

Qualifi Level 7 Diploma



Culture and Society in Tourism

Level 7: Diploma in Hospitality & Tourism Management
UeCampus Study Guide



Academic Module



Study Guide



Online Learning

Unit Overview: Three Chapters

Chapter 1

Current Trends in Tourism

Shifting values, generational change,
technology-mediated culture,
place relationships, new typologies

Chapter 2

The Changing Nature of Tourism

Tourist role, destination concept,
platform ecosystems, contested
purpose,
critical theory (post-modern/colonial)

Chapter 3

Planning for Tourism Development

Culture-society-tourism nexus,
emerging international policy,
sustainable development planning

From identifying tourism trends to critically analysing their cultural impact and informing development policy

Current Trends in Tourism

01 Authenticity & Meaning

Tourists seek genuine cultural connection over staged encounters. Transformative travel, voluntourism, spiritual tourism.

02 Generational Shift

Millennials & Gen Z: digital natives, climate-conscious, experience-first, diversity-valuing. Largest growing tourism segment.

03 Technology-Mediated Culture

Social media as discovery engine; algorithmic curation; AI trip planning; influencer-driven demand; overtourism amplification.

04 Slow Travel & Place

Depth over breadth. Staying longer, travelling overland, immersing in local rhythms. Counter-trend to bucket-list tourism.

05 New Tourism Typologies

Dark tourism, wellness tourism, digital nomad tourism, regenerative tourism, ancestral/diaspora tourism, sleep tourism.

The Changing Nature of Tourism: Four Structural Shifts

Tourist as
Passive Consumer



**Tourist as
Active Co-Creator**

From package holidays to experience seeking, content creation, and participative design. The tourist shapes the product.

Destination
as Product



**Destination
as Living Ecosystem**

From place-as-commodity to understanding destinations as complex systems with residents, culture, ecology, and politics.

Linear
Value Chain



**Platform
Ecosystem**

From tour operator → travel agent → airline → hotel to Airbnb, Booking.com, TripAdvisor, and algorithmic mediation.

Growth
Consensus



**Contested
Purpose**

From “more tourism = better” to questioning who benefits, who is harmed, and what tourism should be for.

Issues Emerging from Structural Change

Housing & Displacement Crisis

Short-term rentals converting residential stock; gentrification; community displacement in Barcelona, Lisbon, Venice

Cultural Erosion & Authenticity Paradox

The more tourists seek authenticity, the more economic incentives transform culture into consumable product

Labour & Decent Work Challenge

Platform economy, gig work, seasonal precarity alongside demand for higher-skilled, culturally literate service

Algorithmic Power Problem

Platform algorithms concentrate power in tech companies; visibility = viability; algorithmic bias shapes destination success

Environmental Accountability Gap

Conscious travel expectations rising but aggregate impact harder to measure, attribute, and regulate

Governance Deficit

Global platform power vs local regulatory capacity; fragmented governance across tourism, housing, labour, environment

Critical Theoretical Frameworks

Five lenses for analysing tourism's cultural and societal impact

The Tourist Gaze (Urry & Larsen)

Tourism as a visual practice of power. Tourists construct the "Other" through selective seeing. Drawing on Foucault: the gaze as an instrument of power.

Cultural Commodification

Cultural practices transformed into products. Cohen, MacCannell: the conversion of living culture into consumable heritage. The staged authenticity paradox.

Social Exchange Theory

Host-visitor relationship as transaction: tourists receive experience; communities receive economic benefit. When perceived costs exceed benefits, resistance emerges.

Cultural Carrying Capacity

The level beyond which cultural identity and social cohesion are unacceptably altered. Unlike ecological capacity, inherently subjective and politically contested.

Cultural Justice (Emerging)

Synthesises all four frameworks into a normative vision: recognition, redistribution, representation, and participation in how tourism governs culture.

The Three “Post-” Concepts in Tourism

Postmodern Tourism

Collapse of boundaries & culture of simulation

- Blurred boundaries: tourist/local, authentic/staged, work/leisure
- Hyper-reality: themed environments, Instagram-designed spaces
- Pastiche & irony: the tourist who knowingly consumes the inauthentic
- Disneyfication as both criticism and lived experience

Post-Industrial Tourism

Service economy & transformation of place

- Shift from manufacturing to service/knowledge/experience economy
- Pine & Gilmore’s Experience Economy: staging memorable encounters
- Industrial heritage: former factories become museums, hotels, galleries
- Creative cities and cultural quarters as economic regeneration strategy

Post-Colonial Tourism

Power, representation & legacy of empire

- Colonial-era power structures persist in tourism: who owns, narrates, benefits?
- Representation: exotic imagery reinforces Western constructions of the “Other”
- Economic leakage: profits flow to Global North corporations
- Indigenous self-determination: communities reclaiming tourism narratives

The Bidirectional Relationship: Culture ↔ Tourism

Culture & Society Shape Tourism

- Cultural values determine what tourism exists and who participates
- Social class, gender, disability shape access and experience
- Religious and cultural calendar creates seasonal demand patterns
- Local culture produces the assets (heritage, cuisine, art) tourists seek
- Community attitudes determine the welcome visitors receive

Tourism Shapes Culture & Society

- Cultural preserver: economic incentives for heritage maintenance
- Cultural transformer: commodification alters practices for tourist consumption
- Social stratifier: creates winners (tourism entrepreneurs) and losers (displaced residents)
- Identity shaper: host communities define themselves through/against tourism
- Environmental modifier: infrastructure, land use, carrying capacity pressures

The relationship is co-evolutionary: culture and tourism continuously shape each other in a dynamic, feedback-driven system

Emerging Trends in International Tourism Policy

Post-Pandemic Reset

From “recover volume” to “rebuild better.” Quality over quantity; managed growth; resident-inclusive planning.

Climate & Decarbonisation

Paris Agreement, EU Fit for 55, CORSIA aviation scheme, carbon taxation. Tourism forced to internalise environmental costs.

Platform Regulation

EU Digital Services Act/Digital Markets Act. Addressing Airbnb housing impact, OTA dominance, algorithmic transparency.

Visitor Management

From niche conservation tool to mainstream policy: entry fees, timed slots, spatial dispersal, dynamic pricing (Venice, Amsterdam, Barcelona).

Cultural & Indigenous Rights

Community right to determine how culture is represented and consumed. UNDRIP, UNESCO frameworks. Self-determination in tourism.

Labour Standards

ILO Decent Work Agenda + SDG 8. Post-pandemic workforce shortages exposing poor conditions. Minimum wage, hours, gig protections.

AI Governance

EU AI Act: first comprehensive framework. Algorithmic tourism mediation, recommendation bias, generative AI in travel planning.

Overtourism, Carrying Capacity & the Right to Place

Overtourism

When tourism intensity exceeds the threshold that residents, environment, and culture can absorb without unacceptable degradation. Venice, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, Amsterdam as global exemplars.

- Resident displacement and anti-tourism sentiment
- Infrastructure strain beyond design capacity
- Cultural sites reduced to backdrop for selfies
- Environmental degradation (coral reefs, trails, waterways)

Cultural Carrying Capacity

The socio-cultural threshold beyond which community identity and cohesion are unacceptably altered. Inherently subjective, politically contested, and community-defined.

- Not a fixed number but a dynamic, perceived limit
- Depends on: distribution, behaviour, cultural sensitivity
- Must be determined by communities, not calculated by planners
- Violation triggers resistance, hostility, policy backlash

The Right to Place

The emerging principle that residents have a fundamental right to their living environment that tourism should not violate. Connects to housing, cultural, and democratic rights.

- Housing as a human right vs accommodation as investment
- Public space as commons vs tourist consumption zone
- Cultural landscape as heritage vs marketable brand
- Policy responses: tourist taxes, rental caps, visitor caps

Social Media, Algorithms & the Digital Mediation of Tourism

Social Media as Tourism Engine

- Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Pinterest as discovery engines
- "Instagrammability" as destination design criterion
- User-generated content replaces expert-curated guides
- Influencer economy: travel as performance and content creation
- Viral amplification concentrates demand on trending destinations
- Real-time sharing creates FOMO-driven decision cycles

The Algorithmic Power Problem

- Algorithms replace travel agents, guidebooks, concierges
- Visibility = viability: properties invisible to algorithms are invisible to tourists
- Algorithmic bias amplifies already-popular destinations
- OTA commission structures (15–25%) shift value from producers to platforms
- Generative AI (ChatGPT, Google AI) as new mediation layer
- EU AI Act: first regulatory framework for algorithmic tourism

From Sustainable to Regenerative Tourism

Extractive Tourism

Takes from communities, environment, culture without adequate return. Leakage, exploitation, degradation.



Sustainable Tourism

Minimises harm: reduce, offset, preserve. Meets needs of present without compromising future. Necessary but insufficient.



Responsible Tourism

Active accountability: fair wages, cultural respect, environmental stewardship. Goes beyond “do no harm” to “do good.”



Regenerative Tourism

Tourism that leaves places, communities, and ecosystems better than it found them. Net positive impact. The emerging gold standard.

The environmental accountability gap: conscious travel expectations rising but aggregate impact harder to measure, attribute, and regulate as tourism structures fragment across platforms

Principles for Managing the Culture-Tourism Relationship

1

Community Consent as Foundation

Tourism development requires informed, ongoing community consent — not merely consultation after decisions are made.

2

Carrying Capacity as Policy Instrument

Cultural carrying capacity must be assessed, monitored, and enforced. Communities define the threshold, not planners.

3

Economic Benefit Must Be Equitable

Revenue, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities must reach the host community, not leak to external corporations.

4

Cultural Representation Must Be Authentic

Communities retain control over how their culture is narrated, performed, and marketed to visitors.

5

Governance Must Match Tourism's Scale

Regulatory frameworks must evolve to govern platforms, algorithms, and cross-border tourism impacts.

6

Tourism as Regenerative Force

The ambition shifts from “minimise harm” to “leave places better” — net positive cultural, social, and environmental impact.

Key Takeaways

- Five megatrends reshape tourism: authenticity-seeking, generational shift, technology mediation, slow travel, and new typologies (dark, wellness, regenerative, digital nomad)
- Four structural shifts define the changing nature: passive consumer → co-creator, destination → ecosystem, linear chain → platform, growth consensus → contested purpose
- Six critical issues emerge: housing displacement, cultural erosion, labour precarity, algorithmic power, environmental accountability gap, governance deficit
- Five theoretical frameworks illuminate cultural impact: tourist gaze, commodification, social exchange, carrying capacity, and emerging cultural justice
- Three “post-” concepts provide critical lenses: postmodern (simulation), post-industrial (experience economy), post-colonial (power and representation)
- Culture and tourism co-evolve in a bidirectional, feedback-driven system: culture shapes demand; tourism transforms culture
- Seven international policy trends: post-pandemic reset, climate governance, platform regulation, visitor management, cultural rights, labour standards, AI governance
- The trajectory: from extractive → sustainable → responsible → regenerative tourism. Community consent, equitable benefit, and cultural self-determination as foundational principles