidays seem to be two centre trips. With ... [for example] one week in the bush being supposedly ecofriendly followed by one week recovery afterwards in pampered luxury on the beach – a sort of let us spoil you in unspoilt Africa. No doubt ... the package as a whole would be deemed ecofriendly and statistically categorised under nature tourism. (Wheeller, 1993, 1994, 1996)

These quotes sum up well the doubts that exist over the sustainability, and even the morality of ecotourism.

**Today's Ecotourism, Tomorrow's Mass Tourism?**

Today's ecotourism package can easily become tomorrow's mass market tourism product with all the accompanying problems of mass tourism that we know well. In the 1960s and 1970s those taking safaris in Kenya were a small number of concerned, aware ecotourists, who had relatively little adverse impact on either wildlife

**Ecotourism or Ego-tourism?**

few commentators have chosen to criticize the concept of ecotourism by

or the host population. Then the local community, the government and foreign tour operators realized the potential and began to develop the Kenyan safari product. The number of safari holidays in Kenya has grown ever since, and the old specialist tourist has been replaced by the mass market package tourist mixing a week's safari with a week's relaxation on the coast.

The safaris have led to disturbance of the wildlife and even tourist and traffic congestion in some areas, while many of the economic benefits have 'leaked' to external operators.

Tourism has now grown too rapidly and has swamped certain locations. At the same time the fact that tourism now contributes a large proportion of Kenya's foreign earnings means that the government feels the need to take action to protect the interests of the tourism industry. This can even lead to local people being moved on or forcibly removed to help the wildlife flourish. This is not only morally unacceptable but is also interfering with an element in the ecosystem which has existed for centuries.

Safari tourism in Kenya today is largely mass tourism with few of the benefits of 'true' ecotourism outlined earlier in the chapter. Action is now underway to reduce the resulting problems but much of the damage has already been done.

Often the phenomenon of ecotourism has grown so that it has more in common with the worst aspects of mass market tourism. Trekking in Nepal, another form of ecotourism, started out as an almost spiritual quest in the 1960s by those seeking inspiration from the Nepalese culture. Now it has become part of the mass tourism market, with the number of trekkers rising over 250% between 1980 and 1991 (Gurung and De Coursey, 1994). Furthermore, Gurung and De Coursey have estimated that on a standard conservation trek in the Annapurna region, every group of 12 trekkers sets off with a support staff of around 50 people. The results of this volume of tourists in such a fragile environment have been:

- deforestation as wood is used for fires lit for the benefit of tourists

- the need to import food and household items to meet tourists' demand. This has caused local inflation and has introduced non-nutritious diets
- non-biodegradable material littering local towns and hills
- contamination of water courses by sewage
- the importing of inappropriate Western values.

Now projects costing millions of dollars are being undertaken to put right the results of ecotourism which simply became too big for its boots. In a sector where tourism organizations are more powerful than many governments in developing countries who is to say that this will not happen elsewhere?

**The Ecotourist 'Locusts'!**

There is always the danger that once an ecotourism destination has become well established, receiving large numbers of more mainstream tourists, it loses its appeal for ecotourists. The more sensitive, aware tourists who value 'unspoilt' areas and will pay highly to visit such a place may well move on, leaving behind the lower spending, less sensitive package tourist.

The 'ecotourist' will then simply move on to another destination to start the same process going all over again. From Kenya to Tanzania, on to Botswana, and then Namibia, perhaps then leaping the oceans to the Indonesian archipelago or China.

**No Hiding Place from the Ecotourist!**

The ecotourist gains prestige and satisfaction from visiting new off-the-beaten track destinations and seeing things that other tourists have not seen. They are thus driven to seek out ever more remote, obscure destinations with ecosystems and cultures wholly different from their own.

Because of this nowhere is safe from the ecotourist. It is their very sense of discovery that makes them dangerous. Instead of staying on the beaten track where their activities

can be managed, they are always longing to escape into uncharted (and unmanaged) destinations.

### Ecotourism is More than Just Wildlife

Very often it appears that ecotourism is just about wildlife. Tourists appear generally to be more interested in watching animals than they are in meeting and seeking to understand people of different cultures. Seeing an elephant or lion in Africa is seen as more important than meeting Maasai tribespeople. Observing the whales which live below the sea off Iceland and Norway is more interesting than finding out about the fishermen who work above the waves. Yet, ecotourism should be about ecosystems and ecosystems are about both wildlife *and* people. Indeed people are simply another form of animal life. In many ecotourism destinations the landscape and the wildlife are a direct result of the interaction between humans and the rest of the wildlife. To ecotourists, therefore, both people and wildlife should be of equal importance.

### The Good, the Funny, the Big, the Bad, but not the Ugly and the Boring

Ecotourists, when it comes to animals, prefer the 'good' and the funny, are in awe of the big, fascinated by the bad, but are not interested in the ugly or the dull. Creatures like dolphins and monkeys are seen as good perhaps because they are the nearest creatures to us in terms of intelligence. We also find them aesthetically attractive in the case of dolphins and funny in the case of monkeys, while elephants impress us with their size. We see creatures like snakes and lions as bad and evil killers, but they are still fascinating. However, no one is really interested in taking a trip to see wildlife which is seen as boring or ugly. No one goes tuna watching, we just want our supermarkets to ensure that when fishermen go hunting tuna, no 'nice' dolphins get caught in their nets! Ecotourists do not seem to want to spend good

money to go and see pygmy shrews, anteaters or antelopes. Yet in ecological terms such creatures are as important and worthy as the elephant or the whale. It seems that ecotourism is a beauty contest where beauty is in the eye of the beholder and the losers have few friends or protectors.

Ecotourism can also lead to the commodification of indigenous wildlife and people, so both are seen as just tourism resources, whose main role in life is to fulfil the desires of tourists. Both people and animals can then be priced so that a chance to meet a tribe in the forests of Borneo can be judged to be worth a \$30 boat trip. Tourists have to choose if this is better value than a \$30 trip to an orang-utan sanctuary. In this process both people and animals are not treated with the dignity which both deserve.

### Patronizing Indigenous People

Ecotourism can lead to indigenous people being patronized by the tourists, often innocently. The indigenous people who are most popular with tourists are those who may:

- be physically very different from the tourist or may dress in what the tourists see as eccentric ways
- live in unusual homes
- eat what the tourist sees as odd foods
- engage in dances and rituals which are picturesque.

Tourists can patronize local people in two different ways:

- by treating them as backward 'primitives' who are to be looked down upon in some way, so that while seen as 'entertaining' the tourist does not see them as an equal
- by viewing them as super-human beings with some almost supernatural ability to commune with nature, who have not changed their life style for generations. This is almost always inaccurate and perhaps reflects a wistful longing in the

heart of the tourist that such people might still exist on the planet.

While the latter may seem less offensive, it is still patronizing in its own way.

### The Role of Tour Operators

Tour operators have increasingly sought to jump on the ecotourism bandwagon. At first involvement was confined to small operators where the owner was simply a person with a deep concern for the destination and its ecosystems. However, large operators are now becoming increasingly involved selling ecotourism trips as excursions and short add-ons to traditional package holidays. These larger operators may have less interest in, or knowledge of, the ecosystems concerned and will probably generate more tourist trips than the small operators. Operators, understandably, focus on the positive aspects of ecotourism trips for the tourist rather than on the problems caused by ecotourism. They sell the idea of ecotourism as 'good' tourism to give their customers a 'feel good' factor about their choice. This simply reinforces the 'ego-tourism' problem identified by Wheeler and discussed earlier in this chapter.

### The Role of Governments

Governments, particularly in developing countries, are keen to attract the high spending ecotourists. They have also been told by international bodies that ecotourism is a relatively beneficial type of tourism. Often they develop ecotourism zealously, but in doing so, they often fail to recognize the rights of indigenous people living in the destination area, who may be moved to other areas to make way for tourism development. They may also spend money on infrastructure that might be better spent on education and health and they might inadvertently give too much power to major corporations based outside the destination, which limits the benefits enjoyed by the local population.

### Towards Sustainable Ecotourism

We have seen that ecotourism and sustainable tourism are not the same thing. However, ecotourism can be a sustainable form of tourism, if properly managed. The aim should be to manage ecotourism so that it is:

an enlightening nature travel experience that contributes to the conservation of the ecosystem while respecting the integrity of the host community. (Scace *et al.*, 1992)

An ideal model of sustainable ecotourism is offered in Fig. 30.3, based on the views of Sadler (1990) and Wight (1993).

Wight (1993) identified nine principles that should underpin sustainable ecotourism, as follows:

- it should not degrade the resource and should be developed in an environmentally sound manner
- it should provide first hand, participatory and enlightening experiences
- it should involve education among all parties – local communities, government, non-governmental organizations, industry and tourists (before, during and after the trip)
- it should encourage all-party recognition of the intrinsic values of the resource
- it should involve acceptance of the resource on its own terms, and recognition of its limits, which involves supply-oriented management
- it should promote understanding and involve partnerships between many players, which could include government, non-government organizations, industry, scientists and locals (both before and during operations)
- it should promote moral and ethical responsibilities and behaviour towards the natural and cultural environment, by all players
- it should provide long-term benefits – to the resource, local community and industry (benefits may be conservation, scientific, social, cultural or economic)

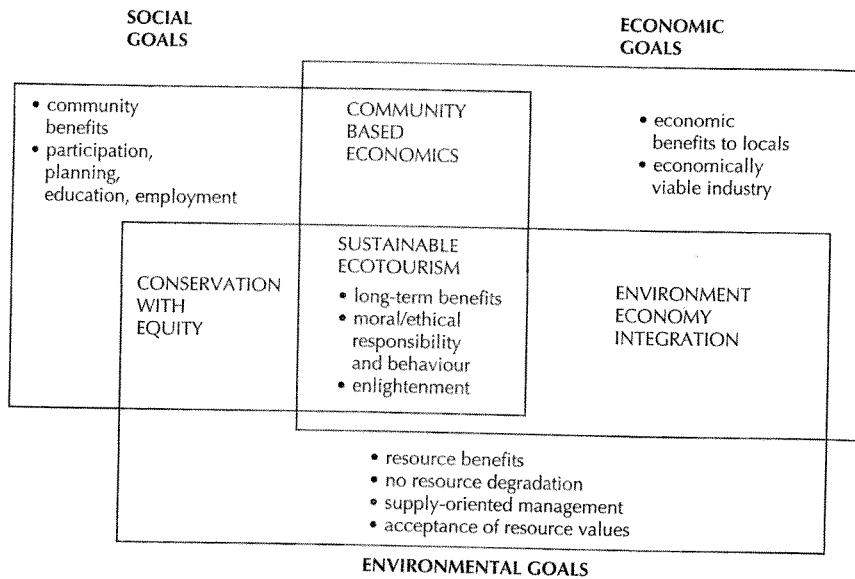


Fig. 30.3. Sustainable ecotourism values and principles model. (After Sadler, 1990; Wight 1993).

- ecotourism operations should ensure that the underlying ethics of responsible environmental practices are applied not only to the external (natural and cultural) resources which attract the tourists, but also to their internal operations.

There is also a need for governments to both effectively control poor quality ecotourism, and actively encourage good quality sustainable ecotourism.

The move towards more sustainable forms of ecotourism will also require a move from what Ziffer called nature-based tour operators to true ecotourism operators. The distinction between the two extremes and the points in between are illustrated in Table 30.1. Already, there are examples of good practice emerging that appear to be examples of sustainable ecotourism. These include:

the controlled development of ecotourism as a whole in Belize, together with individual projects like the baboon

sanctuary on Bermuda Landing and the Toledo Ecotourism Association Project (see Edington and Edington in Stabler, 1997)

- the partnership-based Annapurna Conservation Area Project in Nepal (see Gurung and De Coursey in Cater and Lowman, 1994)
- the Danube Delta Biosphere Resource project on ecotourism (described by Hall and Kinnard in Cater and Lowman, 1994).

Ultimately, however, ecotourism will only become more sustainable if tourists either demand such change or are at least willing to accept its implications for their holiday experiences.

### Conclusions

We have seen that ecotourism and sustainable tourism are not necessarily the same thing. Indeed we have discussed conflicts between the two phenomena. However,

Table 30.1. Ziffer's spectrum of ecotourism. Source: Ziffer (1989), quoted in Burton (1997).

Nature-based tourism	Added subdivisions
Tour operators that sell nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who are unaware or uncaring about its impact</li> <li>• Operators that are aware of impacts, do the minimum to abide by any management rules, who do <i>not</i> seek to educate or change tourists' attitudes, but may provide information</li> </ul>
Sensitive tour operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of impacts, actively seek to educate tourists by providing information</li> <li>• Actively seek to influence tourists' attitudes and behaviour. Support conservation, e.g. members of conservation groups</li> <li>• Practice minimum impact tourism (over and above management requirements) e.g. pack away rubbish, rotate sites</li> </ul>
Donors (in that they give something back to the environment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act positively to improve the environment they use and restore damage, e.g. pack up other people's rubbish, participate in restoration schemes, voluntarily donate a proportion of trip costs to conservation or management of the resource, plant trees, support local community</li> </ul>
Doers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who initiate conservation projects or research</li> <li>• Those involved actively in influencing policy and management towards sustainable practices</li> </ul>

towards the end of the chapter, ideas were outlined which might close the gap and make ecotourism more sustainable. As tourists travel to ever more remote parts of the world to view the wildlife and see indigenous peoples, the need to develop more sustainable ecotourism will become ever more urgent.

the section entitled 'Ecotourism or Ego-tourism?' in this chapter.

3. Discuss the ways in which ecotourism can be in conflict with the concept of sustainable tourism.

### Exercise

Compile a list of tour operators which claim to offer ecotourism or ecotourism type holidays. You should then see where they lie on Ziffer's spectrum, as shown in Table 30.1. Finally, produce a report noting what this exercise has demonstrated to you about the link between ecotourism and sustainable tourism.

### Discussion Points and Essay Questions

1. Critically evaluate Wight's model of ecotourism motivators illustrated in Fig. 30.2.
2. Discuss the issues raised by Wheeler in

### Case Study: Codes of Conduct for Ecotourists

The growing concern over the potentially negative aspects of ecotourism has led to the growth of various codes of conduct for ecotourists and the ecotourism 'industry'. Exhibits 1, 2 and 3 illustrate three examples of such codes of conduct, all of which were included in the World Tourism Organization publication, *Sustainable Tourism Development*, published in 1993.

While all of them contain sound advice, they rarely deal with the fundamental underlying issues and tend to be rather superficial.

**Exhibit 1.** ASTA's ten commandments on ecotourism.

Whether on business or leisure travel:

- **Respect the frailty of the earth.** Realize that unless all are willing to help in its preservation, unique and beautiful destinations may not be here for future generations to enjoy.
- **Leave only footprints. Take only photographs.** No graffiti! No litter! Do not take away 'souvenirs' from historical sites and natural areas.
- To make your travels more meaningful, **educate yourself about the geography, customs, manners and cultures of the region you visit.** Take time to listen to the people. Encourage local conservation efforts.
- **Respect the privacy and dignity of others.** Inquire before photographing people.
- **Do not buy products made from endangered plants or animals,** such as ivory, tortoise shell, animal skins and feathers. Read *Know Before You Go* the US Customs list of products which cannot be imported.
- **Always follow designated trails.** Do not disturb animals, plants or their natural habitats.
- Learn about and **support conservation-oriented programmes and organizations** working to preserve the environment.
- Whenever possible, **walk or utilize environmentally sound methods of transportation.** Encourage drivers of public vehicles to stop engines when parked.
- **Patronise those hotels, airlines, resorts, cruise lines, tour operators and suppliers** who advance energy and environmental conservation; water and air quality; recycling; safe management of waste and toxic materials; noise abatement; community involvement; and which provide experienced, well-trained staff **dedicated to strong principles of conservation.**
- Ask your ASTA travel agent to **identify those organizations which subscribe to ASTA Environmental Guidelines for air, land and sea travel.** ASTA has recommended that these organizations adopt their own environmental codes to cover special sites and ecosystems.

**Exhibit 2.** Guidelines for nature tourism.

Nature tourism is of growing importance to those countries and regions interested in sustainable tourism. It is one segment of the industry which is difficult to define because it covers a wide range of activities. Nature tourists can be people casually walking through an undisturbed forest, or scuba divers admiring coral formations, or bird watchers adding birds to their lists. But, it is a segment of the market that will respond to environmental issues. The following guidelines can be used by the local planner to encourage community, environmental and tourism constituencies to work together toward a common goal.

- **The success of nature tourism depends on the conservation of nature.** Many parks

are threatened, and it is critical for everyone involved with nature tourism to realize that intact natural resources are the foundation.

- **Nature tourism sites need revenue for protection and maintenance, much of which can be generated directly from entry fees and sale of products.** Many protected areas charge nominal or no entrance fees and provide few if any auxiliary services. Nature tourists also desire gift shops, food services and lodging facilities and expect to pay for them.
- **Tourists are a valuable audience for environmental education.** In many parks, opportunities are missed to provide environmental education. Whether 'hard-core' nature tourists or 'new' visitors with little background in natural history, all tourists can enhance their appreciation of the area through information brochures, exhibits and guides.
- **Nature tourism will contribute to rural development when local residents are brought into the planning process.** For nature tourism to be a tool for conservation and rural development, a concerted effort must be made to incorporate local populations into development of the tourism industry. In some cases, tourism to protected areas is not benefiting the surrounding population because they are not involved.
- **Opportunities are emerging for new relationships between conservationists and tour operators.** Traditionally, these groups have not worked together; often they have been in direct opposition. However, as more tourists come to parks and reserves, tour operators have the opportunity to become more actively involved with the conservation of these areas through education for their clientele and donations to park management.

(Source: E. Boo (1990) *The Potentials and Pitfalls*, Volumes 1 and 2, World Wildlife Fund, Washington, DC).

**Exhibit 3.** Environmentally responsible safaris – guidelines for tour operators.

- State your commitment to conservation in brochures and other pre-departure information.
- Conduct orientations on conservation and cultural sensitivity before and during the trip. Arrange to meet with wildlife rangers for all safari tours, not only for special-interest tours.
- Provide guidance about endangered species products sold in souvenir shops and why to avoid them in pre-trip printed materials. During the trip patronize only appropriate craft concessions that sell locally produced goods that benefit the local economy. Explain when it is or is not appropriate to bargain or barter for goods.
- Build in a contribution to a conservation, cultural or archaeological project. Or encourage donations by clients directly to the reserve, wildlife service or non-profit projects. Or adopt a specific project. Or hold a fund-raising drive to donate specific equipment or meet other needs. Or give a membership to a wildlife organization as a tour benefit. Provide an opportunity for clients to see what project they are helping to support.
- Equip clients with information to help minimize any negative impact (e.g. don't wear bright colours, distracting patterns, or perfume, don't smoke, talk loudly, or crowd the animals with more than five vans at one time, stay on the roads). This encourages clients not to pressure drivers to break the rules of the reserve. Stop at the visitor centre. Provide copies of park rules for clients and explain why they are important.
- Discourage negative social ramifications that result by giving candy and inappropriate gifts to children along the route. If there is something to donate, have the tour guide give it to a village elder or school teacher to distribute.
- Ensure that ground operators train drivers/guides. Give recognition or monetary awards for safety excellence and sensitivity to the rules of the reserve. Ask drivers to turn off the engine to alleviate noise and reduce diesel fuel exhaust when viewing wildlife or scenery.

- Follow up the safari with newsletters and information on wildlife appeals. Give a progress report on any adopted project the client helped support. Ask clients for feedback after the safari.
- Explain your commitment to the environment to tour operator colleagues, travel agents during office visits and at trade shows, and in-bound operators. Share ideas on materials, driver training, and ethical standards for the industry. By presenting the company's commitment as a competitive selling point, it can serve to heighten awareness and others may be persuaded to evaluate their practices too.

(Source: Laurie Lubeck (1991) *Wildlife Tourism Impact Project Materials*, California.)

### Case Study: Whale-watching

Whale-watching has increased dramatically on a worldwide scale in recent years. Day trips and whole holidays are now devoted to this activity from California to New Zealand, Iceland to South Africa. It can be seen as part of the growth of ecotourism.

In several ways, it can be seen to be quite sustainable in that:

- It helps tourists increase their understanding of this endangered species. This could lead them to become actively involved with whale conservation groups when they return home.
- It provides an alternative living, potentially, for whaling ships and crews, and is surely better than killing the whales. Indeed, as whaling and fishing have declined, whale-watching has been viewed as the economic and social salvation of some small fishing ports.

Conversely, whale-watching can be seen as exploitation, an extension of the safari park concept. If the scale of it gets out of hand, it can also disturb the whales.

Perhaps, therefore, the challenge is to find better ways of regulating whale-watching, following the example of New England, for example, in the USA. Here there are conditions on boat operators and how close to the whales their boats can go.

We also need a clearer idea of the 'carrying capacity' of whale habitats in terms of whale-watchers, so that we can perhaps begin to impose constraints on the volume of whale-watchers in particular areas of sea.

- putting pressure on politicians, as voters, to legislate for regulation for sustainable tourism, whenever it is appropriate.

This is the only morally acceptable way of developing sustainable tourism in a democratic manner, although it will be very difficult.

Furthermore, sustainable tourism must not become a pre-occupation for a tiny minority of people, it must become an interest for everyone.

### The Supply Side

Sustainable tourism will require tourism organizations to see how they can match sustainable tourism with their business objectives. They must be allowed and encouraged to use sustainability to make profits providing they are willing to take a long-term approach to their operations. Tourism organizations will also have to work more in partnership with, and show greater long-term commitment to, particular destinations.

As far as destinations are concerned, they must jealously guard their uniqueness. In an increasingly competitive market this uniqueness is their main selling point that

differentiates them from other destinations. However, they must then take a global view of the market rather than a parochial one. In other words they should reverse the well-known marketing cliché and **Think Local, Act Global!**

### Some Final Words

Completely sustainable tourism is probably a myth; we can only hope to make tourism more sustainable.

In this book we have looked at a number of ways in which we could move closer to the goal of sustainable tourism.

Whether or not we do move in that direction will depend upon us, you and me. We are the tourists who need to change our behaviour. Sustainable tourism should begin with yourself. If everyone simply undertakes to improve their own behaviour, tourism would become more sustainable.

Are you willing to deny yourself a visit to the beautiful rain forests of Belize? Or not dress in shorts in Greece or not drink alcohol in Islamic countries? Are you willing to pay more for your holiday to make sure that staff are paid a decent wage?

If you are, then the future for sustainable tourism looks bright. It all depends on you.

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