

The Essence of Understanding Issues that Portent for the Future of Global Tourism

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“Coming events cast their shadows before”

-Thomas Campbell-

Abstract

Worldwide tourism has grown enormously over the past ten years and will likely continue to do so in the future. By 2020 the World Travel & Tourism Council projects that the travel and tourism industry will increase to ten percent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), approximately US\$10 trillion, and account for 328 million jobs – one in every ten jobs worldwide. The opportunity that tourism offers for positive economic and social benefits for tomorrow will depend on the decisions being made today. To better understand some of the issues confronting the global tourism industry, David L. Edgell, Sr. developed a list of ten important issues to focus on in the short-term. This article is an attempt to provide some of the background regarding emerging issues for the travel and tourism industry in 2014.

Keywords: Tourism, Issues, Economic development, Socio-economic significance, Safety & Security, Fuel prices, Sustainability, E-commerce tools, Climate change, Policy leadership

Introduction

“Tourism policy must chart the course so that international leaders will recognize that tourism is an important tool leading toward a higher quality of life for mankind” (David L. Edgell, Sr., 1990). If world tourism leaders can identify key issues underlying the dynamics of the global tourism industry in advance, there is a better opportunity to improve the local and global quality-of-life and provide a foundation for peace and prosperity. In essence the issues identified herein portend an understanding of the many ramifications of tourism in the world's productive society, of its powerful political-economic interactions, and of its immense potential as an important social force; in effect, tourism's impact on the world and world's impact on tourism.

The travel and tourism industry is one of the largest contributors to the global economy.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, the travel and tourism industry in 2012 “contributed 9.3% of global Gross Development Product (GDP), or value of over US\$6.6 trillion, and accounted for 260 million jobs” (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2013). Over the next decade, the travel and tourism industry is expected to increase to 10% of global GDP, approximately US\$10 trillion, and “account for 328 million jobs, or 1 in every 10 jobs on the planet” (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2012). Long term forecasts over the next ten years have annual growth in tourism reaching 4.4 percent (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2013).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports that international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) grew by 4 percent reaching 1.035 billion in 2012 (the firsttime in history that international tourist arrivals exceeded the 1 billion mark).

Furthermore, UNWTO numbers relate that international tourism receipts reached US\$1.075 trillion in 2012. Forecasts prepared by UNWTO point to growth of 3-4 percent in international tourist arrivals for 2013. According to UNWTO forecasts, the future of the tourism industry will be one of change, vibrancy and growth (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2013).

Workforce Needs In The Tourism Industry

The positive prognosis of tourism growth means there will be an increase need for highly trained employees and highly educated managers in the tourism industry. To meet these positive projections, educational policy and the quality of the workforce will be quintessential. The tourism industry is made up of numerous different segments that include transportation, accommodations, food service, travel arrangements, communications, entertainment, technology and many other components. These different elements require innovative and creative managers that are well-educated and can adjust to changing conditions in the tourism marketplace.

In addition, because the tourism industry is growing so rapidly, and is so diversified, the demands placed on the travel and tourism industry are varied, and the job market opportunities are broad. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate the dynamic changes taking place in the tourism industry which will alter some of the traditional career patterns. Regularly new technology is being introduced in the tourism industry such as the smartphone, new Internet applications, social media, or navigation systems such as the Global Positioning System. Another area of change is the focus on sustainable tourism which is developing new types of jobs. On the horizon, as space tourism emerges, a completely new area will open up employment opportunities never thought of before. A key question for the tourism industry is whether current curricula in the travel, tourism and hospitality industry are properly aligned with workforce needs in the industry. Institutions of higher education need to partner with tourism industry leaders to ensure that curricula and delivery formats meet the current and emerging needs of today's tourism workforce and today's learners.

Tourism depends on quality service, and more than most other industries needs highly-trained hospitality workers. In the ultimate analysis, the success of travel and tourism in the global environment will depend on its degree of professionalism. Educational attainment is a critical driver for economic and human capital development. Research indicates that increased educational attainment expands career choices consequently increasing social and economic opportunities for individuals in most industries including the travel and tourism industry. Tourism education and training programs will need to be strengthened if a more professional tourism work force is to emerge. In question is the quality and direction of such academic programs. (Source: *Tourism Policy and Planning* (second edition), 2013 by David L. Edgell, Sr. and Jason R. Swanson).

A Review of The Important Tourism Issues

Leaders in the global travel and tourism industry are identifying future issues that will need to be carefully analyzed for the continued growth of the tourism industry. Recently (reported by the Travel and Tourism Research Association's *TTRA Connects*, August 2013) the author of this article, David L. Edgell, Sr. released the "Ten Important World Tourism Issues for 2014".

TEN IMPORTANT WORLD TOURISM ISSUES FOR 2014

1. Continued impact on the travel and tourism industry resulting from the global economic slowdown
 2. Concerns for safety and security remains an important issue for the travel and tourism industry
 3. Necessity for increased local/regional/national leadership in tourism policy and strategic planning
 4. Importance of maintaining a destination's sustainability of social, cultural, natural and built resources
 5. Educating users about optimization of technologies and online applications in the tourism industry
 6. Understanding the transformative effect travel and tourism has on global socio-economic progress
 7. Responding to increased interest in potential long-term consequences of climate change on tourism
 8. Negative impact on the travel and tourism industry of increases in fuel prices and airline fees
 9. Effect on travel and tourism from natural and manmade disasters and world political disruptions
 10. Changes in tourism demand resulting from increased travel by emerging nations
- Each of these issues is briefly explained in the following paragraphs.

COMMENTARY ON THE IMPORTANT WORLD TOURISM ISSUES

1. Continued impact on the travel and tourism industry resulting from the global economic slowdown.

What has been happening recently with respect to the world economic situation has a major impact on the future of global travel. The global economic recession that began for many countries in 2009 put a heavy strain on travel and for the first time in many years (since the terrorist attacks in 2001, which had a negative impact on world tourism) international tourist arrivals declined. In 2010-2012, while the world economy was still in jeopardy, global tourism increased slightly. The economy in 2013 is still weak but a little friendlier than in the recent past. Growth in international tourism will likely show positive increases for 2013. Many international economic experts are forecasting a more robust world economy in 2014 which should bode well for international tourism growth.

2. Concerns for safety and security remains an important issue for the travel and tourism industry.

Concern for the safety and security of world travelers remains an extremely important issue for the travel and tourism industry. Providing for safety and security for travelers will continue to be a major challenge for world leaders in the tourism industry. Many governments issue travel advisories to their citizens when unstable or unsafe conditions in another nation warrant the recommendation to avoid travel to the unstable area. Unsafe conditions can include not only threats to personal safety because of an internal

The Essence of Understanding Issues that Portent for the Future of Global Tourism...David L. Edgell Sr. and Research Scholar

conflict, war, terrorism or crime, but could also result from sickness and disease epidemics or natural disasters present in the destination country. Australia issues such advisories through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; such issuances in the United Kingdom are posted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; in the United States the U.S. Department of State releases a list of “travel warnings” on a daily basis. For example, on October 1, 2013 the United States Department of State issued travel warnings that included 35 countries with conditions that suggested such countries were dangerous or unstable and recommended that Americans avoid or consider the risk of travel to that country.

A first item on many country security agendas is the universal concern for the possibility of a terrorist attack that is directly related to an event where sizable numbers of tourists may be located. For example, at the London Olympics in 2012 there were more than 25,000 soldiers, policemen, and other security personnel assigned to provide safety and security for visitors and athletes during the event.

The onerous inspection systems at airports are a constant reminder of the concern for safety and security. Another matter of safety and security is general crimes against tourists such as robbery, kidnapping, and murder. It is necessary to find better means of alleviating such crimes against tourists. When crimes against tourists are featured in global media stories and reports, the result is often detrimental to the overall image of the destination.

3. Necessity for increased local/regional/national leadership in tourism policy and strategic planning.

The global tourism industry will face many differing kinds of policy issues over the coming years, and quite certainly, tourism policy and strategic planning will drive many of the dynamics of tourism well into the future. We can expect to see a greater global focus on the tourism industry's potential for quality growth both in terms of economic benefits and social-cultural improvements in many parts of the world. In tandem, sustainable benefits of tourism for local communities will continue to grow in priority and importance. Global tourism leaders will unite in facilitating tourism in combination with poverty alleviation, policies to combat negative impacts on tourism and supporting the economic, socio-cultural and environmental contributions of tourism for the benefit of world citizens.

There will be greater efforts towards partnerships of the private and public sectors in what has become known in some circles of tourism policy as “coopetition”. Coopetition is simply a portmanteau word that combines the words cooperation and competition. Coopetition occurs when companies, destinations, or other groups interact with partial congruence of interests to benefit both groups. The definition of the word coopetition in the tourism industry is the need for *cooperation* among tourism destinations in order to better market the tourism product effectively and meet the *competition* (hence coopetition) at the regional or global level (*Coopetition: Global Tourism Beyond the Millennium*).

4. Importance of maintaining a destination's sustain ability of social, cultural, natural and built resources.

Sustainable tourism is part of an overall shift that recognizes that orderly economic growth, combined with concerns for the environment and quality-of-life social values, will be the driving force for long-term progress in tourism development. The universe has a

limited environment to work with, and much of the environment is already under siege from the many different industrial, technological, and unplanned tourism developments under way. To preserve these environmental resources, to impact positively on the social values of the community, and to add to the quality-of-life of local citizens worldwide and at the same time elicit favorable economic benefits for tourism is indeed a challenge for the leaders in the tourism industry (Edgell, D. *Managing Sustainable Tourism: A Legacy for the Future*, 2006).

Better measures to educate tourism enterprises, small communities, and the traveling population about sustainable tourism must be continued as world populations and international travel grow. Respect for a destination's social, cultural, historical, natural and built resources today will be our legacy for future generations to sustain. Increasingly the world's tourism leadership wants to manage sustainable tourism as a legacy to ensure that future generations can enjoy a wide variety of tourism products. (It is a reminder of an ancient proverb that says: "We have not inherited the earth from our ancestors; we have only borrowed it from our children.") (author unknown).

5. Educating users about optimization of technologies and online applications in the tourism industry.

Utilizing electronic commerce (e-commerce) tools in tourism is at the threshold in terms of its impact on the tourism industry. The increase of travelers using the Internet (over 2.5 billion Internet users in the world today) in planning their travel has grown dramatically over the past several years. The Internet affords the traveler more power of choice through greater access to information and has a powerful influence on which destinations a tourist chooses.

Destinations, large or small, in today's tourism marketplace must have a website. Because the cost of a website is relatively low, it helps balance the demand for tourism in that it gives small destinations and properties an opportunity to compete with the larger tourism entities. The use of website technology helps travelers seek variety and flexibility in their choice of a destination.

Many travelers now use smart phones for checking messages, weather, destinations, directions, and other information during trips. Online applications of tourism education courses, training programs, and course materials are growing rapidly in the tourism industry. Other e-commerce tools in the tourism industry include weblogs, podcasts, Global Position System, Travelytics, Facebook, Twitter, as well as many other new social media applications.

6. Understanding the transformative effect travel and tourism has on global socio-economic progress.

Turbulence, strife, poverty, conflicts, and unrest aptly describe much of today's world. Nearly 80 percent of the world's population is in poverty, 70 percent is illiterate and more than 50 percent suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Recently the United Nations (UN) called upon all of its organizational units to help with programs aimed to reduce poverty, including the UN's specialized agency, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). UNWTO through its sustainable tourism program includes the policy to "Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socioeconomic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to *poverty alleviation*."

Many business people in the tourism industry, like most other industries, seek, as their major goal, to obtain an economic gain by developing and marketing their tourism products. Sometimes, in doing so, there may be little interest by businesses on the impact their efforts may have on conserving the environment or improving the quality-of-life of the local citizens. The good news is that it appears that more and more businesses today are becoming interested in sustainable tourism and having concern for the social-economic and quality-of-life of the local population. A new book (2013), *Sustainable Tourism & the Millennium Development Goals: Effecting Positive Change* by Kelly S. Bricker, Rosemary Black, and Stuart Cottrell, provides consider detail in under standing the trans for mative effect travel and tourism (especially that of ecotourism) has on global socio-economic projects.

7. Responding to increased interest in potential long-term consequences of climate change on tourism.

Another rapidly emerging trend of international importance for tourism policy is climate change and its impact on tourism. Climate change, in general, has become a very controversial issue with the majority of scientists lined up on one side and global policy leaders torn asunder and weakened by a lack of action. Within the tourism industry one aspect of policy is clear; tourism administrators must undertake a paradigm shift away from overuse of natural resources toward more interest in environmental stewardship.

Regardless of whether climate change is human induced or a natural cyclical trend, or for some other reason, social scientists and tourism leaders need to act proactively and lead in creating innovative responses regarding projected changes in climate. Dr. Patrick Long, director at the Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina University suggests that “we need to further our knowledge about climate trends...impacts of variability and seasonality...and the development of policies and strategies to adapt to and mitigate effects of climate change”.

8. Negative impact on the travel and tourism industry of increases in fuel prices and airline fees.

When fuel prices increase the impact raises havoc on the travel and tourism sector. All forms of transportation, be it the automobile, airlines or other transportation modes are immediately affected. In recent years, the volatile nature of the alternations of prices in transportation makes it difficult to develop policies to alleviate the negative impact on the tourism industry. The mercurial and erratic price changes will likely continue causing a need for the industry to find better ways to adjust.

In addition, the recent trend of certain airlines regarding airline fees is both confusing and inconsiderate to the traveling public. Such airline policies are inconsistent with the concept of “hospitality” and create a negative image of the airline and make for an uncomfortable decision for passengers. Many tourists complain that the worst part of their vacation is the negative treatment by certain airlines.

9. Effect of travel and tourism from natural and manmade disasters and world political disruptions.

The worst year in recent history for economic impact from natural and manmade disasters was in 2011. While 2012 was a better year in that respect, it was not a good year

regarding world political disruptions. Because such conditions are so unpredictable, it is difficult to measure the impact on the tourism industry. What we do know is that tourists usually avoid areas that have been impacted by natural and manmade disasters. World political disruptions likewise are hard to predict. We do know that “When Peace Prevails, Tourism Flourishes”.

10. Changes in tourism demand resulting from increased travel by emerging nations.

The population of the world in 2012 was estimated at about 7.5 billion. The five most populous countries – China, India, United States, Indonesia, and Brazil – account for almost half the world's population. Four of the five countries, China, India, Indonesia, and Brazil, are considered “emerging nations”. China has led the world in economic growth and in increases in both tourism arrivals and departures. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, China is the fastest-growing outbound market in the world, and by 2020 it is expected that 100 million Chinese will make outbound leisure trips annually. Likewise, over the past few years, the economy of India has been very positive and tourism, both incoming and outgoing, has grown dramatically. It is likely that India will see tremendous growth in tourism over the next several years. Indonesia has seen consistent growth in international tourist arrivals which has had a positive growth in its employment and international receipts. Of the four countries, Brazil may be on the verge of receiving the largest percentage growth. Brazil will host the world's largest sporting event, the World Cup, in 2014 followed by the Olympics in 2016.

Conclusion

“Assuming that the forecasters and futurists are correct...[tourism is] the world's largest industry. Tourism is alive with dynamic growth, new activities, new destinations, new technology, new markets, and rapid changes...The tourism industry is global. It is big business and will continue to grow.” (Goeldner, R. & Ritchie, J. R. *Tourism: Principles, Practices, Philosophies* (twelfth edition, 2012). If the issues cited in this article are well understood and the global leaders in the tourism industry make good decisions, the future growth of tourism will have a positive impact on improving the quality of life for citizens throughout the world.

An issue not dealt with in the ten important world tourism issues for 2014 is the need for an international language. There are about 6,000 languages spoken throughout the world and sometimes important travel information is mis-communicated. An early attempt (1870s) at developing an international language, Esperanto, was invented by L. L. Zamenhof. Zamenhof's goal was to create an easy-to-learn, politically neutral language that would transcend nationality and foster peace and international understanding between people with different languages. For a variety of reasons, Esperanto as an international language, failed. I am of the opinion that the issue of an international language should come to the forefront and that international tourism leaders start the process. With today's computer technology and advances made in linguistics, I think the time has come to develop a simple, neutral, non-cultural based language that could be taught in early childhood (along with a country's language(s)) and utilized in the international travel marketplace and as a force to foster peace and international understanding. I am reminded of a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: “I have watched the cultures of all lands blow around my house and other winds have blown the

The Essence of Understanding Issues that Portent for the Future of Global Tourism...David L. Edgell Sr. and Research Scholar seeds of peace, for travel is the language of peace”.

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