

Can the two be aligned?

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The tourism industry is a vital component for Caribbean economies. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, travel and tourism accounted for over 15% of the Caribbean economy in 2018, equating to US\$62.1 billion. This means tourism is more important to the Caribbean than any other region of the world. So, for the majority of Caribbean countries, tourism is seen as a significant engine of economic growth, now and in the future. Of course, much of the tourism product is linked to nature, and a large part of that is framed around the coastal and marine environment. This contribution is only likely to grow, and coastal and marine tourism is projected to be the largest part of the global ocean economy by 2030. The Caribbean is very likely to benefit from this, but of course managing this growth effectively and sustainably will be challenging. The region must be responsive and creative. This chapter considers the links between tourism and the blue economy, future growth and challenges and whether it is fair to say that at present tourism and the Blue Economy agenda remain largely separate bedfellows.

Tourism, sustainability, cruise ships, regional cooperation, coastal zone management, state capacity
Introduction

The tourism industry is absolutely central to the economies of the Caribbean, and is thus extremely important within the Blue Economy agenda. Tourism is influenced heavily by domestic and external factors, including climate change, and thus must adjust to overcome, or at the very least mitigate, the challenges that are posed. Tourism also contributes to some of the negative issues related to environmental and social sustainability, and so changes must be made within those contexts too. This chapter provides an overview of why and how tourism developed in the Caribbean; its advantages and disadvantages to the region's economy today; the threats aligned against it; and how within the frame of the Blue Economy, the tourism industry can adjust to ensure its long-term sustainability. The chapter shows that despite numerous examples of creativity and initiative, much more needs to be done to safeguard and realign the industry in the Wider Caribbean.

Origins and development of the tourism industry

Tourism is now synonymous with the Caribbean, but that was not always the case. It is really over the last five decades that the industry has established itself, developed and transformed into what we see today. Up until the 1960s, tourism was a niche industry for the region; other sectors predominated, particularly agriculture and mineral extraction. With the exception of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the links with the colonial powers remained strong, and much of the production and export that took place was directed towards Europe, and to a lesser extent the United States. Key agricultural exports, such as sugar, bananas and rum were well established, and under preferential arrangements saw decent rates of return and employed significant numbers of workers. In other countries such as Jamaica (bauxite) and Trinidad and Tobago (oil and natural gas) non-agricultural sectors were equally, if not more important, and these too were seen as key drivers towards development. It was at this time, of course, that many countries in the region were either gaining independence or at the very least more autonomy, and profound political and economic debates were taking place about how the Caribbean could break away from its perceived dependency on traditional exports and markets.

The work of Lloyd Best, a Trinidadian economist, and Sir Arthur Lewis, an economist from St Lucia, were highly influential at this time. They spoke of “Industrialisation by Invitation” – an attempt to reduce the reliance on agriculture in particular and to increase the range of employment opportunities. It was hoped that by establishing an attractive environment for foreign investment, foreign companies would move into the region and in time this would lead to self-sustaining growth in manufacturing. There were some successes, but clear limitations too. A little later, there were more radical ideas from the New World Group, linked to the University of the West Indies but whose influence extended beyond the English-speaking Caribbean, about how concerns over economic dependency could be more profoundly challenged. This group of academics, which included amongst them Lloyd Best, argued that small size should not be a constraint on development, rather strong and effective policy could alter fundamentally the way in which Caribbean economies operated. The work of the Group was prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, and certainly helped to guide the reformist programmes instituted in Jamaica and Grenada. However, by the early 1980s these ideas had been discredited (at least in the eyes of many) and also superseded by the strengthening wave of neoliberal thought, which was also undermining the concept of preference. So, under these circumstances, many countries put greater emphasis on tourism, an industry that had already become an important feature of many economies in the region.

Indeed, from the 1960s with the growth of international air travel and the greater control over domestic economic planning, tourism’s role in the Caribbean grew quickly. This was assisted by Cuba’s withdrawal from the industry after the Revolution in 1959. The government in Havana felt that tourism embodied many of the failings in the economy and society that they wanted to overcome. But most other countries in the region subscribed to the argument of Peters (1969): “that income from international travel can bring the foreign exchange essential for major investment” (quoted in Mullings, 2004, p. 98). As a consequence, significant infrastructure was developed, particularly in the form of hotels to accommodate mass tourism, and enhanced links with air transport companies and tour operators. By 1970, almost four million tourists were visiting the region (Spencer, 2018). However, it was clear even at this time that tourism was not going to be the panacea for development suggested by some, including powerful international organisations such as the World Bank. For example, Patullo (2005) noted that tourism in this period was seen as a demeaning industry with its close parallels to the region’s recent colonial past of slavery, exploitation and dependency. This unease was exacerbated by the sizeable role of foreign ownership. A majority of hotels were foreign-owned, with some of the smaller islands barely having any local ownership (Mullings, 2004). Further, the hope that tourism would create significant links to other parts of the economy, such as manufacturing and agriculture, was not realised. Rather than linkages there were significant leakages, where a majority of the profits went abroad. This trend was worsened by countries’ reliance on international carriers bringing in tourists. Attempts were made to establish local airlines, such as British West Indian Airways (BWIA), Air Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands Air Transport Company (LIAT), but all struggled financially. The creation of the all-inclusive model of tourism in the late 1970s and the growth of cruise ship tourism in the 1990s significantly expanded the industry within the Caribbean, but they did not reverse the view that tourism in the region was dominated by foreign interests (Patullo, 2005; Spencer, 2018).

The industry today

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2019a), travel and tourism accounted for 15.5% of the Caribbean economy in 2018, equating to US\$62.1 billion. This was 2.1% up on the year before. Travel and tourism contributed 2.4 million jobs, or 13.4% of total employment. Most visitors arrived from the United States (43%), followed by Canada (13%), France (6%) and the United

Kingdom (4%). The WTTC suggests that the Caribbean ranks first with regard to the contribution of travel and tourism to GDP and employment; in second place is South East Asia. There are, of course, some differences in terms of the contribution of travel and tourism to particular countries in the region. In the Bahamas, over 40% of the economy is supported by travel and tourism and close to 50% of total employment (WTTC, 2019b). There is a similar level of dependency in Antigua and Barbuda, with a contribution of 44% to both GDP and employment (WTTC, 2019c). In contrast, the contribution of travel and tourism to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is somewhat less: 7.6% to GDP and 9.5% to employment (WTTC, 2019d). In Puerto Rico also, the role is less important: 6.7% to GDP and 5.8% to employment (WTTC, 2019e). Finally, what about Cuba, that for so long did not engage with the industry? Tourist numbers have increased markedly since the early 1990s and in 2018 its contribution to GDP and employment was close to 10% (WTTC, 2019f). So it is clear that despite some variations tourism is a key industry for the region. Let us now consider some of the issues that shape it today.

The most significant change in tourism has been the large increase in cruise ship visitations. Indeed, the Caribbean has now the largest share of cruise visitors; accounting for 50% of global market share by vessel calls and passenger count (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2016). The top Caribbean cruise ship destinations are the Bahamas (where cruise arrivals contributed over 70% of all arrivals in 2013), Cayman Islands, US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico (Spencer, 2018). Other islands, although less popular destinations, still depend heavily on cruise ship visitors. In Dominica and St Kitts and Nevis, cruises represent around 80% of total arrivals (IDDRI, 2019). Many reports suggest that there are real economic benefits to the region from cruise ship tourism. The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in a recent report noted that “cruise ships ... generate a significant amount of economic revenue and employment for the Region” (2016, p. 2). A report by the Business Research and Economic Advisors in 2015 concurred, calculating that cruise ship passengers spent almost US\$2.5 billion when visiting onshore, creating 45,000 direct onshore jobs (Honey, 2019). Similarly, Spencer (2018, pp. 51–52) argued:

Undoubtedly, cruise tourism facilitates employment of locals, both directly and indirectly. Direct employment opportunities include tour operators, store clerks, taxi drivers, craft vendors, port pilots, port security, and port restaurant staff ... This in turn facilitates buoyancy in the economy ...

However, as the Commonwealth Secretariat (2016, p. 3) stated: “cruise tourism in the region has been characterised by high volumes and low value”. For example, “cruise passengers typically stay for one day in each destination, and on average spend 94% less in the country than stay-over (or long-stay) visitors” (Caribbean Development Bank, 2018). Revenues from taxation are also much lower for cruise tourists. As Spencer (2018, p. 66) argued: “[land-based tourists] pay significant departure taxes while [cruise passengers] pay only a token port charge, if anything”. Further, the negative environmental impacts are significant. As Honey (2019, p. 146) argued, “seventy percent of cruises take place in sensitive biodiversity ‘hotspots’, including those in the Caribbean, and environmental monitoring is notoriously difficult”. “Ballast water, grey and black water, chemical pollution, solid waste, and oil are some of the pollutants created and expelled by cruise ships” (Spencer, 2018, p. 53). Also, the impacts of dredging reef areas and construction of port facilities to accommodate the ever-increasing size of cruise ships is of considerable concern. It should be mentioned, however, that with the designation of the Wider Caribbean Region as a Special Area under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Annex V, the restrictions on the discharge of garbage into the sea from ships has placed additional strain on receiving ports waste collection infrastructure (Association of Caribbean States, n.d.).

Greenhouse gas emissions are also significant. The effects of these can be found at sea and in port and coastal areas. Past efforts have been made to construct a unified Caribbean response to mitigate some of these concerns, but they have been largely unsuccessful. For example, plans for a Caribbean Community (CARICOM)-wide standard tax on cruise ship passengers collapsed after the cruise lines threatened to remove destinations from their itineraries (Patullo, 2005; Honey, 2019).

For most destinations in the Caribbean, traditional mass tourism remains of central importance, both in terms of its direct and indirect contribution. In 2018, the most popular destinations were the Dominican Republic with 6.57 million stop-over visitors and Jamaica with 2.47 million. Tourism products rely on coastal pursuits such as sunbathing, swimming, snorkelling and surfing, as well as maritime activities, such as boating and yachting (CDB, 2018). A recent study in Barbados found that visitors place significant economic value on the quality of coastal and marine resources such as wide beaches, sea-water quality and thriving coral reefs (Schuhmann et al., 2017). Notwithstanding, the long-standing concerns related to mass tourism remain, including the damage to vulnerable marine and land-based ecosystems from poorly planned coastal development. For example, it is estimated that 85% of waste water releases from tourist facilities are untreated (IDDRI, 2019); there is a limited role for local stakeholders; and there remains a significant level of leakages from the domestic economy. Thus, efforts have been made to diversify the tourism product.

Ecotourism that focuses on nature experiences while aiming for environmental sustainability is one example; others include community-based and heritage tourism. In recent years, countries in the region have become more successful in marketing particular products and using information and communication technology (ICT) to do so. The Toucan Trail in Belize is a case in point (Spencer, 2018, p. 63). More niche, higher-end, tourism products with greater rates of return have also been developed, such as medical and sports tourism, as well as weddings and honeymoons. St Lucia has been particularly successful in relation to the latter. So there is undoubtedly a recognition that although mass tourism remains the bread-and-butter product for the region, new products and new approaches are required to maintain an acceptable balance between the economic benefits of tourism and environmental and social sustainability. As Neil Waters, acting Secretary-General of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, argued: “the industry [must] shift away from excessive standardisation and embrace the unique culture of the destinations in the Caribbean” (Caribbean News Now, 2019). However, with growing environmental threats, more needs to be done to address the challenges that are already presenting themselves.

External environmental threats and implications

In addition to the negative environmental effects caused by tourism in the locale, there are significant changes to the global environment, which are clearly having impacts on the Caribbean. The World Tourism Organisation (2009, p. 2) called the travel and tourism sector “highly climate sensitive” as climate “defines the length and quality of tourism seasons, affects tourism operations, and influences environmental conditions that both attract and deter visitors”. The most significant risks for the region from climate change are coastal flooding and inundation, loss or reduction of beaches, and loss of coastal ecosystems such as coral reefs, and salt marshes and mangroves that provide valuable ecosystem services such as buffer zones that protect the coast from storm surges (Thomas & Benjamin, 2015). Climate change could also contribute to increased incidences of vector-borne diseases such as dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika virus, which could negatively impact on tourist arrivals to the region and affect its image as a destination. In Jamaica, for example, a one-metre rise in sea level will likely inundate 100% of port lands, 20% of airport lands and 2% of road networks (Trotz, 2014). Similarly, Thomas and Benjamin (2015) estimated that in the Bahamas, sea level rise will lead to displacement of coastal communities, coastal erosion and loss of land,

salination in aquifers and damage or loss of coastal infrastructure amounting to billions of dollars. Further, if sea level increases 0.5 metres, tourism income is expected to fall by 62% in Barbados and 34% in Bonaire (Pulwarty et al., 2010, in IDDRI, 2019).

A further related outcome of climate change is more frequent and stronger hurricanes. This was illustrated very clearly in September 2017 with the passage of Hurricanes Irma and Maria through the Caribbean. Both were Category 5 hurricanes and caused severe damage to several countries, including Antigua and Barbuda (15% of GDP), the British Virgin Islands (350% of GDP), Dominica (224% of GDP), and the Turks and Caicos Islands (51% of GDP) (Caribbean Development Bank, 2018). The hurricanes destroyed or damaged much of the infrastructure, which had a knock-on impact on the tourism industry. In the British Virgin Islands, for example, more than 80% of the 4,000-strong charter sailing fleet was destroyed or damaged. Although the recovery was swift the initial effects were significant. An associated issue is to what extent prospective tourists consider the risks of hurricanes when they plan their trip. Forster et al. (2012) suggested that it is an important issue. They concluded that 40% of visitors to Anguilla considered hurricane season when making a booking, and respondents were less likely to choose a destination if the frequency and intensity of hurricanes increased. Further, as Honey and Bray (2019, p. 41) argued, "Increasingly cruise ships are ... forced to delay or cancel departures or divert course and alter itineraries to avoid extreme weather events".

Can the Blue Economy offer a viable way forward?

In relation to tourism, "the concept of the Blue Economy is expected to ensure the sustainability of resource availability, ecosystem balance and environmental health, and encourage the effective utilization and management of resources" (Tegar & Gurning, 2018, p. 128). In its report entitled *The Potential of the Blue Economy*, the UN and World Bank detailed a number of initiatives that should help to move tourism in the right direction. These included: improving local stakeholder engagement; reducing leakages by enhancing local productive capacity; ensuring the effective handling and disposal of waste; strengthening coastal and biodiversity conservation; implementing adequate disaster risk reduction policies and practices; diversifying the tourism product; and improving planning and development control policies (World Bank Group / United Nations, 2017, p. 17). So in short, as the Caribbean Development Bank noted, "The blue economy calls for the intelligent management of coastal resources to drive economic growth while protecting ocean and coastal ecosystems" (2018, p. 26). Indeed, the study by Schuhmann et al. (2017) found that visitors were highly sensitive to environmental degradation as a major consideration in whether or not they would make a return visit. Making the necessary changes and safeguarding the natural environment are of course easier said than done, given the significant challenges posed by mass and cruise ship tourism in particular. In addition, there is the ongoing threat of climate change, which is way beyond the Caribbean's control. Nevertheless, tourism in the region must take advantage of and advance the benefits within the Blue Economy.

The region has a well-developed governance framework to support tourism and the Blue Economy. There are various inter-governmental associations and organisations of nations assembled for regional integration at the political level, including in particular the ACS and CARICOM. For coordination with regard to governance of the Caribbean Sea, there is the UN's Caribbean Environment Programme (one of its Regional Seas Programmes) and the Caribbean Sea Commission of the ACS. Under the auspices of CARICOM, there are also inter-governmental bodies mandated with coordinating the region's efforts in response to climate change (Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre) as well as tourism development (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, CTO). Regional private sector associations such as the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association, and non-

government organisations, such as the Caribbean Natural Resource Institute (CANARI), also play an important role.

There is a slow but positive move by the tourism industry to begin contributing to efforts to sustain the natural environment on which their business depends. Some large-scale tourism actors have established foundations or associations which support various environmental conservation projects. Marketing is helping to promote more sustainable tourism products, and ICT is being used “as a means of anticipatory warning and post-impact crisis management and in controlling their harmful effects on tourism” (Spencer, 2018, p. 99). For example, the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology has partnered with the CTO to develop a tourism-climate spatio-temporal modelling framework that predicts the influence of intra- and extra-regional climate on tourist arrivals to the Caribbean.

The following case studies highlight some of the challenges and the responses which represent real progress in meeting the Blue Economy agenda in regard to tourism. The case studies have been selected to showcase examples of good governance and beneficial interventions that address underlying issues such as coastal erosion and land based sources of pollution, as well as to highlight the value of individual and collective action by local small-scale actors to secure local livelihoods, the future of the industry and stewardship of key resources.

The Barbados model for coastal zone management

Already presented in Chapter 6, the Barbados-based Coastal Zone Management Unit is a best practice in managing the coastline. The Unit has installed protective infrastructure that serves the primary purpose of providing shoreline protection, while at the same time enhancing the tourism product by offering continuous lateral access along stretches of beach that were once impassable in many sections due to erosion. In addition, the seating and landscaping provide amenity and recreational value in a densely developed urban setting that lacks outdoor public spaces. In short, the more visible and popular function is the use of the timber-deck walkway by visitors and locals alike for a range of recreational pursuits, including walking, fishing and photography.

In a contingent valuation study, results revealed that such investments had a positive impact on enhancing cultural and aesthetic ecosystem services, for both tourists and residents alike. Between 23% and 30% of tourists were drawn to the beaches because of the improved beach conditions. Visitors showed even stronger preferences for the improved conditions with over 60% stating that they were less likely to visit if the beach returned to its pre-improved condition. Moreover, tourists were found to value the improvements at Holetown and Rockley beach at BBD\$51 per visitor and BBD\$43 per visitor, respectively (Banerjee et al., 2018).

Individual and collective action by small-scale actors

Watersports and diving are key attractions for many tourists visiting the Caribbean, and represent economic opportunities for locals to make their livelihoods through the provision of these services to tourists. However, the capacity to leverage such economic opportunities is dependent on having the requisite knowledge and in-water competencies, and despite living on islands surrounded by the sea, many Caribbean people are unable to swim or are uncomfortable in the marine environment. They are therefore unable to take advantage of these opportunities. Fortunately, several watersports and/or dive operators across the region have taken the initiative to build capacity in Caribbean young people by offering swim and dive classes as well as marine awareness and education programmes. For example, Serenity Dive in St Vincent and the Grenadines has launched a school awareness programme, while in Jamaica, Yardie Divers and Environmental Conservationists

was founded by two local marine biologists with the motto “Discover, Educate, Conserve”. The business offers a diversity of services, including SCUBA diving, environmental consultancy and conservation tours. Also, “Dive Fest” in Barbados represents an example of collective action among dive operators to promote dive tourism, while incorporating activities to raise awareness of environmental issues and provide capacity building for local children.

Other opportunities for local small-scale actors may be found in the link between tourism and fisheries in the Caribbean. In some destinations, the tourism industry creates demand for fish and seafood; it is common and often expected that there is a “catch of the day” on restaurant menus. Sport fishing is also an attraction for some visitors, and may provide a niche-market for local operators. Many small-scale businesses are engaged in a variety of activities across sectors, for example, many divers also fish, and some local fishers also offer fishing charters to tourists. In the Dominican Republic, local NGO Reef Check DR has launched AquaCheck, a Marine Environmental Gastronomic Certification Program targeting businesses that use food from the sea, with the purpose of helping to educate and involve these businesses in the incorporation of sustainable options for responsible use of fish and seafood (Reef Check DR, 2018).

Tourism and the (Green and) Blue Economy – ridge to reef management

Tourism in the Caribbean is primarily located in low-lying coastal areas. Properties are therefore at risk from flooding because of poorly designed and maintained public drainage systems. In addition, reefs and other coastal and marine resources which underpin the industry are subject to pollution and sedimentation from land-based sources inland. These issues are exacerbated by climate change, which is predicted to cause increased intensity of extreme rainfall events which would increase the risk of flooding and associated damage. In response, several Caribbean countries are implementing Ridge to Reef projects, and although they are not explicitly Blue Economy projects, they provide critical support to the coastal tourism product and the Blue Economy by alleviating flooding and protecting coastal and marine resources. One such project was implemented in Barbados by the then Ministry of Environment and Drainage in 2014, entitled “Adaptation Measures to Counteract the Effects of Climate Change with a focus on Water Resources Management and Flood Alleviation” (AMCECC). This project was implemented in the Holetown and Trens area, where several major tourism properties are located. It included a management plan for the Holetown Lagoon, the largest remnant wetland on the west coast, which lies between two beachfront hotels. In addition, a capital works programme was developed to design and implement interventions for flood alleviation for the area.

Such interventions by government to address national issues are made for the collective public good, and it is sometimes difficult to relate the specific benefits to individuals. In this case, we can offer an example with clear links to the Blue Economy. Michael Marshall is a resident of Trens, on the eastern side of the west coast road, across from a large hotel and the land-based park facility of the Folkestone Marine Reserve. He makes his livelihood as a small-scale actor in the Blue Economy – he is a watersports operator promoting snorkelling tours and other activities. Michael will benefit as a reduction in land-based sources of pollution will lessen stress on the natural resources that he relies upon for his livelihood. Recognising this, Michael has engaged with executing agency of the works, reaching out to inform on issues that arise, acting as a point-of contact in the community and assisting with setting up meetings. Such an integrated approach (of government action and local stakeholder engagement) to environmental management and the protection of tourism services is one that can and should be embraced further across the region.

Conclusion

The examples in the previous section indicate that action can be, and is being, taken by governments, international governmental organisations, businesses, NGOs and private individuals to align tourism with the Blue Economy agenda and vice versa. It is clear that key stakeholders across the Caribbean are aware of the challenges and opportunities that are present. Some of the work already being seen in countries such as Barbados, Belize, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica is important and effective. Further, there is a growing regional infrastructure that is being put in place to help the tourism industry align with the Blue Economy agenda. But there is clearly much more to do. Regional actors must be better coordinated and pro-active; national governments need to more effectively challenge long-held accepted norms, particularly around mass overnight and cruise ship tourism, and local communities should play a more central role. Perhaps the ideas of the New World Group are important here, in that strong and effective policies are fundamental in bringing about change. However, as this chapter has also highlighted, the challenges facing the region in terms of climate change and environmental degradation, dependency on mass tourism and the foreign companies that (largely) run the industry, and the small-island capacity and character of the countries in question mean that the significant step-change that is required remains out of reach. Perhaps as policy, action and threat increase that step-change will come, but for the moment at least, tourism and the Blue Economy agenda remain largely separate bedfellows.

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