Coastal Tourism

Coastal tourism is defined as the tourist-related activities that take place in coastal zones and islands as well as recreational activities that use the ocean, including water-based sports, marine mammal and bird watching, and so on (Zhao, Hynes and He, 2014). Coastal tourism is very closely related to marine (maritime) tourism since it also covers activities taking place in coastal waters. It also covers beach-based tourism and recreational activities. Hall (2001) concludes that these two types of tourism are very closely related due to the water/sea element. Marine tourism constitutes a form of tourism connected to and dependent on the sea and the marine environment. It requires that consumers travel away from their place of residence and be actively involved with the sea (Orams, 2002). It includes ocean-based tourism.

Coastal areas provide some of the most beautiful scenery and resources for tourism. Orams (2002) recognizes that coastal and marine tourism are two of the oldest forms of tourism. Papageorgiou (2016) points out that coastal and marine tourism not only represent the largest and constantly growing segments of the tourism industry, but are also among the most important (and fastest-growing) economic activities taking place at the seaside. However, Hall (2001) explains that marine and coastal tourism are distinct forms of tourism.

National and international organizations (e.g., North American Industrial Classification System [NAICS]; Statistical Classification of Economic Activities of the European Community [NACE]; and the Ocean Economy Accounting System [OEAS] of China) define coastal and ocean activities and industries differently. For instance, in Europe, coastal tourism includes beach-based recreation and tourism and non-beach-related land-based tourism in the coastal area, as well as the supply and manufacturing industries associated with these activities.

Organized trips to seaside resorts began in the early 19th century in Europe, whilst prevalence of cruises began in the late 19th century, mostly to destinations such as the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. Coastal areas are the most visited in Europe by tourists and, as part of EU’s Blue Growth Strategy, the coastal and maritime tourism sector has been identified as an area with special potential to foster a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe (European Commission, 2020). To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, stakeholders need to be engaged in the strategic planning process and future activities. Morrison (2018) explains that there are five main groups of stakeholders in destination management (tourists, tourism sector organizations, community, environment and government). For coastal areas, such stakeholder groups might include:

- local authorities that locate in coastal areas (e.g., Plymouth City Council in the UK, Shanghai government in China and Los Angeles city government in the USA, etc.);
- national/international governmental agencies that are involved in development and marketing of tourism activities (e.g., VisitBritain, European Travel Commission, Caribbean Tourism Organization, etc.);
- national/international governmental agencies involved in conservation and protection of coastal ecosystems (e.g., Environment Agency in the UK, coastal state parks in the USA, the State Oceanic Administration of China and Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment in Australia, etc.);
- local tourism sector stakeholder groups, whether private-sector operations or run by government agencies or non-profit organizations (e.g., hotel and other accommodation providers, travel trade, transport, attractions, events and festivals, convention and meeting venues, restaurants and other food services, and the media);
- non-profit organizations (e.g., charities, trusts, etc.) involved in conservation and protection of social and natural environments of coastal areas (e.g., the North Carolina Aquarium Society and the North Carolina Coastal Federation, The Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy in the USA, etc.);
- the coastal population;
- tourists, whether they are in coastal areas for leisure, business, visiting friends or relatives or other purposes.

Coastal tourism brings economic development to coastal areas. However, the continuous growth and lack of sustainable management create conflict between coastal tourism and ecosystems of the coastal areas. Indeed, Papageorgiou (2016) argues that coastal tourism is currently
facing huge challenges in balancing environmental programmes and tourist activities. With increasing levels of use, the impacts of coastal tourism are likely to remain a significant issue. Opportunities and challenges in developing coastal tourism may be observed in a social, environmental and economic context (Page and Connell, 2020). A range of opportunities may emerge for coastal areas if they develop coastal tourism, including diversifying economic activities; increasing household incomes for local residents; improving infrastructure and facilities; improving education and understanding of local residents; raising environmental awareness among local communities; creating more employment opportunities; developing more conservation activities; diversifying tourism products; and regenerating declining coastal areas.

Challenges and negative impacts of such development are also clear: development of heavy dependence on coastal tourism; implementation of simplistic coastal tourism products; unbalanced income distribution among residents; a lack of community participation in the development of tourism; increasing numbers of tourism-related crimes; fewer beaches for public use; environmental degradation and pollution; destruction of habitats and damage to ecosystems; loss of coastal and marine resources; and competition over local resources between communities and coastal tourism development (e.g., water).

Coastal regions and nations and relevant international organizations clearly recognize the paramount need for protection and strategic planning for sustainable development of coastal areas. They have developed and adopted a range of policies to develop coastal areas. Some critical developments are summarized below:

- In 1972, the United States introduced the notion of coastal zone management and other countries soon followed.
- In 1992, at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, ‘Protection of the Oceans’, was approved by more than 178 governments, who committed to integrated management and sustainable development of the coastal areas and marine environment under their national jurisdictions. The key principles of Agenda 21 are the concept of integrated local development; the visualization of alternative future scenarios; the use of indicators to assess sustainability and local quality of life; the establishment of partnerships with the private sector; the participation of the citizens in the project; and the adoption of short-, medium- and long-term action programmes.
- In 1995, the European Code of Conduct for Coastal Zones proposed by European Union for Coastal Conservation was formally adopted.
- In 1996, China drew up its own Agenda 21 on the environment and sustainable development, and then a specific Ocean Agenda 21 inspired by the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit’s Agenda 21.
- In 2005, the EU Coastal Zone Management strategy was adopted and implemented.
- In 2005, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) proposed a methodological framework to establish the process of strategic planning for sustainable tourism development in coastal areas based on five guiding sets of principles: strategic planning approach; integrated coastal zone management; UNEP’s and the World Tourism Organization’s (UNWTO) 12 aims of sustainable tourism; tourism carrying capacity assessment; and stakeholder involvement.
- In 2015, all UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among the goals, many are related to coastal areas.

The coast line has special importance for urban populations globally. The range of products on offer in coastal areas is expanding far beyond the traditional ‘sea, sand and sun’ experience. The future of coastal tourism is promising and bright. Hence, it is paramount to consider the complex relationships among threats from coastal tourism, other human activities and coastal ecosystems to develop an effective and efficient sustainable coastal tourism management model (see figure).

Academics and industry practitioners emphasize that engagement of different stakeholders through effective partnerships will be crucial for the future of the coast (European Commission, 2020; Garcia and Cater, 2020; McArdle, 2020). The unprecedented growth in information and communication technologies (ICTs) has fundamentally altered business models and revolutionized the management of tourism.
organizations and destinations. ICTs bring with them a range of advantage for stakeholders in coastal tourism service ecosystems (Buhalis, 2020) to achieve the SDGs.

**References**


