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The Future of Tourism

Introduction

For the past 50 years or so, tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon has been steadily growing, despite what can be seen today as temporary blips in which growth has slowed or numbers have actually fallen for a short period. Some of these factors leading to a decline or a slowing in growth have been as a result of natural causes, and others have occurred following human-induced changes yet others, especially COVID-19, are not yet fully understood in terms of their origin. Looking to the future, there are several factors that can assist in the further growth and development of tourism and yet others that can restrict development and even turn growth into decline. This chapter considers future developments in tourism.

Key perspectives

Some of the factors that will affect the future of tourism are external to the industry. The most important of these, as noted in Chapter 11, is global climate change. One major result of global warming will be melting of the polar ice caps; the rise in sea level that occurs will cause flooding along low lying coastal areas and in particular will affect a number of islands where tourism is important such as the Maldives and Seychelles. Mountain areas will also be affected by global warming which will disrupt any type of snow-based tourism. Climate change will have dramatic impacts on how, where and when people travel, assuming that they are able to, and will reshape the tourism industry over time (Foundation for the Future, 2009).

As noted in Chapter 12, natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis may have an effect in particular locations; and diseases such as SARS be spread around the world by tourists. COVID-19 is a similar disease to SARS and its effects between 2020 and 2022 have been more significant than SARS and more damaging to global tourism than any other factor in the recent history of tourism. Like SARS, COVID-19 negatively affected tourism destinations, but was also spread around the world by tourism. Following the outbreak of SARS, many scientists were concerned about the possibility of a similar disease appearing again. The COVID-19 pandemic has

led more scientists and others to predict, not the possibility, but the inevitability of another pandemic in the near future (Sridhar, 2022).

Terrorism is a relatively recent phenomenon affecting tourism, and in some locations such as Egypt and the Indonesian island of Bali, where tourists were the specific target of terrorists, has greatly altered tourist behaviour and motivation to visit, although these changes in tourism do not appear to be permanent.

Other factors that may affect future tourism are internal and will probably include changes in demand for particular types of tourism experience. Changes in demand are likely to occur if prices for holidays and other tourism activities increase in relation to, for example, higher fuel costs. Changes in demand also occurred in 2020 through to 2022 as a result of COVID-19, when many tourists who would normally take one or more overseas holidays were unable to do so and modified their behaviour, which greatly affected the rise in staycations, where holidays have been taken at home not overseas (Seakhoa-King, et al 2020). As tourism is in some ways a 'fashion industry' (Prosser, 1998) new locations and activities will be sought by future tourists, compared with those of today.

By the mid-2020s, the UN expects the world population to grow to 8 billion. That's over one billion extra people, since the middle of the second decade of this century, who will place dramatic new demands on the planet as well put pressure on the finite resources for tourism. The growth of the middle classes in countries like China and India has the potential to reshape global tourism flows dramatically. In the period up to the outbreak of COVID-19, many more tourists visited these countries from the rest of the world than travel in the opposite direction. In the post-pandemic world, movement of tourists from China and India to the rest of the world is very likely to greatly increase.

For many commentators conditions are already bad and the following case study indicates for some that tourism has already reached a point where drastic action needs to be taken to change it.

Case study: 'Mass tourism is at a tipping point – but we are all part of the problem'

During August 2017, *The Guardian* newspaper published two very critical commentaries on tourism. Extracts from one of them, written by journalist Martin Kettle, are presented below.

Kettle indicates that about 30 years ago, he was researching to write on global population pressures, and interviewed the zoologist Desmond Morris. During that interview, Morris said something that was hard to forget Kettle indicated. "*We have to recognise," he said, "that human beings may be becoming an infestation on the planet"*.

Those words came back to Kettle as reports were arriving during the 2017 summer about the increasing reaction in several parts of Europe to mass tourism. Kettle noted that very different places, including the Mediterranean coast and the Isle of