Environmentalism in tourism: the connection of lifestyle, tourism and sustainable development

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A tree's style of life is the individuality of the tree expressing itself and moulding itself to an environment. We recognise a style when we see it...for we then realise that every tree has a life pattern and is not merely a mechanical reaction to the environment. It is much the same way with human beings.

Alfred Adler

Keywords: environmentalism, tourism, lifestyle, sustainable development.

Summary findings, conclusions, recommendations

In Adler's theory the "style of life" refers to how we live, sort out difficulties, and manage our own personal relationships. He strongly believed that each one of us is a distinctive, unique individual with our own characteristic way of life. Since the term was coined in the early 20th century it is no wonder that the meaning of "lifestyle" has gone through enormous changes. These days it is more often used to express "a way of life or style of living that reflects the attitudes and values of a person or group". Since globalisation is increasingly turning the world into a "global village" no wonder that lifestyle is changing faster than ever before. As a result "for tourism, this influences the tourist's perception of his/her personal needs and behaviour "[1]. In this short essay attention will be focussed on the mutual effects of lifestyle and tourism. After taking a brief look at the different life-stages, which, according to Knowles (2001), have a fundamental influence on holiday choice, we will examine other factors that determine tourists' decisions. The most important of these factors (perhaps not surprisingly) are time and money. It will be interesting to see that for many in western societies the greatest hindrance is not the financial burdens of a holiday but rather the lack of time to spare. This, inevitably, leads to demands that have not been trends in the tourism industry in past decades. Shorter, multiple holidays in exotic places are more sought after than they have ever been and due to changes in society somewhat shocking niche markets are also emerging.

It is obvious that travelling overseas is less of a luxury these days than it used to be. As a consequence, more and more people will be able to make their choice to be on the move, be it on business or holiday, thus contributing to one of the hottest issues currently. Climate change, which has already made its influence felt, will no doubt have significant influence on all of us. What can travellers do to leave less of an environmental footprint and meet not only the needs of the present but also of the indefinite future? The objective of this work is to make the reader think about the effects of current and future trends in tourism on the natural environment.

[1] European Travel Commission: Tourism Trends for Europe. March 2004

Important determinants of a holiday choice

There are numerous ways and possibilities to spend free time and the opportunities are by no means the same for each individual members of the society. How free time is – and will be – spent is determined to a large extent by a number of influencing factors. Let us see some of the most important ones without intending to give a comprehensive list of the possible issues.

Economic factors and time

Although the economic states of a country or individual cannot be the sole determinant in the holiday choice, it would be difficult to argue that they are not of key importance. What makes the tourism industry alive is discretionary income and free time, i.e. paid holidays. Although it seems fair to say that holidays are more readily obtainable financially for most people currently than they were even a few of decades ago, we should not forget about the trend of free time. It is indisputable that the average working week was once well above the currently acceptable 40 hours and attempts have been made to shorter it further[2]. Should these attempts be successful and the trend continue (as it will surely not), we would end up not having to work at all. However, in the report of the European Travel Commission on tourism trends a rather interesting term appeared: "time poverty", a phrase by which they refer to the fact that a large number of American citizens do not have "enough time to do what they want, when they want"[3]. This phenomenon holds true not only for the stronger sex but also for women as well. As a matter of fact, it is the young mothers at work who have the least free time since apart from having to work (even though most of them have part time occupation) they also have a child or children to rear. Families with two earners face a unique 'problem', namely that they have to find the time to spend their discretional income together.

It is also interesting to see how the employment rates have changed in the last century in the United States.

Table 1

Labour Force Participation Rates of Men, 1900-2000, %

Year	All Men	Aged 25-44	Aged 45-64	Aged over 65
1900	80.0	94.7	90.3	63.1
1920	78.2	95.6	90.7	55.6
1930	76.2	95.8	91.0	54.0
1940	79.0	94.9	88.7	41.8
1950	76.8	97.1	92.0	45.8
1960	74.0	97.7	92.0	33.1
1970	70.6	96.8	89.3	26.8
1980	77.4	93.0	80.8	19.0
1990	76.4	93.3	79.8	16.3
2000	74.7	87.9	78.3	17.5

Source: Borjas – Labor Economics

[2]According to *Borjas*, a typical American employee in production worked 55 hours weekly at the beginning of the 20th century. This figure gradually reduced to less than 35 hours in 2002.

[3] www.etc-corporate.org

Table 2

Labour Force Participation Rates of Women, 1900-2000, %

Year	All Women	Single Women	Married Women	Widowed, Divorced or Separated
1900	20.6	43.5	5.6	32.5
1910	25.4	51.1	10.7	34.1
1930	24.8	50.5	11.7	34.4
1940	25.8	45.5	15.6	30.2
1950	29.0	46.3	23.0	32.7
1960	34.5	42.9	31.7	36.1
1970	41.6	50.9	40.2	36.8
1980	51.5	64.4	49.9	43.6
1990	57.5	66.7	58.4	47.2
2000	60.2	69.0	61.3	49.4

Source: Borjas – Labor Economics

What is striking about these figures is that while the participation rate of men has slightly reduced in the 20th century, an ever increasing number of women are choosing to take up employment. It is worth noting the particularly sharp increase of married women in the labour force (5.6% in 1900, 61.3% in 2000).

Family life cycle and ageing

As it has already been noted, the family life cycle – among other influencing factors – is a key determinant in buying behaviour thus in how people decide to spend their leisure time.

In his book Marketing Management, Kotler analyses nine separate stages of family life cycle in connection with buying or behavioural patterns.

The different stages are as follows:

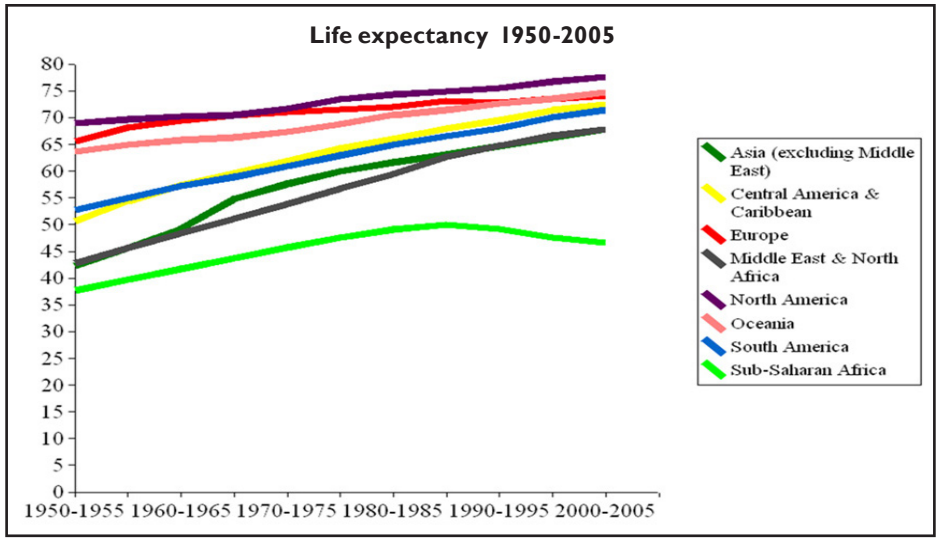
1. Bachelor stage: young, single people not living at home
2. Newly married couples: young, no children
3. Full nest I: youngest child under six
4. Full nest II: youngest child six or over
5. Full nest III: older married couples with dependent children
6. Empty nest I: older married couples, no children living with them, head in labour force
7. Empty nest II: older married. No children living at home, head retired
8. Solitary survivor, in labour force
9. Solitary survivor, retired

As people proceed through the different life cycle stages their interests, focus on life, inclinations etc. will naturally change. Consumption patterns, however, are also influenced by such internal and external factors as occupation, education, income, motivation, etc.

Furthermore, healthier diets, more exercise, better medical treatment and a number of other reasons have lead to rising life expectancy and an ageing population in the developed world.

Figure 1

The development of life expectancy worldwide[4]



The elderly, apart from being the fastest growing segment in the population, are also one of the wealthiest both financially and time-wise. Consequently, it is inevitable that this age group should receive more attention from service providers.

Technological development

Mankind has witnessed an almost incomprehensible development in transport technology over the past century or so. At the time of Thomas Cook steam engines were the wanders of the world and flying was a mere dream. Hardly had a few decades passed by when in 1919 the first transatlantic flight was completed. From then on it took less time and effort to cover long distances, nevertheless it still presented a (threatening) challenge to fly to such exotic places as Australia for instance. *Bill Bryson* writes:

"The perils of aviation in the period are neatly encapsulated in the experience of Harold C. Brinsmead, the head of Australia's Civil Aviation Department in the first days of commercial aviation. In 1931, Brinsmead was on a flight to London, partly for business and partly to demonstrate the safety and reliability of modern air passenger services, when his plane crashed on take off in Indonesia. No one was seriously hurt, but the plane was a write-off. Not wanting to wait for a replacement aircraft to be flown in, Brinsmead boarded a flight with the new Dutch airline, KLM. That flight crashed while taking off in Bangkok. On this occasion, five people were killed and Brinsmead suffered serious injuries from which he never recovered. He died two years later. Meanwhile, the surviving passengers carried on to London in a replacement plane. That plane crashed on the return trip."[5]

[4] Life expectancy has been increasing and converging for most of the world. Sub-Saharan Africa has recently seen a decline, partly related to the HIV epidemic. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Average_lifespan

[5] Bryson: Down Under, pp 314-315.

Where do we stand now? In a cross Atlantic flight technology would allow us to arrive in New York from London earlier than we depart. That of course refers to the Concord service, which is no longer in operation and was the privilege of the elite classes. Or let us consider the ideas of *Sir Richard Branson*, who plans to have not only a shuttle service to space for a price of about €200.000 but also have a hotel built in space in his lifetime. From a technological point of view mankind is capable of achieving these goals and if the financial prospects are favourable there is no reason why these plans should not come true.

Changing demands – changing trends

Since people in the developed world can expect longer, healthier and better off life than earlier generations it is inevitable that this age group will be more active in travelling. This age group will seek health tourism products and spa services, while active and adventure holidays will be increasingly popular with the younger generations. In the developing world the involvement of the younger, more affluent generations with rising incomes aged 16-35 in tourism will grow relatively fast not only in leisure holidays but also in visiting friends and relatives. According to the European Travel Commission working people have less time for leisure so they are more willing to spend so as to save on their leisure time. It is also reported that demand for short breaks are on the increase.

The maintenance costs of both manmade and especially natural attractions will rise. wwf.org.uk reports that in certain cases desperate efforts have already been made. In Switzerland, in order to stop excessive melting of glaciers, an area of 2.500m^2 have been covered with insulating fleece.

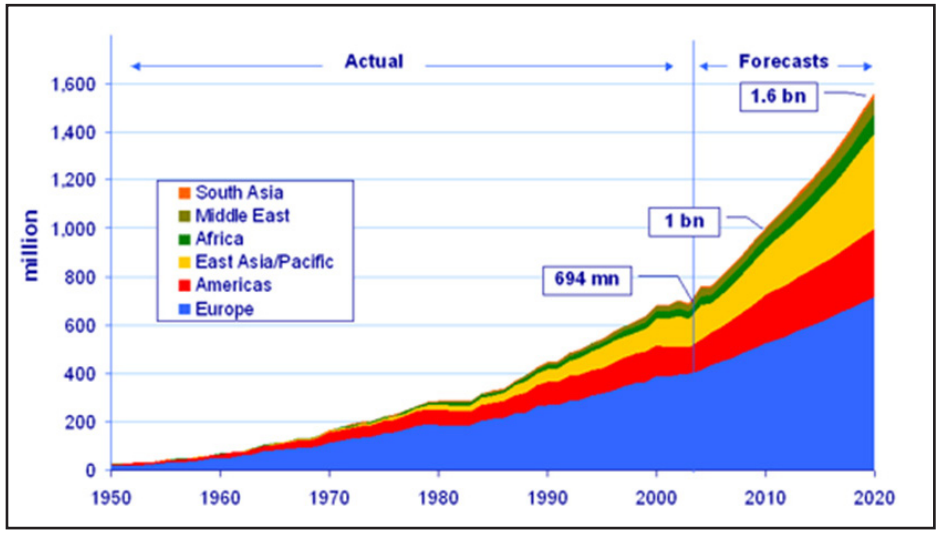
Due to educational and awareness raising campaigns demand for nature based holidays and eco-tourism will increase. Sustainability is already gaining more and more importance. Another factor in new trends is globalisation. More people study or work far away from home – their number is also on the increase.

We could go on listing these trends but from our point of view two more aspects have to be considered: lifestyle and transport. The data presented above makes it obvious that travel is no longer a luxury thus it has become an accepted part of life for many. Young people get married at a later stage in their life (the percentage of marriages is decreasing), which means they do not have the responsibility to bring up children. The upper limit of the youth market has already been modified from 30 to 35. Medical tourism in Europe is growing in popularity either because some people cannot afford treatment in their home country (think about dental tourism in Mosonmagyaróvár – Hungary) or because the advanced technology available in Europe can represent new hopes for people living in other parts of the world. Another niche market connected to lifestyle is gay-tourism (see *Hughes: A gay Tourism Market. in: Thyne, M. Laws, E. Hospitality, Tourism, and Lifestyle Concepts*. pp. 57-74).

As for travelling, 70% of all tourism journeys are connected to the car – a trend that is not likely to change according to the European Travel Commission. Changes, however, have already started to take place in aviation. The growth of budget airlines has made air travel affordable for the masses, which has already had a huge impact on our lifestyle: despite the threats and unnerving events the number of people opting to fly will continuously be on the increase according to the World Tourism Organization *(WTO)*.

Figure 2

Tourism 2020 Vision (WTO)[6]



The impacts of tourism

We have so far seen some influencing factors having an effect on individuals in their orientations in connection with tourism and have also presented some forecasts on the dynamic growth and changing nature of tourism. Since an increasing number of arrivals is expected and the volume of tourism is likely to rocket it is evident that this phenomena will have impacts not only on people's lifestyles but also on the environment. In the subsequent parts of this essay we will examine – to different extents – two kinds of impacts of tourism, namely socio-cultural and environmental impacts [7].

Socio-cultural impacts

The extensive number of scientific literature on the social impacts of tourism prevents us to duly present them, nevertheless some of the main influences are summarised in Table 3.

[6]"Tourism 2020 Vision is the World Tourism Organization's long-term forecast and assessment of the development of tourism up to the first 20 years of the new millennium."

[7]Economic impacts, though highly relevant from the point of view of effects on life style, will not be discussed due to the heavily restricted space.

Table 3

Socio-cultural impacts on host societies

1. Impact on population structure
• Size of population, age/sex composition
• Modification of family size
• Rural-urban transformation of population
2. Transformation of types of occupation (overlapping with economic impacts)
• Impact on language and qualification levels
• Impact on occupation distribution by sector, low-paid work
• Demand for female labour, increase in seasonality employment
• Foreign ownership and employment (neo-colonialism/imperialism)
3. Transformation of values
• Increasing social awareness, cultural exchange and knowledge
• Reinforcement and renewal or loss of pride in local culture
• Increasing services (education, health, standard of living)
• Jealousy, xenophobia, racial tension
• Cultural decline (acculturation), language decline
• Changes in religious or political behaviour
• Breakdown of moral values (for example prostitution, crime, gambling)
4. Influence on traditional way of life
• Changes of art, music, folklore, habits and customs
• Revitalisation of cultural traditions, development of cultural facilities
• "Trinketization" (over-commercialisation) of crafts/art produced for souvenirs
• Conservation of cultural heritage (e.g. ceremonies, art, crafts etc.)
• Preservation of monuments
5. Modification of consumption patterns
• Qualitative and quantitative alterations
• Demonstration effect

Source: Winner (2002)

Table 4

Adaptation of tourists to local norms

Type of tourist	Numbers of tourists	Adaptations to local norms	Community impact
Explorer	very limited	adapts fully	↓
Elite	rarely seen	adapts fully	↓
Off-beat	uncommon, but seen	adapts well	↓
Unusual	occasional	adapts somewhat	↓
Incipient mass	steady flow	seeks western amenities	↓
Mass	continuous influx	expects western amenities	↓
Charter	massive arrivals	demands western amenities	Steadily increasing

Source: Smith (1989)

As we can see from Smith's work, the larger the number of tourist to a given area, the less successfully they adapt to the culture of the host country while finally they expect nothing less in comfort than what they are used to in their home country. It would be interesting to see how the lifestyle of visitors is affected by their experience in a foreign environment.

Environmental impacts

Lifestyle thus is affected by the number of tourists and one can easily imagine that in the future due to the expected increase in international arrivals on the one hand and the simultaneous effects of globalization on the other the velocity of this shift will accelerate. There is, however, an alteration of a different kind that is – according to most scientists but denied by some – is triggered by human activity. How and to what extent does tourism contribute to climate change and what might be the consequences of global warming on life?

It should be obvious that while motor vehicles – let it be public transport, priva-

te cars or aircraft – are powered by fossil fuels the best solution is to use them less. Unfortunately, as we have seen, the very opposite trend can be observed currently, and although the contribution by aviation to climate change is fairly modest[8] at present, it is growing faster than any other contributors to this trend. In fact, forecasts suggest that by 2030 the aviation industry will make up as much as one quarter of the contribution to global warming in the United Kingdom.

The theoretical consequences are well known to many:

• Melting glaciers

• Rising sea levels due to the melting of the Arctic ice

• Declining crops

• 15-40% of species potentially facing extinction after only 2 °C of warming

• Shifts in weather patterns (heat waves, floods, hurricanes).

• Wildfires

• Disappearing islands and countries

Global warming on tourism

Tourism is one of the industries most threatened by climate change since a large number of destinations depend on the state of the surrounding natural environment. Although it is possible that some higher latitude countries will experience positive impacts of tourism in the short run such as lower heating requirements or an increase in inbound tourism, these will not be the prevailing trends. Lower latitude countries will have to face serious consequences:

"The Halifax Travel Insurance Holiday 2030 report reveals that by 2030 global average temperatures are likely to be at least 1 °C higher and possibly as much as 2 °C. While this doesn't sound very much, the implications could be dramatic for global holiday destinations. By 2030 global sea levels could be 72 mm higher but accelerated melting of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets could contribute to levels of 25 cm. Every one mm sea-level rise translates into 1.5 metre retreat of the shoreline. This means by 2030 shorelines could be expected to have retreated by at least 108m, and possibly by up to 375m, equivalent to the height of the Empire State building. This would wipe out beaches across the globe and coastal amenities such as hotels, golf courses and retail facilities would be threatened."

http://blog.sustainabletravel.com/

What can be done to curb the negative effects of global warming? It seems that first of all awareness should be raised not only about the problem but also about what can be done to tackle them. Let us see some suggestions now from *http://www.panda.org/index.cfm:*

• Make tourism and conservation compatible – the money you spend on your trip helps determine the development and direction of tourism

• Learn about the culture and customs of the areas you will visit before you go.

• Visit parks and nature reserves.

• View and photograph wildlife from a distance.

• Respect the environment, stay on trails during hikes, do not remove plants or feed animals, and never litter.

• Reduce your air travel.

• Reduce your car use.

• Respect local culture, traditions and religious places.

• Conserve water.

• Limit energy use, including your use of air conditioning and hot water.

• Minimise your use of personal care products – or you might just find them on the beach next time you visit.

• Reduce the impact of your recreational activities by avoiding sports which have a significant harmful impact on the environment or choose more progressive establishments (e.g golf courses which recycle water).

• Recycle newspapers, magazines and your beverage containers.

[8]Approximately 3% of overall EU greenhouse gas emission; http://europa.eu/index_en.htm

• Choose lodgings that have effective waste treatment systems, that recycle, that are energy efficient.

• Respect rules and regulations, pay attention to signals and behave responsibly.

• Say „No" to Bad Souvenirs – some souvenirs could end up costing a lot more than you paid for them.

We could also add to this list new and already existing regulations should also be implemented and airlines, for instance, could introduce voluntary greenhouse fee[9]. Nevertheless, all this would not yield any favourable results if we did not change our lifestyles not only while away from home but also when we are not on holiday. The only way to stop the harmful effects is by "changing out emissions and lifestyles"[10].

This suggestion is seconded by the UN IPCC committee, which announced that "a dramatic shift in lifestyles"[11] is required.

Is it feasible to change our lifestyles to the extent that could make a difference? According to *http://www.wwf.org.uk/core/* there are people who have already changing their way of living. What is more, we should not forget that: "No one could make a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little"[12].

The authors' intention was to point out connections between lifestyle and tourism. Holidays, flights, exotic places, even space is more readily accessible than ever in history – having a huge impact on our lifestyles. However, at current levels and with current technology this trend is not sustainable. It has been suggested that beside further and more advanced technological changes the lifestyle of modern man has to be altered in order to preserve the planet for the next generations.

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[9]"The Airline group SAS has introduced an initiative to let customers pay a voluntary carbon emission fee that contributes to environmental projects aimed to reduce the release of greenhouse gases." http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17612589/
[10]http://www.associatedcontent.com/lifestyle
[11]http://www.ecotonline.org/Pages/HomePagelist.asp
[12]Edmund Burke: Irish orator, philosopher, & politician (1729–1797)