

part one: introduction

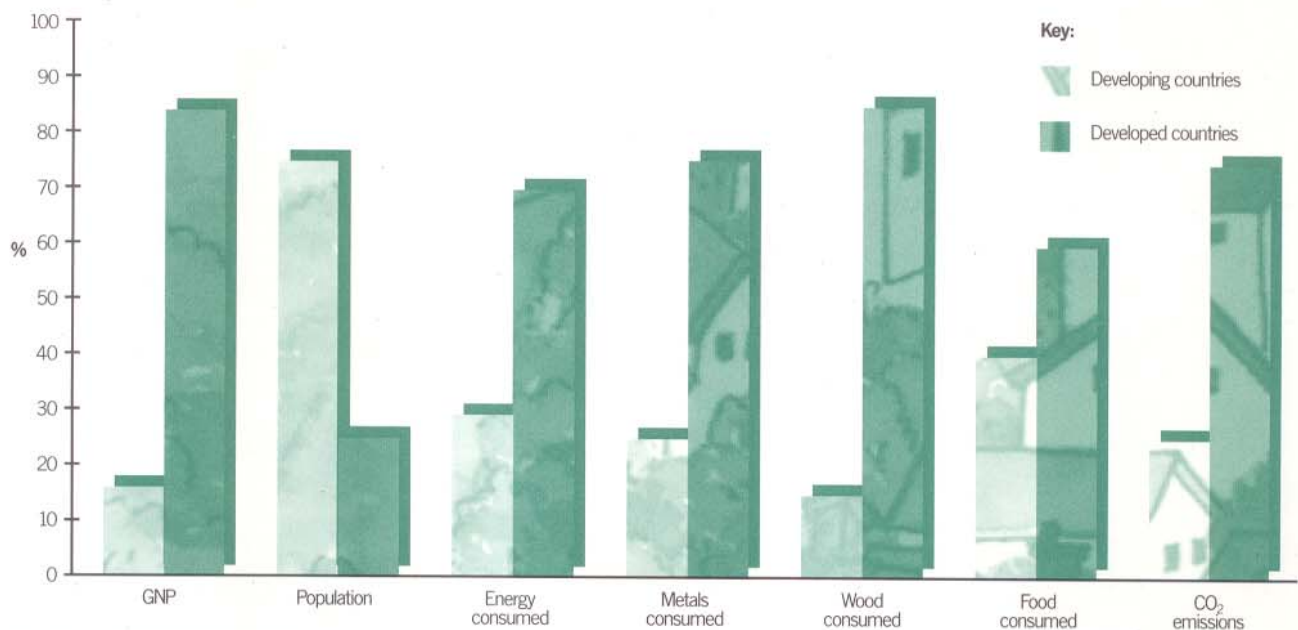
1 AGENDA 21 AND THE TRAVEL & TOURISM INDUSTRY: A SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Humanity is confronted with major disparities within and between nations and a deepening of hunger, poverty, illiteracy, and ill health. The ecological consequences of ozone depletion, climate change, soil degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and air, water, and land pollution threaten our future. The development gap between the industrialized and developing countries has widened and the number of people living in poverty has not diminished. More than 1 billion people in the developing world live without

adequate food, health care, education, and housing, while those in developed countries consume most of the world's resources.

Sustainable development and enhancement of the environment are priority issues that affect not only the global population but also world economic growth. During the last three decades, concern has been mounting over the continued deterioration of the environment evidenced by local area smog, ozone depletion, deforestation, desertification, and other phenomena. Should this

Figure 1 Disparities between nations



Source: The Earth Council 1994

disruption of the global ecological balance continue, it could jeopardize the Earth's life-sustaining qualities and, eventually, lead to both ecological and economic catastrophe.

What is Agenda 21?

Agenda 21 is a comprehensive programme of action adopted by 182 governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the Earth Summit, on 14 June 1992. It provides a blueprint for securing the sustainable future of the planet, from now into the twenty-first century. It is the first document of its kind to achieve widespread international agreement, reflecting a global consensus and political commitment at the highest level.

The Agenda is grouped around a series of themes, comprising 40 chapters and 115 separate programme areas, each of which represents an important dimension of an overall strategy for global transition to more sustainable development-practices. The chapters build up a comprehensive list of actions. These actions address the issues of environmental protection and human development in an integrated manner and include incentives and concrete measures to reduce the inequalities between rich and poor nations, stimulate the economies of developing countries, eliminate poverty, reduce use of earth's natural resources, and reduce the unsustainable rates of population growth that threaten both development and the environment.

What it means

This broad programme of action was adopted by all 182 countries attending the meeting. It is perhaps the most complex document ever negotiated at an international conference. While not legally binding, Agenda 21 has moral and practical force. Its greatest strength lies in the fact that it was not produced by experts for government consent but rather was negotiated, word by word, by representatives of the governments which will be responsible for its implementation.

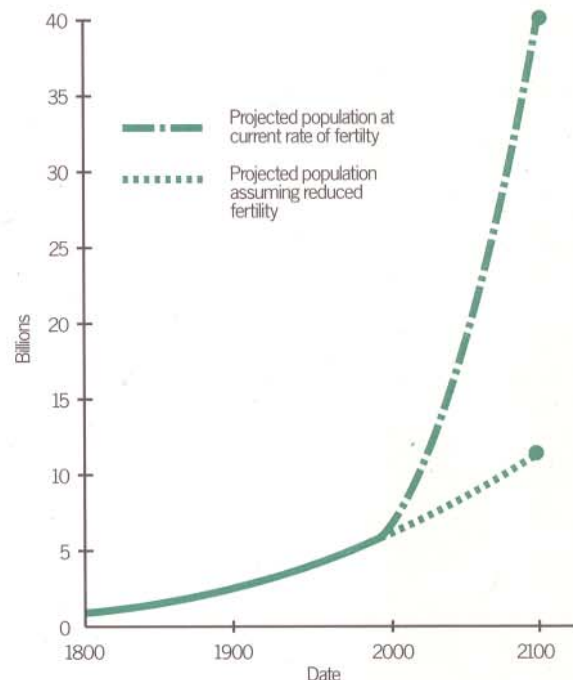
In essence, Agenda 21 represents a commitment to an important strategic thrust, which now requires specific initiatives from all levels of society and from business communities. Without commitment from these groups, the objective set by the document – a sustainable future for all – will not be achieved.

Who is responsible?

In short, everyone. Agenda 21 addresses governments, UN agencies, other inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, business and industry, and the public at large. Each of these groups must be involved in implementing the actions specified by the Agenda in order to ensure success and guarantee the future of our planet. Agenda 21 designates national governments as having most of the responsibility for leading the process. However, a wide range of partnerships will be required for success.

As the world's largest industry, Travel & Tourism has a unique and leading role to play in achieving the aims of the Agenda.

Figure 2 Population growth



Source: Hinrichsen, 'Putting the Bite on Planet Earth'

Core requirements for action

The successful implementation of Agenda 21 requires firm commitment and concerted action within which political, social, and economic commitments are made by all parties and at all levels of society – essentially a ‘global partnership’. For such a partnership to be effective, it must be accompanied by new levels of cooperation and increased awareness of environment and development problems within all sectors of government and society.

Implementation of the Agenda requires a major shift in priorities, involving a full integration of sustainable development considerations into economic and social policies and a major redeployment of human and financial resources at national and international levels. In many cases there will be significant benefits from this shift; governments will spend less on ill health and face lower clean-up costs; businesses will experience cost savings from more efficient resource use; tourism destinations will enjoy long-term success; finally, our children will be guaranteed a sustainable future.

Agenda 21 for the Travel & Tourism Industry describes the actions required from the Travel & Tourism industry. While these actions may seem daunting, the consequences of inaction could be serious, bringing, in the short term, an increase in regulatory or economic penalties on businesses and potentially irreversible damage to the landscapes, wildlife, monuments and buildings, and cultural diversity on which the industry depends. In the long term, inaction could result in environmental and economic catastrophe.

Tools for achievement

The Agenda identifies three core tools which can be used by governments to achieve its objectives:

- (i) introduction of new, or strengthening of existing, regulation, to ensure the protection of human health and the environment; regulation is seen as playing a supporting role in the Agenda, developed only where other

measures are less likely to bring improvement or where health or the environment can be irretrievably damaged

- (ii) use of free market mechanisms, by which the price of goods and services should increasingly reflect the environmental costs of resource inputs, manufacture, use, recycling, and disposal subject to country-specific conditions; developed by governments in discussion with industry, these tools are identified as having considerable potential to bring about improvements in the areas of waste minimization, water management, and energy management; in developed countries, such tools are likely to result in price increases for some of these services
- (iii) industry-led voluntary programmes, which aim to ensure responsible and ethical management of products and processes from the point of view of health and safety and environmental aspects; such programmes should be guided by appropriate charters and codes of conduct and integrate environmental considerations into all elements of business planning and decision-making, fostering openness and dialogue with employees and the public.

While these tools are not new, the emphasis on the latter two is unusual. The Agenda does not specify the circumstances under which these instruments should be used, nor indeed the most effective combinations. These decisions lie with individual governments. To a large extent, the tools used will be dictated by individual programmes developed within and between sectors.

Travel & Tourism: leading the way

Travel & Tourism is the world’s largest industry, transporting more than 528 million people internationally and generating US\$322,000 million in receipts in 1994 (World Tourism Organization 1995). It is a major economic force, generating in 1995 an estimated US\$3.4 trillion in gross output, creating employment for 211.7 million people,

The framework for sustainable development to be established by the Travel & Tourism industry should be based on the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, from which the following guiding principles flow:

- Travel & Tourism should assist people in leading healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature
- Travel & Tourism should contribute to the conservation, protection, and restoration of the Earth's ecosystem
- Travel & Tourism should be based upon sustainable patterns of production and consumption
- nations should cooperate to promote an open economic system, in which international trade in Travel & Tourism services can take place on a sustainable basis
- Travel & Tourism, peace, development, and environmental protection are interdependent
- protectionism in trade in Travel & Tourism services should be halted or reversed
- environmental protection should constitute an integral part of the tourism development process
- tourism development issues should be handled with the participation of concerned citizens, with planning decisions being adopted at local level
- nations shall warn one another of natural disasters that could affect tourists or tourist areas
- Travel & Tourism should use its capacity to create employment for women and indigenous peoples to the fullest extent
- tourism development should recognize and support the identity, culture, and interests of indigenous peoples
- international laws protecting the environment should be respected by the Travel & Tourism industry.

producing 10.9 per cent of world gross domestic product (GDP), investing US\$693.9 billion in new facilities and equipment, and contributing more than US\$637 billion to global tax revenue. By 2005, it is estimated that the industry will have expanded its global role, generating US\$7.2 trillion in gross output, creating employment for 305 million people, producing 11.4 per cent of world GDP, investing US\$1,613 billion in new facilities and equipment, and contributing more than US\$1,369 billion in tax revenue (WTTC, *New Economic Perspective*).

With this position in the world economy, Travel & Tourism has a moral responsibility to take the lead in making the transition to sustainable development. It also has a vested interest in doing so. The product that Travel & Tourism packages and sells ultimately relies on clean seas, pristine mountain slopes, unpolluted water, litter-free

streets, well-preserved buildings and archaeological sites, and diverse cultural traditions.

Despite Travel & Tourism's economic significance and its dependence on environmental quality, it is mentioned in only a few sections of Agenda 21. Chapter 11, for example, advocates that governments 'promote and support the management of wildlife [and] ... ecotourism'; chapter 17 states that 'coastal states should explore the scope for expanding recreation and tourist activities based on marine living resources'; chapter 36 calls for countries to 'promote, as appropriate, environmentally sound leisure and tourism activities ... making suitable use of museums, heritage sites, zoos, botanical gardens, national parks, and other protected areas' (Johnson ed, *The Earth Summit*).

The emphasis is on the potential of speciality, nature-orientated, and, by definition, low-capacity tourism ('ecotourism') to bring about environ-

mental improvement. However, ecotourism, in its strictest sense, can only account for a small proportion of the global tourism market; current estimates vary between 3 and 7 per cent. According to the widely accepted World Tourism Organization definition, Travel & Tourism includes both domestic and international travel for business, social, cultural, religious, recreational, and holiday purposes. Focusing attention on ecotourism alone will fail to realize the industry's huge potential for worldwide improvements. The real benefits lie in making all Travel & Tourism sustainable.

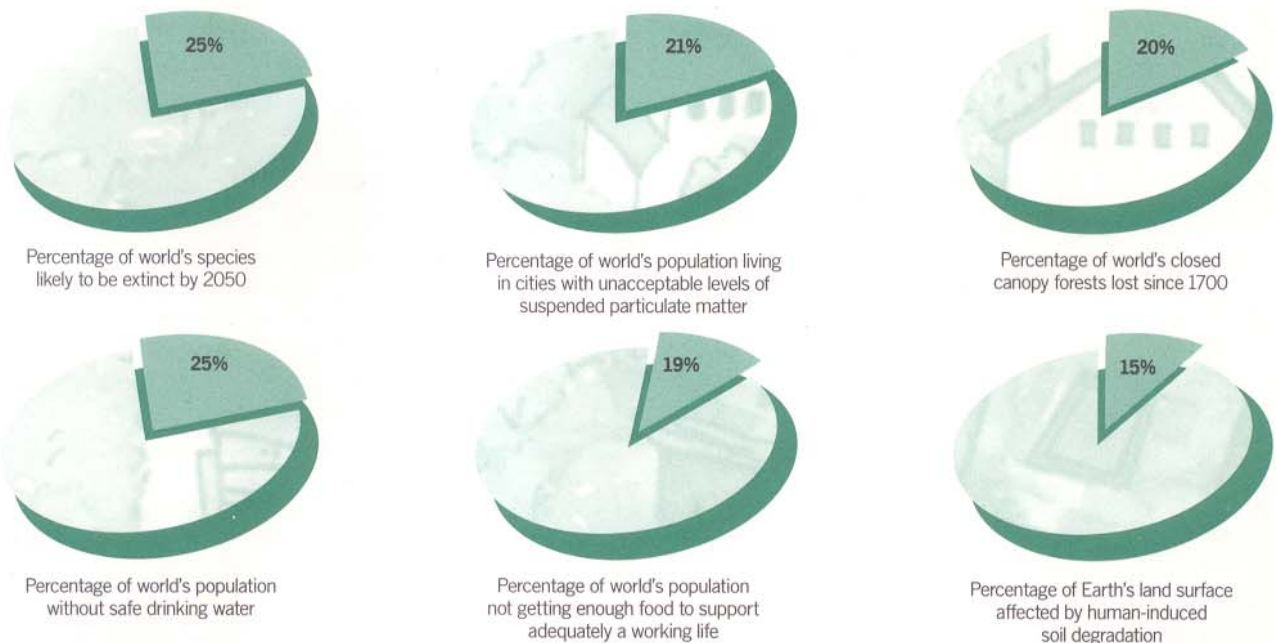
An action programme for Travel & Tourism

Agenda 21 specifies actions that industry can take to bring about sustainable development and ways in which governments can facilitate this process. This document translates the Agenda into an action programme for the Travel & Tourism industry. It aims to help government departments

with responsibility for Travel & Tourism, national tourism administrations (NTAs), representative trade organizations, and Travel & Tourism companies fulfill their potential to achieve sustainable development at local and national levels. It lays out the key objectives for achievement by the year 2005. Implementation of its recommendations will go some way towards harnessing the power of Travel & Tourism to:

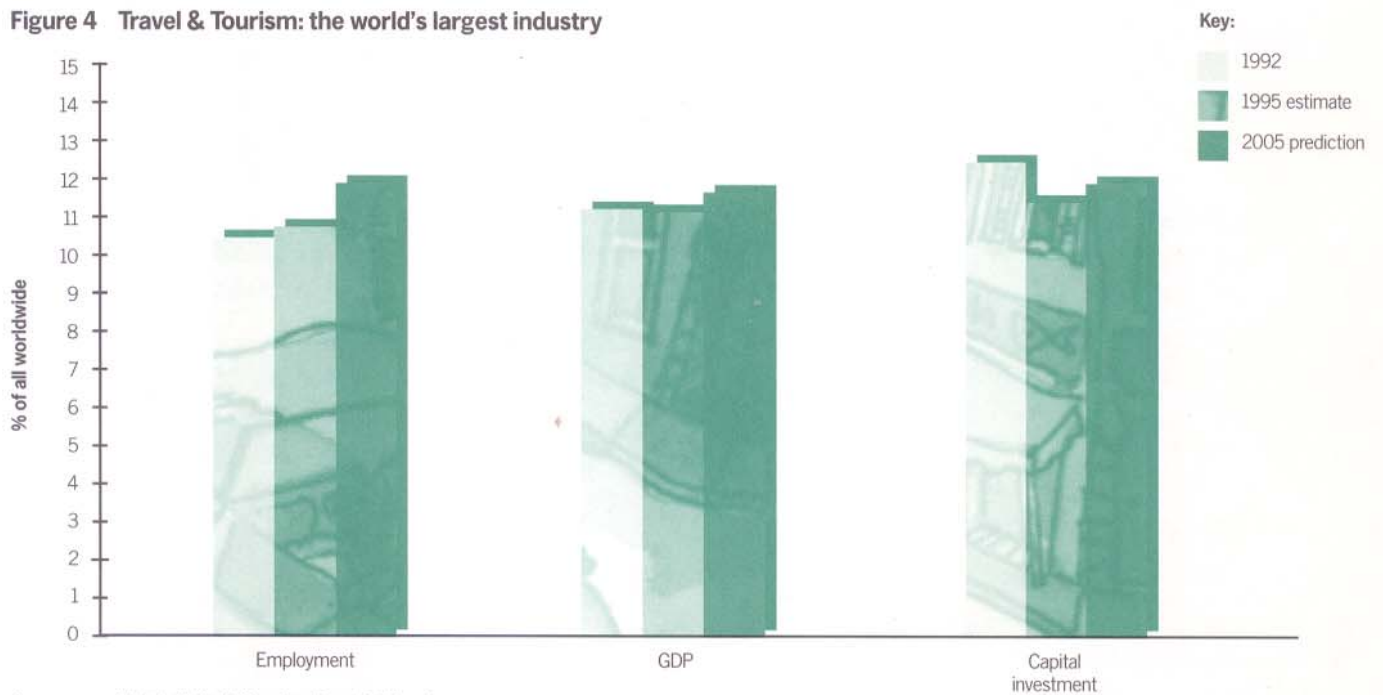
- create economic value for resources whose conservation would otherwise be seen as having no financial value; such resources include wildlife, such as lions and whales, natural areas, such as forests and wilderness areas, built heritage, such as the Taj Mahal and Angkor Wat, and cultural heritage, such as traditional ways of life
- provide the incentive and means for environmental enhancement of areas such as city centres and old industrial sites, including the creation of employment in these areas

Figure 3 Deterioration of the environment



Source: IUCN, UNEP, WWF, *Caring for the Earth*

Figure 4 Travel & Tourism: the world's largest industry



Source: WTTC, United Kingdom Travel & Tourism

- establish essential infrastructure, such as water treatment plants, for residents as well as visitors; this may, in turn, stimulate other economic activity
- research and develop environmentally sound technology and techniques which can be transferred to other companies and countries and to host communities
- use communication opportunities with customers and host communities to pass on the messages and practices of sustainable development
- provide an environmentally sound growth alternative for developing countries and island states, which can help them attain sustainable development patterns
- lead other industries in the adoption of business practices that contribute toward sustainable development by asking suppliers to provide environmentally benign products and exchanging information and ideas on sound environmental management.