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## **Eight reasons why tourism professionals should strive for sustainability**

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## EIGHT REASONS WHY TOURISM PROFESSIONALS SHOULD STRIVE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

### SUSTAINABILITY?

The idea of sustainability springs from the concept of sustainable development which became common language at the world's first Earth Summit in Rio in 1992:

*"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* (Brundtland Report for the World Commission on Environment and Development).

Following a similar idea, the UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as the:

*"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"*

It seems a reasonable thing to do, although somehow, we are not able to comply with it.



Some senior management groups do not accept the fact that the world is changing in specific ways. On the other side, those who do accept these changes, are looking to build competitive advantages to hedge against future legislation and to tackle emerging strategic challenges. This last group understands that these emerging challenges may impact the: (1) medium-long term viability of their organization, (2) financial performance of the business and shareholder returns and (3) the size and scope of the business in terms of geographies and market segments. This makes them leaders of the sustainability movement<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Mike Rosaenberg: "A Strategic approach to sustainability"

### REASON 1: TO LEAD WORLD PROGRESS

The global consequences that the tourism industry has, are called impacts. Impacts are both positive and negative.

Positive impact is how tourism has benefited all destinations by bringing economic growth, cultural openness and new infrastructure. Tourism has been, undoubtedly, part of the progress of the world, countries, towns and villages, currently representing 7% of the world's exports in goods and services, and 10% of global GDP, being the 3rd economic sector.

Further facts are:

- The chart below shows how much tourism influences GDP and employment percentages in the 10 top OECD countries;
- Many tribes around the world, damned to disappear, have now recovered their ancient ways of living through the development of tourism.

Country	Year	Tourism as % of GDP	Year	Tourism as % of total employment
Austria	2014	5.50	2013	7.3
France	2014	7.00	2014	7.2
Greece	2013	5.32	2014	9.1
Hungary	2011	5.47	2011	9.0
Iceland	2013	4.60	2014	8.2
Italy	2010	6.00	2010	8.4
México	2013	8.66	2013	5.9
Portugal	2010	9.20	2013	9.2
Slovenia	2009	4.90	2014	6.1
Spain	2012	10.90	2014	12.7

Source: OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2016 - © OECD 2016

- Tourism has had a positive effect on wildlife preservation and protection efforts and many countries have established wildlife reserves and enacted strict laws protecting them. As a result, several endangered species have begun to thrive again<sup>2</sup>, as for example the apes of the Great Lakes in Africa.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/Business/SectoralActivities/Tourism/FactsandFiguresaboutTourism/ImpactsOfTourism/EnvironmentalImpacts/TourismandEnvironmentalConservation/tabid/78779/Default.aspx>



Source: <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G02770.pdf>

On the other side, we find the negative impacts. While building that progress, over a long period of time we have ruined, destroyed and razed to the ground many environmental wonders, unique villages and cultural heritage sites with the so called 'mass tourism' strategy. 'Mass tourism' still happens today. For example:

- UNESCO has already cautioned that 3 million visitors per year is too great a number for Mount St. Michel. Few places have ever had so many souvenir shops per square metre<sup>3</sup>.



- The Machu Pichu Ruins in Peru, built in XV century to host 800 people, are now visited by 2,500 daily.



- Moais Statues, megaliths on Easter Island in Chile dated around 1400 - 1650 A.D, are being worn down not only by time but also by tourists.

<sup>3</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/2829>



The greatest damage is usually found in 'sun & beach' destinations such as the Island of Koh Tachai in Thailand, currently closed to tourism since May 2015 by the Government due to the ecological damage caused by mass tourism<sup>4</sup>. Other similarly endangered places are the Phi Phi Islands, also in Thailand, Cozumel Island in Mexico and the Galapagos Island in Ecuador.

The undeniable evidence surrounding the negative consequences of tourism in some destinations has encouraged many voices to advocate for sustainability.

Undoubtedly, tourism is directly related to culture and environment, the biggest tourism drivers. A damaged environment will not help boost tourism visits, which will indeed lead to a decline in business.

The conclusion is that positive impacts are preferable to negative ones. **Ameliorating and creating destinations that are more sustainable will add value to businesses helping them to lead in world progress.**

## REASON 2: TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate is a crucial resource for tourism and many destinations depend on the local climate to thrive.

On the other hand, tourism, as one of the fastest growing economic sectors, has been estimated (2005) to have an impact on global warming as high as 5% of the global GHG emissions<sup>5</sup>. Projected worldwide travel increase will pose a greater threat. By 2035, if no action is taken, the CO2 emission generated by tourism will be more than three times higher than it is today<sup>6</sup>.

Given that tourism has an impact on climate, and changing climate also impacts on a destination's attractiveness (beach, nature and winter sport tourism

<sup>4</sup> <http://similar-islands.com/koh-tachai/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://sdt.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/climate2008.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> UNEP. Climate Change. <http://www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/Business/SectoralActivities/Tourism/Activities/WorkThematicAreas/ClimateChange/tabid/78787/Default.aspx>.

segments), demand patterns for tourists are likely to change.

Rising temperatures (loss of snow cover could cause a fall in winter tourism), higher sea levels (that could submerge small islands and coastal regions), extreme climate events hitting harder each time (floods, cold and droughts) and degraded habitats (desertification, deforestation), will seriously affect almost every sub-sector of the tourism industry. Figure below<sup>7</sup>.



Raolo Island. Catherine Wilson/IPS

Many international agencies, NGOs and private sector companies are now seriously advocating for climate change:

- The OECD mentions in 'OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2014', that in the medium-term, climate change will continue to cause pressure on individuals to choose more sustainable transport modes<sup>8</sup>.
- Although UNWTO cites some potentially positive effects of climate change on tourism (e.g. longer beach seasons), it highlights mainly negative effects that outweigh the positive effects.
- The IPCC in its Second Working Group (WG2) report, aimed to assess the risks associated with climate change. It states that climate change impact in the short term is mostly expected to affect small islands and developing states (SIDS) in coastal areas.
- According to a 2015 World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) study, "The next 20 years will be characterized by our sector fully integrating climate change and related issues into business strategy, supporting the global

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/08/swamped-by-rising-seas-small-islands-seek-a-lifeline/>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/568343/EPRS\\_IDA\(2015\)568343\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/568343/EPRS_IDA(2015)568343_EN.pdf)

transition to a low carbon economy, strengthening resilience at a local level against climate risks, promoting the value of responsible travel, and making entire supply chains greener."

Implications may go further than they seem. In small island states and developing countries, where tourism is a major economic activity, any significant reduction in tourist arrivals will have serious employment impacts and generate further poverty. There are already 'climate refugees' which need to relocate.

With these scenarios, it is in our benefit to implement adaptation and mitigation measures, in all types of destinations. **Embracing sustainability to fight Climate Change is a basic necessity at this point.**

### REASON 3: TO SAVE COSTS

Adaptation and mitigation strategies are all envisioned from a reducing costs stand point. This reduction of costs automatically implies both economic and environmental benefits. The sector is already responsible for waste in the following areas:

- **Water waste**

Architects, urbanists, communication and tourism professionals around the world are looking for creative solutions to this challenge: the instability of water resources. This is a worldwide problem. Diminishing the industry's dependency on water by reusing it is key. Desalination and reuse systems are already being implemented into designs for new urban and tourism facilities. Both tourists and residents are more conscious about water distribution, misuse and shortage.

Nowadays, tourism establishments have many tools for a better water management.

- **Energy waste**

Fossil fuel energy systems transformation to renewable energy is highly necessary. Energy is also a great challenge which needs to be handled in a similarly forward-thinking way. A way to start is to reduce carbon footprint, the challenge of this being the reporting of emissions. The Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative (HCMI) was created by WTTC to help remedy this situation<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.wttc.org/mission/tourism-for-tomorrow/hotel-carbon-measurement-initiative/>

- **Food waste**

One-third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally<sup>10</sup>. Food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain representing an additional waste of resources used in its production such as water, energy and inputs, increasing the green gas emissions in vain.

Have you ever calculated how much money your establishment wastes in discarded food? According to Green Hotelier, 'the average cost of avoidable food waste to a hotel business is £0.52 (approx. \$0.85) per meal in the UK. Multiply this by the number of covers to give you an idea of how much money you could help your business, and the industry, save'.<sup>11</sup>

**Correct management of these issues in tourism facilities and destinations could certainly help us save costs as well as drive behavioral change, help us achieve long term success and be a leading example for other industries to also adopt sustainability.**

#### REASON 4: TO ENLARGE SCOPE OF BUSINESS

There are several studies to help us shed light on trends and statistics:

- The percentage of consumers who are willing to pay more for sustainable brands that showed commitment to social and environmental values went up from 55% to 66% between 2014 and 2015. About 73% of the younger generations - Millennials and Generation Z - are more likely to pay more for sustainability, compared to 51% of Baby Boomers<sup>12</sup>.
- Among agents that book meetings and incentives travel 79% reported that demand for healthier corporate/business meetings (i.e. meetings with healthy food, fitness and spa experiences, access to nature etc.) was a rising trend in 2015<sup>13</sup>.
- Nature-based tourism accounts for about 20% of total international travel and continues to grow, according to the UNWTO<sup>14</sup>.
- Europeans have expressed wide support for the

10 <http://www.fao.org/save-food/en/>

11 <http://www.greenhotelier.org/know-how-guides/reducing-and-managing-food-waste-in-hotels/>

12 The Nielsen Company. (October 12, 2015). "Consumer-Goods' Brands that Demonstrate Commitment to Sustainability Outperform Those that Don't." <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/press-room/2015/consumer-goods-brands-that-demonstrate-commitment-to-sustainability-outperform.html>.

13 Spafinder Wellness, Inc. (2015). 2015 State of Wellness Travel Report. Spafinder Wellness, Inc. <http://www.spafinder.com/blog/press-release/new-state-of-wellness-travel-survey-shows-record-86percent-of-travel-agents-expect-growth-in-2015/>

14 Conservation International, Rainforest Alliance, UNEP. (2015a). A Practical Guide to Good Practice for Tropical Forest-Based Tours. [http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/good\\_practice.pdf](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/good_practice.pdf).

enforcement of the EU's current legal framework for protection of nature. The 2015 Eurobarometer further confirmed that more than 80% of Europeans are concerned about the loss of biodiversity<sup>15</sup>.

- A 2013 TripAdvisor.com survey of 1,300 U.S. travelers shows that nearly two-thirds often or always consider the environment when choosing hotels, transportation and meals<sup>16</sup>.
- There is a consensus among specialists that we are currently experiencing a "New Tourism." These new tourists have a higher level of environmental and cultural awareness, which means that as a result of the generalization of ICTs and social networks they are more demanding, more able to influence, and have their say on the products that they consume<sup>17</sup>.

More people in wide-ranging generations are expressing concern on sustainable issues and travelling with purpose, eco-gastronomy and local buying is becoming a trend, including in high end segments.

As a business, refusing these fact can have consequences: today bad practices are rapidly spread on social media and it is in the hospitality sector where people rely most on peers' opinions before deciding where to spend their money.

Who hasn't heard about the scandal and consequences regarding Volkswagen's CO2 motor fixing? Or the issue that Nestlé had when caught using a Palm Oil supplier accused of unsustainable practices? 'Greenwashing' activities in developed countries that do not follow the same standards in other countries can also be an issue for brands, giving rise to customer doubts and implying huge investment to regain confidence.

In Tourism, unsustainable practices can occur with huge negative impacts, such is the case of Ile a Vache in Haiti. In 2013, a projected resort development, supported by the former government, could have been a great idea as an economic boost. Unfortunately they neither looked for the population's consensus nor assured land tenure security<sup>18</sup>. This brought islanders to stop the project and investors lost money and time until the situation was back on track years

15 WWF, BirdLife International, Friends of the Earth Europe, and European Environmental Bureau. (2015). Nature Legislation: Fit for Purpose and in Need of Action. [http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/wwf\\_5020\\_ngo\\_policypaper\\_final\\_print.pdf](http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/wwf_5020_ngo_policypaper_final_print.pdf)

16 "Survey: 62 percent of travelers go green; hotels could do more." (May 8, 2013). Planyourmeengs.com. ppress release on TripAdvisor.com survey. <hp://planyourmeengs.com/2013/05/08/survey-62-percent-of-travelersgo-green-hotels-could-do-more/>.

17 UNWTO. (2015a)

18 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/15/paradise-overbooked-haiti-land-earthquake-tourism/>

later. Costs are kept much lower when things are done right from the very beginning.

**To enlarge the scope of business, catch up with new trends and influence tourism behavior, we need to play fairly and transparently. This will guarantee better business in the long term.**

### REASON 5: TO THRIVE ABOVE WORLD CONFLICT AND ENGAGE WITH GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

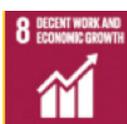
Why has tourism continued its growth and diversification over the last decades?

A quick analysis would conclude the already mentioned positive impacts - economic growth, poverty eradication, biodiversity protection, cultural heritage conservation – and its ability to develop across each generation.

The potential that tourism has in both emerging economies as well as in developed countries is key to making it recognized as one of the most influential sectors. But this potential hangs in the balance when exposed to the dangers of armed conflict.

Unfortunately it has clearly been demonstrated that a country's tourism is only as strong (or weak) as its security level. **Tourism thrives with peace and disappears without it.** Tourism can therefore be used as a tool for peace. When tourism players realize and decide to commit to the importance of this kind of safety, they are in fact strategically thinking about the business.

These issues, among others, are included in the **Sustainable Development Goals**<sup>19</sup>, which are a path to engagement towards sustainable development for all sectors. Tourism is specifically mentioned in three:



Goal 8: promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full productive employment and decent work for all



Goal 12: ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

<sup>19</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>



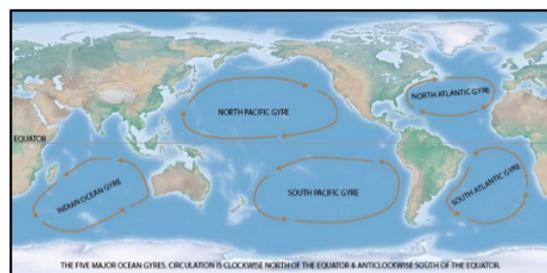
Goal 14: conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Engaging in sustainable development could also mean advocating in the sustainable process to produce certain products used in the sector, as for example:

- **Palm Oil:** it is currently the cheapest edible oil and is found in approximately 40-50% of household products in many developed countries. Even though agricultural results of this oil has been proven to be 10 times more productive than any other vegetable oil such as soya bean or rapeseed, it poses negative impacts: thousands of hectares of tropical forests -mainly in Malaysia and Thailand - are being illegally incinerated for its plantation<sup>20</sup> and linked to major issues such as deforestation, habitat degradation, climate change, animal cruelty and indigenous rights abuses... An estimated 1000-5000 orangutans are killed each year for this development.

- **Plastics:** have been dominating the 20th century due to their low cost manufacture, versatility and waterproof qualities. They are used in an enormous range of products. They are synthetic and derive from petrochemicals. Unfortunately, they also create a big environmental problem, because of their low rate of decomposition. Even though the industry has advanced with recycling techniques, millions of tons are not being recycled and are not biodegradable. As an example, we find the Garbage Patches, present in five major World Sea gyres composed of microplastics and with uncertain future consequences (see figure below)<sup>21</sup>.

#### Marine debris accumulation locations



Taking this into account, it is recommended limiting or eliminating our use of disposable plastics especially

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2122544/Hundreds-orangutans-killed-north-Indonesian-forest-fires-deliberately-started-palm-oil-firms.html?ITO=1490>

<sup>21</sup> <http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/about/media/how-big-great-pacific-garbage-patch-science-vs-myth.html>

StyroFoam packages, which as of January 1st 2017, for example, have been banned in San Francisco US<sup>22</sup>, and increasing our use of biodegradable resources<sup>23</sup>.

## Tourism is definitely a driver of change.

A constructive approach would involve setting company objectives to seriously commit to some of the goals for change. Also joining the UN Global Compact initiative can help a company in taking steps towards achieving sustainable development goals.

Not doing so when the possibility to do so is there would be negligent. We may be risking too much if we don't.

## REASON 6: TO ACCEPT A MORAL AND ETHICAL IMPERATIVE - HERITAGE FOR OUR SUCCESSORS

Beyond engaging in sustainable development for financial costs, trends, scope of business and even legalities, there are strong ethical and moral reasons to embrace sustainability in tourism.

As humans, we differ from other species in our capacity to distinguish between good and bad through ethics and morality.

For those who work for their own sake and also for the sake of their kids, family and friends, doing the right thing is always gratifying.

A bad thing is knowing that human trafficking and child abuse is happening around you, in your establishment, and you are profiting from that. There are voluntary programs to be specifically implemented in tourism, such as the fight against human trafficking with the ITP Protocol, the NSIS of Portugal (Network of Strategic and International Studies)<sup>24, 25</sup> as well as initiatives concerning child sexual exploitation like The Code<sup>26</sup>. All of them are part of what for longer than a decade has been called Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Photo below<sup>27</sup>.



Source: By Citizen Thel, Mexico

We know the Philippines, Mexico, and Thailand are among the most common destinations for sex tourism, where children and women are forced and enslaved for the sake of tourism. Is that acceptable?

ECPAT International<sup>28</sup> estimated that 30,000 to 40,000 children are exploited in underage sex work in Thailand<sup>29</sup>. All tourism professionals serving in those countries should tackle this matter as a flagship of their business. This is again a great example where tourism can drive change.

In 1999, UNWTO adopted the Code of Ethics, a set of principles addressed to all. By April 2016, a total of 452 signatories from 64 countries had committed to promote and implement the Code in their business operations.

**Today, these initiatives are sustainable development obligations. They correspond to the values that we will leave as heritage for our successors.**

## REASON 7: TO BECOME MORE COMPETITIVE - REINVENT BUSINESS AS USUAL

Innovation and creativity are both characteristics of our industry. To become more competitive we need to reinvent 'business as usual'. Joining sustainable practices as well as reinventing 'business as usual' will help with this matter.

The following cases clearly demonstrate that the industry needs to be reinvented:

- Coral reefs: Some estimates place the total global value of coral-reef based recreation and tourism at \$9.6 billion<sup>30</sup>. For many countries, such as the Caribbean states, tourism depends on healthy seas and reefs. There is increasing evidence that climate change, overfishing activities, pollution<sup>31</sup> and tourism activities like diving, anchoring

28 <http://www.ecpat.org/about-ecpat/>

29 <https://viewsonsextrafficking.wordpress.com>

30 <http://coralreefsystems.org/content/value-corals>

31 [https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4\\_syr.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr.pdf)

22 <http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/City-OKs-ban-on-Styrofoam-Jane-Kim-wants-to-play-8332796.php>

23 <http://nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/great-pacific-garbage-patch/>

24 [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/report\\_of\\_the\\_31st\\_meeting\\_of\\_the\\_world\\_tourism\\_network\\_on\\_child\\_protection\\_2\\_2.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/report_of_the_31st_meeting_of_the_world_tourism_network_on_child_protection_2_2.pdf)

25 <https://thrive.hyatt.com/content/dam/Minisites/hyattthrive/2015%20Refresh/ITP-Human-Trafficking-Position-Statement.pdf>

26 <http://www.thecode.org/>

27 <https://twoglobalcitizens.wordpress.com/tag/stop-child-sex-tourism/>

and bad sewage management, severely impact coral reefs. A World Resources Institute (WRI) report states that 75% of the world's coral reefs are at risk. Overexploitation and coastal development pose the greatest potential threat and if we continue with business as usual, WRI projects that 90% of coral reefs will be in danger by 2030, and all of them by 2050<sup>32</sup>. Reinventing activities that are popular for tourists, such as diving, would create a competitive advantage and save otherwise endangered coral reefs

- **Waste production:** At the Marrakesh summit 2016 it was estimated that between 4 and 5 million tons of waste are produced daily on our planet. Fifty percent of the waste is never properly collected. Out of the half that is collected, only 15-20% of it is recycled. Waste management is a challenge all over the world. It is difficult to measure the percentage of rubbish produced by the tourism sector, although there is work in progress to do so. Many cities are already considering implementing intelligent containers, where a company or a household will be charged based on the weight and volume of its rubbish.
- **Clean air:** More and more scientific studies show an array of positive impacts clean air and green scenery have on our minds, creativity, and general well-being. You may have read about how postoperative patients recover at different rates depending on whether they can see trees or bricks from their hospital windows<sup>33</sup>. This can also be applied to hotel rooms and the way we consider the wellbeing of our guests. Could it also result in longer stays and less complaints?

For example, the Shinrin-Yoku (Forest Therapy), developed by Chiba University (Japan) and the Tokyo School of Medicine, scientifically demonstrated how forests can benefit both our immune and nervous systems. Cases of stress, trauma, and some cancers improved when the patient is close to nature<sup>34 35 36</sup>. Tourism products around 'Forest Therapy' are already in development. Again, if the tourism industry introduced new measures and developed new ways to solve these challenges, such as waste reduction and increasing recycling/reuse, we could have a dramatically positive impact on the world. There are a few additional key points that you should take into account as you decide whether to join sustainable practices:

32 <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2011/06/13/losing-our-coral-reefs/>  
33 <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360132312001758>  
34 <http://www.h.chiba-u.jp/prof/graduate/ryokuchi/yimiyazakie.html>  
35 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17055544>  
36 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2793347/>

- UNEP affirms that for businesses that embrace mitigation and are proactive in addressing climate change, "there will be new business opportunities. Current societal trends have already created new markets for low-carbon tourism products, and these markets are expected to grow in the future. Sustainable practices in the tourism industry in the era of climate change is not just politically correct; it is a competitive advantage<sup>37</sup>."
- A 2015 study states that a growing number of businesses are advocating for a more sustainable and efficient use of natural resources as central for their development, showing that through dialogue between stakeholders, nature and business can thrive side by side<sup>38</sup>.
- A 2015 report on convention centers found that 70% of respondents have a dedicated Sustainability Coordinator or Sustainability Manager, 77% have an employee 'green team', and 85% participate in sustainability programs or initiatives and take an active role in shaping the sustainable development of their community. In addition, 90% have either achieved or are actively seeking a sustainability-related certification<sup>39</sup>.

### REASON 8: TO COMPLY WITH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS & ACCESS POTENTIAL FUNDING

Global concerns such as climate change, health, social inequalities, economic impacts, migration, and security continuously push governments to take measures and adopt new laws. Sustainability, which addresses all of the aforementioned issues, is more present than ever in the international governing committees.

There are many emerging certification programs that demand following specific standards. Additionally, there are now many regulatory procedures and laws (energy, environmental, labor, waste management, etc...) that require compliance by the industry.

Currently, there are several voluntary programs for companies and destinations, that provide different sustainability certifications, either internationally recognized (GSCT, Biosphere Responsible Tourism, EarthCheck, etc.) or nationally recognized.

37 UNEP. *Climate Change*.  
38 WWF, BirdLife International, Friends of the Earth Europe, and European Environment Bureau. (2015).  
39 Greenview & Twirl Management. (2015). *Green Venue Report: The State of Convention & Exhibition Center Sustainability*. <http://www.greenvenue.com/2015-green-venue-report>.

Regulatory interventions identify and address market failures to protect stakeholders and environmental resources. They enable competitive markets, which provide investment incentives, innovate and improve efficiency, maintain consumer confidence and encourage responsible consumption<sup>40</sup>.

Since tourism is a complex sector that incorporates a wide range of industries, there may be several acts and laws impacting tourism businesses, without being necessarily tourism-specific legislation in your country. Such is the case in Australia, where the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre found 175 Acts convening this<sup>41</sup>.

Compliance with these constant new laws may necessitate important investments for companies, resulting in funding opportunities, which should be availed of at the time.

There will come a day when transition periods to adapt to the new regulations will end, and latecomers who missed the deadline will incur sizeable penalties.

Some of these laws involve ISO Norms. ISO, an independent, non-governmental international organization based in Switzerland, provides practical standards, internationally consistent solutions and best practices to help make these goals a reality. As examples, we find:

- ISO 50001 for energy management,
- ISO 20121 for sustainable event management,
- ISO 14001 for environmental standards,

In addition, ISO has a committee developing standards specifically for the tourism industry, ISO/TC 228, Tourism services.

Concerning funding programs, look into:

- **COSME programme (EU)**, operating from 2014 - 2020 with budget of EUR 2.3 billion, aims to support SMES in four areas: facilitate SME access to finance, improve framework conditions for competitive and sustainable EU enterprises, promote entrepreneurship and improve access to markets.

- **Horizon 2020 (EU)**, the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever, has nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020) and is a financial instrument to help achieve excellence in science,

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/262631/12-688-regulation-and-growth.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/262631/12-688-regulation-and-growth.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.sustainabletourisonline.com/business-operations/planning/regulatory-compliance>

industrial leadership and tackle societal challenges including energy transference, open to private sector.

- **Life regulation (EU)**, in place for 2014–2020, has a budget of €3.4 billion to co-finance grants for best practices, pilot and demonstration projects that contribute to the climate change adaptation and migration efforts.

Many countries have developed financial aid for those that transition to sustainable energy solutions, create tourism products, and/or build hotels with sustainable principles. **Do not hesitate to take advantage of all these opportunities. Breaking the law will cause you to lose your competitive edge. Avoiding non-compliance costs.**

### CONCLUSION: IT'S EASY

Beginning the process of transitioning to sustainable practices in your company may seem daunting. An easy way to start is by following principles and guidelines developed by international agencies such as UNWTO, Global Sustainable Tourism Council and other EU tourism policies.

Running a tourism business is a great challenge and an incredible achievement. Implementing sustainable systems for water, energy, waste and food management is not only the right choice, but should seem easy.

Join programs like The Code to take action against human trafficking and sexual exploitation, which unfortunately happen frequently through tourism. This program will encourage your staff to be more attentive to warning signs, and know how to react if they identify potential situations like this.

Act fairly with the local culture and environment you are surrounded with and take measures to protect them, which will in turn protect your business in the long run.

Introduce and invite others to adopt a healthier lifestyle and consumption patterns, avoiding usage of plastics and palm oil products.

The sector can't keep practising **tourism as usual**. The future of tourism undeniably includes sustainability. If you agree to implement these simple actions, tourism can be a cleaner industry that will boost job creation,

reduce poverty, encourage peace and have a positive impact on the planet.

It is about time that we confront the reality. We have the means of doing things right. Whether our contribution is positive or negative does not only depend on each of us, but on all of us together. There is a sense of urgency so do not forget this report after you read it. Instead, take action.

Sustainability is a huge opportunity for us to grow both as an industry and as humans. Those who make great changes, good or bad enough to influence the lives of many, are those who will be remembered.

Let's make a substantial GOOD change.

Other relevant sources:

- <https://europeanclimate.org/climate-change-implications-for-tourism/>
- [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/568343/EPRS\\_IDA\(2015\)568343\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/568343/EPRS_IDA(2015)568343_EN.pdf)
- <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/4099Presentation%200.1%20Kelly%20Bricker%20-%20full%20presentation.pdf>
- <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/peseta/economic-results>
- [http://www.responsibletravel.org/whatWeDo/The\\_Case\\_for\\_Responsible\\_Travel\\_2016\\_Final.pdf](http://www.responsibletravel.org/whatWeDo/The_Case_for_Responsible_Travel_2016_Final.pdf)

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