UNESCO Chair Report

Balancing the role of Tourism and Development with the preservation of Cultural Heritage.

Chair: Aleksei Kloos
Deputy Chair: Ojiro Yahagi

Personal Statements
Chair – ALEKSEI KLOOS

Dear Delegates,

Thank you for joining MUNISS' 17th session! It is my absolute pleasure to be your chair at UNESCO this year. Allow me to introduce myself very briefly.

My name is Aleksei, and I'm currently 15, turning 16 in late April, just after MUNISS. I am the Vice President of the Model United Nations club of my school, the Franconian International School, and I have been to 5 conferences in total: two of which were in Germany, two internally hosted, and one abroad, but this is my first time chairing, so this is also a new experience for me.

Funnily enough, last year, for MUNISS' 16th session, I was a delegate myself in the very committee I'm very grateful to chair: UNESCO, so I've truly come full circle this year. Last time I was here, I saw amazing, fruitful, and engaging debates, and I would love nothing more than to continue that again this year.

UNESCO is a fantastic committee for intermediate delegates, and together with my Deputy Chair, Ojiro Yahagi, we will ensure that this is a welcoming place for constructive discussions about topics that are still relevant today whilst balancing having fun and being productive. I am very much looking forward to seeing you all in April and for the debates that will ensue. Until then, best of luck with your position papers, and hope that this guide will be of use to you all.

Deputy Chair – OJIRO YAHAGI

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 17th session of MUNISS! I will be chairing you for this conference as deputy chair and looking forward to seeing you all then. Let me introduce myself briefly before you get into the debate topics.

My name is Ojiro. I'm 16 years old and I have been to 2 conferences, one being the last MUNISS hosted last year and the other one was FAMUN recently hosted in the Netherlands. I've been part of both conferences as a delegate, just like you, and this is my first time chairing an official conference.

I am very much aware of how important chairs can be to have a flowing, meaningful debate between delegates so I will put my full effort into providing you with such an environment. The main chair, Aleksei Kloos, and I promise you to have both a constructive and enjoyable committee. I can't wait to see you all in April at ISS, but till then, get ready to have the most exciting debate you've ever experienced.

Introduction

Tourism, as an industry sector, is a leading catalyst for economic growth across the world, and it is pivotal to understand its role in global economies, especially for developing countries. Presently, tourism is considered one of the largest employers and generators of foreign currency ("Tourism Will Be One"), thus, its significance to many countries.

There are many other aspects that tourism has, not exclusive to economic growth. Many tourists visit popular destinations to experience a cultural exchange, of sorts, and by bringing together people of different cultures and sharing their experiences, it helps to also promote peace and tolerance. Therefore, it is within nations, governments, and thereby delegates best interests to be mindful of not just the financial aspects of tourism, but also the social, cultural, and environmental aspects as well.

Going into more detail on these aspects, social, as an example, generally refers to the relationship between the tourists and the locals, as well as the society as a whole. Tourism is notable for its efforts for introducing people to not just one another, but also cultures, leading into the next aspect, which highlights the significant impact that tourism has on local cultures. Whether this means appreciating them or appropriating them, mass tourism has completely altered the way that cultures themselves are viewed by both tourists and locals. This naturally can involve various economic concerns, most generally reflecting on the degree to which tourism impacts the economy, such as through jobs and economic conditions (eg. inflation). Lastly, environmental concerns, as expected, encourage countries to be mindful of the impact that mass tourism has on the environment of a certain region.

Finding a balance is key to promoting tourism and thereby development, but also preserving cultural heritage.

Glossary

1. **Authenticity:** Being actually and exactly as claimed, the quality of being genuine ("Authentic Definition").
2. **Cultural Heritage:** An expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed down through generations ("What Is Cultural Heritage?"), but can also include artifacts, monuments, groups of buildings or sites, museums, and even festivals ("Cultural Heritage.").
3. **Commercialism:** The emphasis on maximising profits disregarding the effects on other people or places ("Cultural Heritage.").
4. **Holiday home:** A second home purchased abroad for vacation.
5. **Host community:** A community that is being visited for tourism.
6. **Indigenous:** Having originated in a particular region ("Indigenous Definition").
7. **Infrastructure:** Basic systems and services in a country, such as transportation ("Infrastructure").
8. **Local:** About a particular place of mention ("Local Definition").
9. **Resident:** A person who has lived in a certain area for a long time ("Resident Definition").
10. **Seasonal employment:** Temporary work during a certain time of the year ("What Is Seasonal Employment?").
11. **Tourism:** The act of traveling for the sake of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure ("Tourism.")
12. **Tourist:** A person who travels for pleasure and interest ("Tourist").

Issue Explanation

One cannot undermine the positive influences of tourism on a country's development. However, to truly create a balance where there is healthy growth across multiple sectors in a country, but also preservation and enrichment of the culture, one must take into account the negative impacts as well. The most impacted areas can be divided into, but not limited to, approximately four categories: economic, cultural, social, and environmental.

Economic

As mentioned previously in the introduction, there are a plethora of positive impacts that economics can bring, generating a massive amount of income and job opportunities whilst being an ever-growing industry. This is a primary reason why many countries may consider investing in their tourism industry and their development as a whole, also due to the improvements in general infrastructure. However, there are still certain side effects that should be noted.

Firstly, when a large influx of visitors arrives in a certain area, it can dramatically increase the price of goods, services, transportation, etc, which are also affected by shops in tourist areas accommodating the arriving tourists compared to residents ("Impacts of Tourism."). This is further not aided by potential tax increases.

Additionally, certain areas with large amounts of 'holiday homes' that are mostly empty for a better part of the year can increase the price of homes for locals who predominantly live there throughout the year. This demand for housing also makes it much more difficult for those looking to buy their first properties. This can lead to conflicts between residents and those who want to buy a second home.

Furthermore, over-dependence on tourists as a source of income can be detrimental to a country's economy, as any small external or internal issues within a community can cause a loss in visitors, which causes the economy to suffer, which is not aided by seasonal employment.

Lastly, when the income gained from the tourist industry is not adequately distributed within the host communities, in regards to both gender, age, and geographical standpoint, this can cause tension and conflict within the local communities, which in turn, also leads to a negative sentiment among the area in regards to tourism and thus leading to a potential decrease in tourists because of this.

Cultural

Whilst, in certain, specific instances, tourism may help in preserving traditional practices, such as festivals, music, and cuisine, in addition to creating a demand for locally-produced, traditional crafts, this is not the case for every location.

More often than not, tourism can cause a loss of an area's cultural identity, especially that in which mass tourism has caused rapid development. Many tourist experiences are altered in a way to make them more appealing to tourists, based on their experiences and expectations, which then leads to a loss of authenticity, and a 'commercialization' of what should be unique, traditional experiences (Shahateet), which can be seen in many examples.

A common issue amongst many tourist areas is a lack of appropriate presentation and appreciation of local cultures can reinforce negative perceptions and stereotypes whilst adopting nearly 'theatrical' and false elements of presentation by sacrificing authenticity ("Heritage at Risk").

This is not the only instance in which this is an issue. Disrespect from visitors towards the rights and wishes of indigenous or local peoples of a community by irresponsibly conducting themselves towards locations and traditions can lead to conflict.

Additionally, tourist experiences hosted by certain companies can cause unrealistic expectations for tourists by not adequately informing them of local customs and can promote inappropriate behaviour.

Social

A main aspect of why people decide to travel to other countries is to experience a cultural exchange, or cultures that are not of their own, which most commonly includes learning about these different cultures and meeting new people. This helps to promote peace and tolerance, as previously mentioned but also promotes greater respect for the locals living in the area in which they are visiting.

However, this is again, not always the case, as there are some conflicts between tourists and locals, such as the following. Despite this, it should also be noted that most of these social issues tend to arise in areas with mass tourism or severe disparities.

As one example, there may be an increased crime rate in the area, specifically referring to prostitution, unlawful gambling, drug dealing, robbery, and assault. Whilst this is mostly unrelated to local people, gangs will occasionally move into the area to exploit tourists.

Additionally, tourist activities that either knowingly or unknowingly engage in the trade of stolen or illegal cultural experiences can cause issues relating to the resources of a host community.

Environmental

The environment is also equally as important to consider as other factors, as it can have a substantial impact on the physical attributes that make a region more

attractive to tourists. An influx of tourists can have some positive effects, an example being the redevelopment of Cardiff Bay in Wales. Again, it should be noted that there are also some adverse effects, which are occasionally more noticeable, such as poorly designed tourist facilities, in terms of geographical location, construction, and management can cause detrimental impacts on the ecosystem and local environment. This can also extend to tourism activities which are either excessive or poorly unregulated.

To conclude, focus should be placed upon mitigating the negative impacts of tourism on a community, whilst aiding them in maintaining and preserving the elements of their culture, with a particular focus on customs, traditions, and authenticity to achieve a balance that promotes the healthy growth of a country.

History of the Topic

Tourism is not a newly developed idea, but the origin of our modern definition of tourism can be traced back to the 17th century when young nobles would participate in what is called the 'Grand Tour', in which they would make a large trip around Europe with the sole purpose of absorbing the culture there (Periz Rodriguez). In the 18th century, this custom also spread towards the more wealthy class in other parts of the world, notably, The United States. This increase in travel, also backed by the Industrial Revolution in the second half of the century, promoted substantial improvements and advancements in technology, such as improvements in freight and passenger transport. The 19th century saw the creation of some of the first travel agencies, Thomas Cook & Son as an example.

The 20th century prompted the further growth of tourism due to the mass production of cars and buses, and improvements in air transportation also contributed to this growth. A recession in the 1970s caused the tourism sector to suffer, primarily due to an energy crisis. However, this also prompted the promotion of lower costs and prices to travel, hence, leading to mass tourism, thus, tourism became something for nearly everybody, whereas it was previously limited to something exclusively for the wealthy or upper-class.

As mentioned above, the state of tourism now, as it stands today, is that it is a commodity. Whilst not necessarily the most affordable for absolutely everyone, it is undeniable that tourism has reached a new peak in affordability and a decline in prices, although this may be subject to change in the foreseeable future. Mass tourism in itself refers to a large influx of organised tourists to a specific destination, but this is mostly prompted by mass consumption, brought on by the dramatic shifts in certain economic systems in the late 20th century. This has brought on many concerns to various communities, as outlined previously, that must be addressed prudently.

Many countries specifically rely on tourism as a source of income for most of their residents, with approximately 44 countries citing that over 15% of their GDP comes from tourists and 330 million jobs are provided by it alone. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge their role in promoting sustainable tourism and growth. As an example, the Maldives noted that around 68% of their GDP was revenue generated by tourists. In Europe, Croatia is a notable example, where revenue from tourists contributed around 18.9% of its entire GDP in 2022, with 15.3 million tourists in that year alone. Spain, in 2020, was projected to lose around 62 billion euros from tourists due to lockdowns, as tourism was the third largest contributor to its economy. In Bangladesh, there is a projected 9 jobs per tourist, meaning that for every 100 tourists, there would be around 944 related jobs. These figures, whilst only reaching the surface level, only prove how critical tourism can be for certain countries.

Notable Previous Attempts

There are many examples of previous attempts to try and promote the balance of development due to tourism and preserving cultural heritage, such examples being:

1. The creation of ICOMOS ("ICOMOS - Questions") - The International Council on Monuments and Sites. It is a Non-Government Organisation (NGO), which was founded in 1965-1966 after the Charter of Venice was adopted into practice. Generally, it is centralised on preserving and protecting the conversation of monuments and also participates in the World Heritage Committee as an advisory body to push the implementation of the World Heritage Convention of UNESCO.

2. The Conservation Initiative (PACT) was launched by the World Heritage Centre in 2002 ("World Heritage Information Kit."), to promote solution-oriented conservation efforts through developing partnerships. Only countries that are signatories may be considered for UNESCO World Heritage Sites. As of August 2015, it has been ratified by 191 States (Von der Decken). It has mostly aided in raising awareness of the issues regarding conservation whilst collecting funds for these efforts.

3. The Budapest Declaration on World Heritage was signed in 2002 ("The Budapest Declaration") to recognise and assess the successes and limitations of the conventions to establish new objectives whilst initiating new partnerships. This declaration was particularly important in proving the legitimacy and usefulness of the World Heritage Committee. It also added a 'fifth C' to the existing Strategic Objectives ("Decision 26 COM 9"), which are Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building, communication, and communities, but the declaration as a whole worked on encouraging nations that were not already a part of the World Heritage List to do so, whilst urging other countries to 'strengthen the credibility of the World Heritage List'.

4. The UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme ("World Heritage and Sustainable") was created to form a framework for international cooperation to both protect heritage and achieve 'sustainable economic development ("UNESCO World Heritage") through a unique approach focusing on dialogue and stakeholder cooperation for the general facilitation of management and development of sustainable tourism as a whole.

Media Contribution

It is no secret that social media plays a massive role in spreading information about tourism and culture, whether that be tourists spreading their travels online, or locals speaking their opinions on certain changes to their community for travel. Influencers or prominent social media figures possess the ability to influence others to buy, visit, or eat things that they promote to their audience, which also applies to vacations or travel. Most influencers post about where they have gone for vacation, and their behaviour is in part adopted by their impressionable audience, which can either promote sustainable practices and cultural heritage, or the opposite.

Many notable news sources have written countless articles regarding this topic, some questioning how much tourism is too much, and some arguing in favour of mass tourism, mostly because of the economic benefits. Yet, some are arguing against tourism as a whole, citing the displeasure with the local communities for the reasons mentioned above, or for environmental reasons, with one notable example being the New York Times. However, many of these news sources differ on their opinions depending on the country in which they have been published in, but it is clear that there are many differing opinions on this topic.

As per a general opinion, it is impossible to form a consensus on whether tourism should be encouraged or discouraged, especially regarding cultural and other factors. Certain communities are against it, and others promote it, but even within said communities, there may be a few members who are still split on it. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to consider the specific nuances and circumstances of a given community and its environment to determine a general opinion before ultimately deciding on a path of best action.

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