



Responsible Travel and Ethical Tourism: Trends and Issues



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ABSTRACT: The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 initiated the sustainable development in tourism. In the sixth United Nations meeting in 2022, the importance of responsibility in sustainable tourism development has been highlighted. The Tragedy of the Commons revealed the over-use of shared or common resources and each exploiter of common resources was guided by self-interest. The Cape Town Declaration brought together the destination approach to responsible tourism developed in South Africa with AITO's source market approach. Responsible Tourism is critical as it minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts; generates great economic benefits for local communities and enhances their wellbeing; involves local people in decision making about tourism in their communities; contributes to the conservation of cultural and natural heritage; is inclusive; provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through meaningful experiences and is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, builds local pride and confidence. Business has incorporated Corporate Social Responsibility but there will be increasing pressure for businesses and destination governments to take responsibility, reduce emissions and adapt the way they construct and sell tourism. For future development, the roles of government and intergovernmental action are critical to oversee how far responsible businesses can go before their very existence as profitable.

KEYWORDS: responsible tourism; Tragedy of the Commons; responsibility; sustainable development; destinations; governments

Introduction

Responsible tourism emerged at the beginning of this century as a movement encouraging travellers, holidaymakers, communities and businesses to take responsibility and improve tourism. Responsible tourism aims to make better places for people to live in and for people to visit, putting the interests of resident communities first. The reasons for the emergence of responsible tourism are discussed, followed by its development and some thoughts about the future.

Almost half a century ago, in 1972, the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment took place in Stockholm, the first of a series of conferences on environment and sustainable development. In June 2022 the sixth UN meeting, was again held in Stockholm

addressing the theme "Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity." (www.stockholm50.global). The concept of responsibility has come to the fore as the gap between rhetoric and delivery has become increasingly apparent. The 2022 conference was intended to deliver a springboard for action to accelerate the UN Decade of Action implementation to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the post-2020 global Biodiversity Framework, and encourage the adoption of green post-COVID-19 recovery plans.

In 1972 the Club of Rome published a report by Meadows et al., which concluded that economic growth could not continue indefinitely because of resource depletion. The report was widely debated and criticised. However, a review of its projections published by Turner in 2008 concluded that "30 years of historical data compare favorably with key features of a business-as-usual scenario called the "standard run" scenario, which results in collapse of the global system midway through the 21st century" (Turner, 2008, p.397). In 2014 Turner was significantly more pessimistic about the "mixed results" from successive UN conferences pointing to "... unresolved critical environmental issues and resource constraints such as anthropogenic climate change and peak oil, the global economy is also beset by ongoing challenges from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), not least of which are lingering levels of extraordinary debt." Turner points out that "the standard political remedy of growing the economy out of debt has potential ramifications for environmental stability, with evident negative feedbacks on the economy" (Turner, 2014, p.4).

The analysis provided by Meadows et al. (1972) and Turner (2008) assumes the continuation of business as usual. A crisis is inevitable only if we persist with business as usual. We have choices. More recently, Kate Raworth's reconceptualisation of sustainable development for the Anthropocene, popularised as Doughnut Economics, has begun to secure traction, recognising that "... wellbeing depends on enabling every person to lead a life of dignity and opportunity while safeguarding the integrity of Earth's life-supporting systems." Raworth argues that the "best chance of enabling a life of dignity and opportunity for more than 10 billion people over the coming century, therefore, depends on sustaining Holocene-like conditions, such as a stable climate, clean air, a protective ozone layer, thriving biodiversity, and healthy oceans." Raworth argues that we need to ensure that people enjoy the internationally agreed social foundations within our planetary boundaries (Raworth, 2017, pp.48-49). There is growing awareness of these issues, particularly amongst the young, and growing evidence that consumer attitudes are changing.

The UN developed a broad sustainability agenda and in 2015 launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the United Nations General Assembly. The SDGs are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. Halfway to 2030, there are growing doubts about the possibility of achieving the SDGs and calls for radical reform of the Goals and Indicators (Naidoo & Fisher 2020, Sachs et al., 2020). 2021 saw COP 26 on Climate Change and COP 15 on Biological Diversity, raising awareness of these two existential crises and the limited progress to date (Pettorelli et al., 2021). We would each prefer others to make the necessary sacrifices; this is the tragedy of the commons.

The Tragedy of the Commons

There is very substantial literature on the 'Tragedy of the Commons' (Hardin, 1968; 1998). This is not a new problem. In 1833, William Foster Lloyd published a pamphlet addressing the over-use of shared or common resources, hypothesising that each exploiter of common resources would be guided by self-interest. When further exploitation of the resource would lead to its degradation, it still makes rational sense for the individual or business to continue exploiting the resource because the benefit accrues to the individual or business, and the loss is commonized (Hardin, 1968).

Lloyd writing in the wake of the enclosure movement in England, developed a theory of the commons as a critique of Adam Smith, suggesting that improvident use of property owned in common was likely to lead to overgrazing, as individuals pursued their short-term interest. Hardin explained the tragedy. "Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons" (Hardin, 1968, p.1244).

In the 4th century BCE, Aristotle understood this challenge and described it eloquently:

"...that which is common to the greatest number has the least care bestowed upon it. Everyone thinks chiefly of his own, hardly at all of the common interest. Everyone thinks chiefly of his own, hardly at all of the common interest, and only when he is himself concerned as an individual. For besides other considerations, everybody is more inclined to neglect the duty which he expects another to fulfil... ." (Jowett & Davis, 2000, pp.24-25).

In economics, it is widely recognised that externalities exist. The classic example is pollution. The producer bears only the direct costs of production, not the indirect costs of the harm caused by the pollution. Humanity has been slow to recognise that we live in a finite world, we look at the oceans and our atmosphere, and they appear infinite. Since 1968 we have become increasingly familiar with images of our spaceship Earth, the gyros of plastic in our oceans, and the consequence of the accumulation of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, but, as predicted by Aristotle, we still look to others to solve these problems. Individuals, businesses and governments acting on behalf of nation-states would all prefer others to bear the costs of applying the polluter pays principle. (Gaines, 1991) Humanity has developed a range of ways to manage common property resources sustainably, but those strategies require governance. Elinor Ostrom was awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize in Economic Science for her work documenting, in *Governing the Commons*, how communities can successfully regulate access to common resources, co-operating to exploit those resources prudently without collapse. We know how to do it, but governments are reluctant to act and impose costs on their electorate or lobby groups and apply the polluter pays principle.

In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and government initiatives to defend bankrupt banks and other financial institutions, there has been public concern about " '...privatizing profits and socializing losses' or 'Main Street vs. Wall Street'", an agenda which also raised intergenerational debt issues. (Bental & Demougin, 2016, p.179) The wave of social protest by the young about the failure of governments to address the existential threat of climate change has given rise to "intergenerational discounting: a description of breakdown in

reciprocal obligations of care, giving rise to accusations of hypocrisy, expressions of resentment and rage, and the description of the virus as the 'Boomer remover'" (Elliott, 2022, p.74) Sustainable development on a finite planet is beset by conflicts about who should bear the costs, conflicts between developed and developing nations, economic sectors and generations. For example, we would all prefer others to bear the costs of reducing carbon emissions. Issues of climate justice and compensation for loss and damage caused by the burning of fossil fuels for industrialisation are being raised more assertively as they were at COP 27 (Meyer & Roser, 2010; Schlosberg & Collins, 2014).

The Emergence of Responsible Tourism

Not until the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 did tourism feature on the UN sustainability agenda. The UN's Agenda 21 programme called on countries to "promote, as appropriate, environmentally sound leisure and tourism activities", as well as "the formulation of environmentally sound and culturally sensitive tourism programmes as a strategy for sustainable development of urban and rural settlements, and as a way of decentralizing urban development and reducing discrepancies among regions." It was not until 1995 that the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council published Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry: Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development. Tourism was slow to address the sustainability agenda. By the time tourism was considered at the Commission on Sustainable Development (the post-Rio process) at the United Nations in New York in 1999, Ministers of tourism reminded those present that Rio had been about environment and development. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, the WTO focussed on tourism and poverty alleviation (Goodwin, 2016, p.15).

By 2002 three decades had passed since the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, and it was increasingly apparent that the sustainable development agenda was progressing slowly, if at all. Sustainable is an adjective describing a use or activity that can be maintained or continued for a period. The Brundtland Commission defined 'sustainable development' as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need" (Brundtland Commission, 1987, p.16). This is a noble ambition, but it is challenging to operationalise. The 17 SDGs, 231 indicators, and 169 targets evidence the breadth of the agenda and the complexity of reporting.

The travel and tourism sector reflects our planet's natural and cultural diversity. It is significantly dependent upon that diversity to create motivation for travel. Tourism is a social activity with significant and measurable impacts on natural and cultural heritage and communities. The impacts of tourism are shaped by the way tourism is provided by businesses and consumed by travellers and holidaymakers: the choices we make as businesses and suppliers of travel, accommodation, guiding and attractions, the tourism planning and regularity frameworks imposed by governments and conservation authorities, and tourists' decisions and behaviours determine our and their impacts.

In Cape Town in 2002, the 1st International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations was held as an official side event to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The conference was organised by the Responsible Tourism Partnership and Western Cape Tourism as a side event preceding the WSSD in Johannesburg ,

and attended by 280 delegates from 20 countries and international organisations on their way to Johannesburg. The conference grew out of the South African work on responsible tourism guidelines, which resulted from South Africa's 1996, post-apartheid, white paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa (DEAT) which adopted responsible tourism for the new South Africa defined as: "tourism that promotes responsibility to the environment through its sustainable use; responsibility to involve local communities in the tourism industry; responsibility for the safety and security of visitors and responsible government, employees, employers, unions and local communities" (DEAT, 1996, p.5). Responsible tourism was "not a luxury for South Africa, but an absolute necessity if the country has to build a successful and sustainable tourism industry" (DEAT, 1996, p.13). The 1996 policy has not been revised, and responsible tourism remains "... the key guiding principle for tourism development. ... tourism impl[ying] a proactive approach by tourism industry partners to develop, market and ... [responsibly manage] ... the tourism industry, so as to create a competitive advantage" (DEAT, 1996, p.22). DEAT developed and published detailed guidelines on implementing responsible practices across addressing economic, social and environmental issues (DEAT, 2002).

In the UK, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) had in 1996 asked their volunteers working around the world about the major issues affecting the communities with which they worked. Tourism was revealed to be the biggest and in 1998 VSO launched a WorldWide campaign encouraging holidaymakers, amongst other things, to buy directly from craftspeople rather than the hotel shop. "An experience for you. A livelihood for local people." There followed a commercial opinion poll of UK holidaymakers, 72% of respondents said that they "would welcome a campaign that dealt with the impact that tourists can have in the developing world" VSO published *Travelling in the Dark* in 1999, reporting that two-thirds of operators failed meet even a minimum standard and many failed to provide anything at all. Tearfund took up the issue and funded another commercial survey into how important different criteria were in determining choice. Unsurprisingly cost, weather and accommodation came first. Next came good information on the social, economic and political situation was rated as of high importance by 42% of respondents, "significant opportunity for interaction with the local people" 37%, and "designed to cause as little damage as possible to the environment", 32%. Tour operators highly value repeat business because repeats and referrals reduce marketing costs. However, only 26% of respondents said that having travelled with the company before was important to them when booking a trip. It surprised many operators that 27% said the company having ethical policies was highly important to them.

Subsequent research with Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) members revealed extensive work by businesses to make tourism better for communities and their places and the dominance of ethical motivations amongst AITO members. This led to a discussion about whether AITO should adopt an ethical tourism commitment, the association adopted a commitment to responsibility instead. Some may see this as a weaker commitment. However, the advantage of the concept of responsibility is that it requires members "... to respond, to act, rather than standing, or sitting, on their principles and their ethics" (Goodwin, 2011, p.87). In the UK VSO's campaigning work on ethical tourism was taken up by Tearfund, and further evidence of changing consumer demand was published (Goodwin & Francis, 2003). The Cape Town Declaration brought together the destination approach to responsible tourism developed in South Africa with AITO's source market approach. Given the range and breadth of ethical views held and the indivisibility of an ethical commitment, the ethic of

responsibility (Morris) enabled businesses and destination managers to address those problems that matter locally and can be addressed through tourism.

Why Responsibility?

The idea of responsible tourism was not new. The Manila Declaration of 1980 referred to "the responsibility of states for the development and enhancement of tourism" (Goodwin, 2011, p.27). In the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics, the words responsible and responsibility occur 14 times. Jost Krippendorf, in *The Holiday Makers*, published in German in 1984 and English in 1987, explored the impact of leisure and travel in the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Krippendorf understood both the damage that tourism could do (Krippendorf, 1975) and was amongst the first to realise that the expectations and demands of tourists would evolve. Krippendorf pointed out that "every individual tourist builds up or destroys human values while travelling" and "it is not a bad conscience that we need to make progress but positive experience, not the feeling of compulsion but that of responsibility" (Krippendorf, 1987, p.109).

Krippendorf foresaw the "birth of a new travel culture", one in which tourists seek "the satisfaction of social needs: contact with other people and self-realization through creative activities, knowledge and exploration." No longer manipulated, tourists were increasingly critical consumers, "informed and experienced", and moving towards being "emancipated and independent" – though he accepted that "passive and uncritical tourists" still outnumbered "active and enlightened ones". He concluded that "the readiness and desire for a different tourism is becoming more widespread day by day" (Krippendorf, 1987, p.74). The growth of the experience economy has played a significant role in reshaping tourism as consumer demand changes; Krippendorf's vision for the future of tourism conflicts with the paradigm of travel and holidaymaking as hedonistic escapism, which for some engenders a feeling of guilt. Krippendorf called for "rebellious tourists and rebellious locals" to reshape tourism (Krippendorf, 1987, pp.107-108).

As is evident from the range of issues addressed in the Responsible Tourism awards and the panels, discussions, debates and presentations at conferences, workshops and trade shows, the agenda ranges across decarbonisation, potable water, plastic waste, poverty reduction and local economic development to orphanages and labour conditions (RTP, 2022a). In the spirit of Krippendorf, the Cape Town Declaration sought to make tourism better, to improve it. Relishing the world's diversity, it accepted "... that responsible and sustainable tourism will be achieved in different ways in different places." In 2002, conference participants considered the South African guidelines (DEAT, 2002) and visited some of the initiatives taken in the Cape to realise the ambitions of responsible tourism. The Declaration called on "... countries, multilateral agencies, destinations and enterprises to develop similar practical guidelines and to encourage planning authorities, tourism businesses, tourists and local communities - to take responsibility for achieving sustainable tourism, and to create better places for people to live in and for people to visit" (CTD, 2002).

The Cape Town Declaration established an agenda far broader than that of sustainability. Drawing on the experience of implementing initiatives in South Africa and around the world by AITO members and others, the conference identified the characteristics of Responsible

Tourism as minimising negative economic, environmental, and social impacts; generating great economic benefits for local communities and enhancing their wellbeing; involving local people in decision making about tourism in their communities; contributing to the conservation of cultural and natural heritage; being inclusive; providing more enjoyable experiences for tourists through meaningful experiences and being culturally sensitive, engendering respect between tourists and hosts, building local pride and confidence (CTD, 2002). There have been effective campaigns against volunteering in and visiting orphanages, riding on elephant back, posing with lions, swimming with dolphins and flight shaming in the last decade. (Mkono & Hughes, 2020; Taylor et al., 2020; Fenton-Glynn, 2021; Cousins et al., 2009; Kline & Fischer, 2021; Mkono et al., 2020; Goodwin, 2016, pp.239-242).

The agenda was broad, reflecting the issues of concern in 2002. Climate change and biodiversity extinction were not prominent twenty years ago. In 2022 the Cape Town Declaration was reviewed and revised to reflect the more extensive experience of implementation and the urgency of decarbonisation, biodiversity loss, and adaptation to climate change. The breadth of the agenda and the emphasis on action distinguishes responsible tourism from sustainable tourism. The aspiration to achieve sustainability is shared, although responsible tourism has a broader agenda, addressing concerns about the conservation of living culture and orphanage tourism and child protection (Guiney & Mostafanezhad, 2015).

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The 2022 Responsible Tourism Charter

Signed on Magna Carta Island on November 6th 2022 at an event supported by Therme Group

Sustainability is an aspiration. It will only be realised if and when we take responsibility for making tourism sustainable. Responsibility drives sustainability. Responsible Tourism is about "making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit."

The diversity of our world makes travel worthwhile and generates tourism. Few businesses or destinations can address all the issues on the Responsible Tourism agenda. We need to explain why we take responsibility for the things we choose to improve through tourism and the impacts of our efforts.

Responsible Tourism:

- Recognises that greenhouse gas emissions, plastic waste, and biodiversity extinction are global issues requiring local action. Potable water is also an issue in many places, but not everywhere;
- Sets goals, measures and reports efforts to minimise negative economic, environmental, and social impacts, including crowding and overtourism;
- Generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities by providing better employment conditions, developing shared value with local businesses to create more and better livelihoods and addressing the economic needs of the economically poor and marginalised;

- Involves local people in decisions that affect their communities, their lives and life chances
- Makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity, lived cultures and cultural monuments;
- Addresses biodiversity loss and is nature-positive;
- Provides inclusive employment for the differently abled and people of diverse ethnicities, gender and sexual orientation;
- Provides more enjoyable experiences for all, through more meaningful connections with local people and a greater understanding of local history and culture, and social and environmental issues;
- Offers culturally sensitive experiences engendering respect between tourists and hosts, and building local pride and confidence. (RTP, 2022b)

We call upon countries, multilateral agencies, destinations and enterprises to develop practical guidelines and to encourage planning authorities, tourism businesses, tourists and local communities - to take responsibility for achieving sustainable tourism and creating better places for people to live in and for people to visit.

Recognising that sustainability is a journey and that we will need to do more when we can, we commit to

- do what we can to make tourism better;
- explain why we focus on particular issues and what we are doing to address them and
- recognising that transparent and auditable reporting on the impacts of our efforts is essential to demonstrating what is being achieved by those taking responsibility;
- moving our sector towards sustainability.

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Sustainability is the ambition; responsible tourism is about what we do as producers and consumers to realise the aspiration. Too often, sustainability is used only in the abstract sense. Responsible Tourism is not the same as sustainable tourism. Responsibility requires that we say what we are doing to improve tourism and be transparent about what we achieve. Sustainability is the abstract aim, so vague that it cannot be called an objective. It is very often little more than greenwashing. Responsible Tourism results when we take responsibility as producers or consumers - it is about what we do, evidenced by what we achieve. Transparency is essential to responsibility, and current certification schemes are opaque. The consumer is not told and does not know what the business has achieved. In 2018, a drought year in Cape Town, it is not possible to choose to stay in the hotel with the lowest water consumption per bed night – the information is not available, nor do we know how successful, if at all, the hotel has been in reducing its carbon emissions. Certification does not enhance the guest experience. A certificate is not part of the guest experience; locally sourced food and soft furnishing, a wildflower garden, or a reedbed are. (Goodwin, 2016 235-239)

"Sustainable and sustainability are generally used passively in large part because the end state or objective is undefined and therefore inoperative." (Goodwin, 2016, 23) There are three clear elements in the concepts of responsible and responsibility, the capacity, willingness or obligation to respond; obligation, accountability, liability and blame; and empowerment, responsibility, the opportunity to demonstrate our good character to feel good about ourselves. (Goodwin, 2016, 23-29, Sizoo, 2010, Visser, 2011) The balance between these three elements varies in different cultures and languages and over time. We all debate what constitutes responsible behaviour with our parents as children and then with our children as parents.

The Business Cases

American economist Howard Bowen coined the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility in 1953; it started as a movement for businesses to give to charity and reduce working hours. The agenda has broadened with contributions from stakeholder and legitimacy theory and the idea that a company can 'do well by doing good'; in other words, it can make a profit and make the world a better place at the same time" (Blowfield & Murray, 2014; Falck & Hebllich, 2007, p.247; Goodwin, 2016, pp.71-78; Servaes & Tamayo, 2013).

In the context of slow progress on sustainability and in the face of an unwillingness by governments to push progress through regulation, encouraging businesses and destinations to adopt responsible businesses and destination management practices emerged as the best way to secure change. The business cases for responsible tourism are plural and draw on a range of arguments and evidence. It is the right thing to do (businessmen and women have children and grandchildren). There can be cost savings from reduced resource use, and product quality can be enhanced by local purchasing, freshness and delivering a more meaningful connection with the place for the tourist. Purchasing locally, employing local people on good terms and conditions and encouraging visitors to behave in ways that respect local mores and customs secures good neighbourly relationships and license to operate. There has always been an element of risk in travel, recently heightened by Covid. Trust, reputation and customer loyalty are core business assets that contribute to PR and marketing, and reduced staff turnover and training costs are also a business advantage (Goodwin, 2016, pp.78-96).

In 2015 Mintel reported that "56per cent of US consumers stop buying from companies they believe are unethical". In the UK, the Co-operative Bank's Ethical Travel Survey found that over the decade 1999-2009, the proportion of people who had felt guilty about an unethical purchase increased from 17% to 43%; the proportion who had avoided a product or service because of a company's behaviour increased from 44% to 64%. For an industry that values repeat bookings and referrals, the proportion of consumers who had recommended a company because of its responsible reputation was more than half (52%) in 1999, it increased to 59% by 2009 (Goodwin, 2011, p.64).

In 2021 Booking.com surveyed close to 30,000 people who had travelled at least once in the past year across 30 countries and territories. They have been conducting research annually for six years, and the demand for sustainable travel increases each year. 83% of global travellers think sustainable travel is vital, with 61% saying the pandemic has made them want to travel more sustainably in the future. Almost half (49%) still believe that in 2021, there are not enough sustainable travel options available, with 53% admitting they get annoyed if

somewhere they are staying stops them from being sustainable, for example, by not providing recycling facilities. Part of the problem is that businesses are not communicating their sustainability practices. Booking.com has responded by encouraging businesses on their platform to give details of their sustainability practices (Booking.com).

As the consequences of climate change impact on destinations around the world, there will be increasing pressure for businesses and destination governments to take responsibility, reduce emissions and adapt the way they construct and sell tourism.

Destinations

Overtourism has, over the last decade, become an issue in more destinations. Travel bans increased tourist pressure on some domestic travel destinations with little or no previous experience of the problem. Like Venice, long-suffering from overtourism, others were reminded of the place before the hordes. Destination Management Organisations are beginning to focus more on management than marketing and using marketing as a management tool rather than little more than promotion. Destinations like Amsterdam, Barcelona, Cornwall, Seoul, Valencia and Venice are now trying to reduce the negative impacts of tourism on local communities and improve the visitor experience. They are turning from focusing on arrivals to looking at yield and attracting compatible tourists, tourists whose activities in the destination cause less crowding and friction with local people. This emerging trend engages governments more directly in the active management of tourism and tourists (Goodwin, 2017).

Intrepid, The Travel Corporation and TUI Group are amongst the few tourism businesses using the SDGs to structure their sustainability reporting, although many more reference particular goals. The SDG indicators are not being used, and transparent reporting is still limited. Listed companies in the sector will respond to the trend towards ESG reporting environmental, social and corporate governance. Google is now enabling people booking flights to choose less carbon-intensive options, and Boooking.com is engaging accommodation businesses in transparently declaring which sustainability practices they are practising. Increasingly businesses will be more transparent about what they are taking responsibility for and achieving on the sustainability agenda. There needs to be a shift to Certification +, where the certifying bodies certify the particular claims made by businesses, for example, about water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and employment, which are then part of the contract with the consumer.

The Next Decade

The trends discussed here are now well-established. Responsible travel takes many forms and carries many names – some – but not all -forms of ecotourism, regenerative, sustainable, and conscious travel are responsible. The travel and tourism sector is particularly prone to greenwashing. Rebellious tourists demand more of the industry, and rebellious locals demand better management of tourism in destinations where domestic and international tourists interact with local communities. Over the last twenty years, good practices have been developed; tried and tested solutions have been identified and promoted for replication on the Platform for Change (RTP, 2022b). The aviation issue is the most intractable; for many destinations, particularly in the developing world, a step-change in aviation fuel is essential if they are to continue to earn foreign exchange and create employment through tourism.

Resilience is increasingly important, as it is to focus on existential issues, particularly climate change and biodiversity loss. The SDGs agenda is broad; progress has been less than we hoped. The net-zero by 2050 ambition exemplifies the challenge. By 2050 many of today's decision-makers will be deceased or in their dotage. Carbon emissions will continue accumulating in our atmosphere and heat our planet. Our emissions today will contribute to global warming for decades. By 2050 irreparable damage will have been done. The key figure to watch is the concentration of CO₂ in our atmosphere, and we have not yet even dented the upward curve – the accumulation of greenhouse gases continues to rise inexorably.

There is no sign of governments taking the steps necessary to address the challenges of climate change, let alone the broader SDGs agenda. In the absence of effective government and intergovernmental action, there are limits to how far responsible businesses can go before their very existence as profitable, sustainable enterprises is undermined by the freeloaders and laggards continuing with business as usual. Without coordinated and assertive action by governments, Responsible Tourism driven by rebellious tourists and locals remains our best hope. It is unlikely to be enough.

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