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Issue:

Implementing measures to minimize the negative effects on flora and fauna caused by tourism

Forum:

Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC)





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Introduction

Tourism has the ability to significantly impact the flora and fauna in the area. This can be in both positive and negative context. It can raise awareness about the importance of the preservation of nature or be a source of financial aid that is needed to protect certain areas. It can, however, also have a very negative impact on nature.

If the number of visitors is too large for the environment to cope with it will suffer under the high level of tourism.

Some of the negative impacts can be soil erosion, loss of natural habitat, more pollution and many other devastating changes. In this report, we will discuss these negative impacts, how they are caused and possible solutions for them.

Definition of Key Terms

Deforestation

Deforestation is the clearing of trees in great numbers. From the 1970s deforestation started increasing at a steady pace. The past few years these numbers have been going down, but sadly not fast enough. Deforestation is very harmful to nature in numerous ways.

Pollution

When a harmful or poisonous substance is present in or is introduced into nature, it is called pollution. There are many different kinds of pollution, the four most important ones being air pollution, water pollution, light pollution and noise pollution.

Solid waste

Any abandoned or discarded material. Solid waste is not limited to solid materials as

it can also be semi-liquid and contained gas.

Ecosystems

An area (geographic) and all its living organisms, the surroundings and all natural cycles. A community of organisms interacting with each other and their surroundings.

Trampling

The action of stepping on something and thereby causing damage to it.

Soil erosion

When the upper layer of soil is being displaced, topsoil is the most fertile part and will disappear first. Soil erosion is a form of soil degradation which is usually a natural process caused by weather, plants or animals. However, when humans interfere, this process can be sped up and be a lot more harmful.

General Overview

Humanity has always had a great impact on nature. We built cities and roads in places in which human influence had been completely absent. In other areas, we built fences around small pieces of nature to ensure their safety, but thereby also limited their ability to grow. Now there is little left of pure flora and fauna, and the places on earth that still have such sites often attract tourists. As previously stated: tourism can have a positive impact on nature, but more often than not, it has a negative impact.

Natural resources

Tourists usually use a lot of water. They stay in hotels where they use water, use the swimming pool or go to tourist attractions that require water to maintain. This increases not only the water usage, but also the volume of wasted water. The water consumption has also grown in areas that are popular to tourists. This can double the amount of water that is usually consumed by inhabitants. Especially in dry areas this can be a great disaster.

On other local resources like food and energy, tourism can also put a lot of pressure. The transportation or the extraction of these resources can be very damaging. The high demands tourists have for their trips will definitely increase the demand for local resources.

Woods often suffer from tourism. Trees are cut down to generate energy or to make place for accommodation. Deforestation can increase greenhouse gasses, increase soil erosion and disrupt the water cycle as trees hold a lot of water in their roots. It also contributes to the greenhouse effect because there are fewer trees to help fight the overproduction of CO₂.

Pollution

The transportation of tourists to their destination causes a lot of pollution. Trains, cars and planes cause CO₂ emissions and air pollution. Traveling by plane has been increasing in popularity for the past years and now about 60% of all air travel is accounted for by tourism. The emission of damaging gasses is known to contribute to problems such as acid rain and global warming. In addition to that, aside from worldwide air pollution, it can also cause severe local air pollution. Something that can be overseen sometimes, that can also be caused by the use of transport by tourists, is noise pollution. It can not only cause stress, annoyance or hearing loss for humans, but it can also be damaging for wildlife. In places that attract a high number of tourists littering and waste disposal can cause problems. An example would be trekking tourists in the mountains. They tend to leave behind their garbage because of the lack of better options. Another example is cruise ships. They generate a lot of solid waste that ends up in the sea. This will end up causing the death of many marine animals.

Physical impact

Beautiful places such as beaches, lakes, mountains and forests often attract tourists. Places like these also house entire ecosystems. Too much tourism has physical impacts such as the degradation of these ecosystems. Several things can cause this. The first cause is the construction of infrastructure that is necessary to accommodate tourists such as hotels, restaurants, water and energy supply and roads. This can lead to loss of wildlife, soil erosion, beach and sand erosion. Deforestation is also a problem, as mentioned before. The extensive and often unnecessary use of land is one of the causes of this. The development of marinas (a dock for pleasure yachts and other small boats) affects life at the coastlines greatly, and the building materials that are used to build it also came from an ecosystem that has therefore been affected too. Corals close to the marinas are being damaged and this affects the species living within. Trampling has great impacts on vegetation and soil. It can cause changes in the composition of species, reduced regeneration, loss of organic matter, among many other things (see table 1).

Trampling impacts on vegetation	Trampling impacts on soil
Breakage and bruising of stems	Loss of organic matter
Reduced plant vigor	Reduction in soil macro porosity
Reduced regeneration	Decrease in air and water permeability
Loss of ground cover	Increase in run off
Change in species composition	Accelerated erosion

Major Parties Involved

United Nations World Travel Organisation (UNWTO)

The UNWTO has been doing research on the negative effects of flora and fauna and what measures could be taken. It has published a report regarding tourism-related CO2 emissions.

Europe

According to the UNWTO Europe is the most important tourism region worldwide, the most popular destinations being the Mediterranean Sea and Southern Europe. This also means that its flora and fauna is being damaged by this tourism.

France

France, along with Spain and the United States of America, is the most visited country worldwide. This means that the effects of tourism are also damaging here. The negative effects of tourism will also have negative impact on the economy if no action is taken. For example: snow in the alps is melting which will decrease its popularity among tourists.

Spain

Spain as well has a lot of tourism, and thus is influenced greatly by it. Tourism currently makes up about 17% of the GDP and is therefore very important for their economy. Throughout the Mediterranean Sea, about 60% of the sewage that is dumped in it is untreated and therefore more harmful. A part of this comes from Spain but they are attempting to clean their beaches.

United States of America

National parks in the US have always been popular tourist attractions and therefore also areas that are being greatly damaged. Despite attempts to reduce this, like the National Park Service Organic Act (Also called the Organic Act) that created the National Park Service (NPS), tourism still has a great impact on the parks.

UNESCO

UNESCO manages global geoparks to ensure they are protected from the negative

effects of tourism. They began doing this in 2001 and at the moment there are 147

UNESCO geoparks worldwide.

Timeline of Key Events

Aug. 25th 1916	The National Park Organic Service Act was signed into law.
Nov. 16th 1945	UNESCO was founded in London, UK.
January 2th 1975	The UNWTO was founded.
Nov. 17th 2015	UNESCO ratified the creation of the UNESCO global geoparks.
Dec 2019	UNWTO releases and article regarding the Transport-related CO2 Emissions of the Tourism Sector

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

Although not always successful, there have been attempts to minimize the negative effects of tourism on wildlife and vegetation. There have been organisations trying to protect regions of wild nature and attempts to save wildlife. One of these organisations is the UNWTO. They have been doing a lot of research on the negative effects of tourism that is definitely useful in solving this issue.

UNESCO is also an organisation that is very active on this topic. The UNESCO global geoparks are the proof of that (UNESCO global geoparks are, as defined by UNESCO, "single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development."). They are active in 41 countries with a total of 147 geoparks. While UNESCO started working with geoparks in 2001, the creation of the UNESCO Global geoparks label was only ratified in 2015. The National Park Service Organic Act is a United States federal law. It establishes the National Park Service (NPS) that manages all the national parks in the US. Ever since 1916 the act has been signed into law. The NPS aims to regulate the use of national parks to conserve the scenery and protect the wildlife in it.

Among all the attempts to resolve this issue, these are the most important ones. They are also the most effective ones. When thinking of further solutions. it could be helpful to keep these organisations in mind. They can be used as an example or as a helpful tool in solving the issue of the negative effects of tourism on flora and fauna.

Possible Solutions

With the current organisations working on solving the issue a lot is being done already, but this doesn't seem to be enough. The levels of pollution are still very high and need to be brought down. To do this a couple of things need to be taken into consideration and solved.

Firstly, it is essential that tourists themselves are aware of the consequences of aspects of pollution like littering and trampling. If they are appropriately educated on their behavior they might change it. People have been becoming more educated for quite a while, tourists are being more mindful of their surroundings and the levels of pollution have been going down because of it. While it is good that there has been some progress, the impact has not yet delivered sufficient change to reach a tipping point. If we would want to bring even more change it would be very important that citizens are educated properly.

Secondly, it would be beneficial if economic assistance is provided for research and action. Some member nations might have enough economic stability to invest in the protection of flora and fauna from tourism, but others might not. It is important that the vulnerable flora and fauna in these counties are well protected too. When solving this issue, it could be important to also pay attention to small sub-problems that contribute to the bigger issue and to try and find solutions for these. There are many ways to try to prevent the many negative effects of tourism on flora and fauna, these being some of them. In order to reduce these negative effects as many possible solutions as possible should be generated and debated on, hopefully resulting in concrete passed resolutions. Hopefully, inventive and original solutions will lead to a plan that will solve the issue effectively.

Appendix/Appendices

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