

ПРАКТИКА И ОПИТ  
PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE

**THE TRANSFORMATIVE AND POLITICAL POWER  
OF TOURISM FOR WORLD PEACE: FROM PAST TO PRESENT**

*“Tourism is the main bridge for building understanding. It has a unique ability to promote peace between and among peoples everywhere.”<sup>1</sup>*

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**Abstract:** Among the world’s largest industries, tourism has evolved from a cultural exchange mechanism to a tool with significant political implications for peacebuilding. The International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) was established during the UN’s International Year of Peace in 1986, and tourism was positioned as a “Global Peace Industry” with transformative potential. The IIPT’s 1988 Vancouver Conference marked a political milestone, promoting “Sustainable Tourism” and solidifying tourism’s role in international policy to foster understanding, cooperation, and reconciliation. Key documents, such as the Manila Declaration (1985) and the Amman Declaration (2000), framed tourism as a strategic instrument for soft power, diplomatic relations, and conflict resolution. This article underscores tourism’s role in advancing global peace agendas by analyzing how tourism shapes geopolitical perceptions, addresses social justice, and supports UN Sustainable Development Goals. The article concludes by advocating for increased research into tourism’s political influence on peacebuilding while acknowledging the industry’s capacity to bridge divides, promote inclusivity, and support sustainable global relations.

**Keywords:** sustainable tourism; library tourism; peace; SDGs; culture of peace

Sixteen centuries have passed since Saint Augustine said: “The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page.” Nowadays, according to Louis D’Amore the metaphor of “The Book” as a “traveling machine” and the

traveling itself, are becoming a bestseller worldwide. The tourism industry is one of the largest and fastest-developing branches in the world, changing the perception of society at all levels of our existence (D'Amore 2013).

### **Tourism as a key driver of economic recovery and growth**

Tourism is linked with other global industries, and because of that trait, the impact of tourism on economic growth is significant and exponential. This is due in part to the employment opportunities that tourism provides and the temporary increase in consumer spending that occurs when individuals travel.

A recently published report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reaffirms the pivotal role of tourism in economic prosperity. In light of the UNWTO's projections indicating a potential resurgence in tourist numbers to pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year, the IMF report points to the favorable implications that the sector's accelerated recovery will have on specific economies across the globe.

As indicated in the World Economic Outlook (WEO) Report, “the global economy is projected to expand by 3.0% in 2023 and 2.9% in 2024. Although this represents an increase on previous forecasts, it remains below the 3.5% growth rate recorded in 2022. This indicates that the effects of the pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis are ongoing”.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has indicated that in 2019, prior to the advent of the pandemic, travel and tourism (including its direct, indirect, and induced impacts) constituted 10.5% of all employment (334 million jobs) and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$ 10.3 trillion). The latest annual research from WTTC points out that in 2023, the travel and tourism sector contributed 9.1% to global GDP, representing a 23.2% increase from 2022 and a 4.1% decline from the 2019 level. In 2023, the number of new jobs created reached 27 million, representing a 9.1% increase compared to 2022 and a 1.4% decline compared to the 2019 level. Domestic visitor spending exhibited an 18.1% increase in 2023, exceeding the 2019 level. Conversely, international visitor spending demonstrated a 33.1% surge in 2023, yet remained 14.4% below the 2019 total.<sup>4</sup>

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in its Manila Declaration, established that the development of international tourism may “help to eliminate the widening economic gap between developed and developing countries and ensure the steady acceleration of economic and social development and progress, in particular of the developing countries” (Juan et al. 2024).

### **Tourism as a key driver for peace – a brief historical overview**

Tourism has the potential to be a catalyst for peace and mutual understanding between nations and cultures, as well as a means of facilitating reconciliation processes. From promoting cultural tolerance to enhancing governmental functionality, this article examines the correlation between sustainable tourism practices and positive peace indices, offering insights into the ways in which tourism can contribute to global harmony.

The vision of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) created in 1986 the International Year of Peace consists of the belief that travel and tourism become the world's first global peace industry and every traveler could be an "Ambassador for Peace."

The 'Sustainable Tourism' concept was first introduced at the IIPT First Global Conference, *Tourism: A Vital Force for Peace*, Vancouver 1988. The conference attended 800 delegates from 68 countries who adopted the new paradigm for a "Higher Purpose" of tourism. They emphasized the key role of tourism in fostering travel and tourism initiatives that boost intercultural understanding, equity, tolerance, and conservation of cultural heritage, and quality of the environment. They also support the fight against poverty, military conflicts, and terrorism to support peace and sustainable development.

In the mid-1970s the Government of Canada commissioned the firm of L. J. D'Amore and Associates to conduct the world's first study on the future of tourism and at the same time created the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT). The study was implemented through a "North American lens" and had the following findings about the benefits of the future development of tourism: booster the levels of incomes, improve education systems, possibilities for increasing leisure time and wellbeing of the people, opportunities for more families to travel. For the first time, the social and environmental impact of the tourism matrix was explored.<sup>2, 3</sup>

Two years later the study was updated in 1978 and the research program "Tourscan" was created. The program produced 6 to 8 reports per year exploring the social impact of tourism, trends in travel and tourism, and annual forecasts for the next year.

**The big issue becomes the question of how tourism can change the world into a better place.**

The First Global Conference: *Tourism – A Vital Force for Peace* was held in Vancouver, Canada, in October 1988 after two years of preparation. The conference received support from the private and public sectors of the Canadian travel and tourism industry with the main sponsor Air Canada. At the event, the concept of "Sustainable Tourism Development" was presented, introducing the important role of tourism in our global society which consists of the following:

- „Promoting international understanding
- Collaboration among nations
- Protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity
- Enhancing cultures and valuing heritage
- Sustainable development
- Poverty Reduction, and
- Healing Wounds of Conflict.”

According to the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT), the important role of tourism was recognized by the governments and industry.

They emphasized the benefits of tourism regarding social, economic, environmental, and political aspects and the power of this industry in the creation of the “Culture of Peace”.

Tourism has long been recognized as a significant contributor to international relations and world peace (Matthews 1978). In 1986, the United Nations marked the “International Year of Peace,” reinforcing global commitments to peace initiatives. Five years earlier, in 1981, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) issued the Manila Declaration, underscoring tourism’s importance in promoting and preserving peace. The declaration described tourism as “a vital force for peace” and a “moral and intellectual foundation for fostering international understanding and interdependence” (Youngsun Shin 2008).

The Manila Declaration began with a powerful statement: Tourism could be the main power to support global peace and promote understanding and cultural dialogue. (UNWTO 1985). This marked the first formal recognition by a leading global tourism organization of tourism’s role as a force for peace, setting a foundational precedent for nations and governments worldwide.

In 1987, the conference titled “Tourism – A Passport to Peace” was convened in Shannon, Ireland, paving the way for the inaugural “Global Conference on Tourism – A Vital Force for Peace” held in Vancouver in 1988. This pivotal event led to the publication of the first work focused on “Peace Through Tourism,” edited by Louis D’Amore, the founder of the International Institute for Peace Through Tourism established in 1986, along with Jafar Jafari. Additionally, the “Amman Declaration on Peace Through Tourism,” resulting from the conference in Amman, Jordan, in 2000, became an official United Nations document.

As preparations were underway for the “Tourism, A Vital Force for Peace” conference in 1988, one of its organizers published an article in the *Journal of Travel Research*. Titled “Tourism: The World’s Peace Industry,” this article indicated that the conference was grounded in the Manila Declaration, which “challenged the industry to embrace a concept of tourism that underscores its social, cultural, economic, educational, and political significance” (D’Amore 1988).

In the ensuing decades, numerous global summits and declarations have reinforced tourism’s position as an essential contributor to peacebuilding. For example, the Berlin Declaration of 1999 highlighted the importance of cross-cultural exchange and sustainable tourism in conflict resolution. The idea of tourism as a peace-making tool was adopted by not only individual nations but also multilateral organizations, which recognized its potential to enhance diplomatic relations and foster cooperation among states. By aligning political support with sustainable development objectives, tourism emerged as a diplomatic pathway, capable of bridging divides among nations, cultures, and communities.

The concept of a culture of peace, developed by UNESCO and championed by the UN during the ‘International Year of a Culture of Peace’ in 2000 and the subsequent ‘International Decade of a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World’ (2001–2010), provides a vital framework for understanding the role of tourism in achieving sustainable peace.

Peace is the most treasured gift to humanity which supports peaceful relations not only between societies but also between society and nature. If there is no peace there will be no tourism either. A concrete example of the linkage between tourism and peace is tourism in Nepal which passed through a long-armed conflict (1996–2006) (Upadhyaya 2013).

For the last six decades, tourism has emerged as one of the world's largest industries, playing a crucial role in reducing unemployment, driving economic growth, and facilitating natural resource conservation and cultural exchange (Honey & Gilpin 2009).

### **The transformative role of tourism in the post-Covid era**

COVID-19 hit negatively all aspects of our global society but one positive direction after the pandemic was the revival of the tourist industry, especially with the possibility to build Positive Peace. The statement that tourism is one of the main prerequisites for global peace gives an immersive direction in front of the science for discovering the determinants of such a phenomenon.

During the pandemic, as tourism came to a near halt, the sector's role as a bridge for cultural understanding and peacebuilding was underscored like never before. As travel resumed, the industry became a pivotal force in rebuilding global connections and fostering cooperation among countries. The post-pandemic recovery underscored tourism's capacity to contribute to Positive Peace by reviving local economies, creating employment, and enhancing intercultural exchanges. This resurgence highlighted tourism as more than just a leisure industry but a crucial element in the collective healing process and the promotion of sustainable peace.

Tourism serves as a vital bridge for fostering understanding and has a distinctive capacity to promote peace among people globally. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) aligns with UN Secretary-General António Guterres in advocating for nations to resolve their disputes through peaceful means rather than conflict, emphasizing the importance of upholding international security and justice.

The World Economic Forum notes that the recovery of this sector presents a unique opportunity to reevaluate the impact of tourism on both people and the planet, aiming to create a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future. Shifts in demand – such as the push for greater digitalization, an increased interest in nature-based experiences, and the rise of digital nomads – bring forth both challenges and significant opportunities for new businesses, entrepreneurs, and entire communities.

The relationship between tourism and the promotion of a widespread culture of peace is more intricate than it initially appears. It involves a comprehensive contribution from tourism to the enhancement of global mutual understanding and peace, requiring an ontological approach that is transdisciplinary, integrating tourism studies, cultural heritage management, and peace and conflict studies.<sup>4</sup>

Recent research indicates that peace through tourism is pivotal in conflict resolution at various destinations and can also support the broader aim of peace on both local and global scales. The findings highlight that community involvement in tourism development significantly influences conflict resolution, enabling locals to reap the benefits of tourism activities while empowering them to enhance their skills through small business initiatives (Sharma et al. 2023).

Ooi (2015) posits that tourists serve as both subjects and objects within the realm of geopolitics, emphasizing that fostering mutual understanding and empathy is integral to the geopolitical landscape from a soft power perspective. He argues that tourism can further the goals of soft power by improving understanding of destinations and enhancing their reputations. Consequently, tourism can play a proactive role in promoting peace, friendship, cohesion, and socio-economic development in regions while simultaneously enhancing national and international perceptions among countries.

The tourism sector possesses the capacity to foster peace, promote justice for all, and create a conducive environment for comprehensive business growth. Scholars have noted that religious tourism can serve as a potent social force that drives peaceful and inclusive development in the developing world. It is contended that interfaith tourism aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 16, which focuses on maintaining peace and social justice in developing countries such as those in Africa (Senbeto 2021).<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, researchers have proposed that peace tourism, a burgeoning form of tourism, could serve as a methodology for achieving peace through tourism initiatives (Erwin & Sturm 2021). Furthermore, tourism is a phenomenon deeply rooted in social structures, networks, and behavioral dynamics. It is therefore unsurprising that the belief in tourism's ability to contribute to peace – by enhancing human relationships, and perceptions, and fostering understanding among people – remains widely accepted and historically grounded (Farmaki 2017).

### **Library tourism – a keeper of cultural sustainability and peace**

The importance of cultural heritage as an enabler of sustainable development is widely acknowledged (Giliberto & Labadi 2021). The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a total of 169 targets spanning economic, environmental and social development. SDG 11 states “Make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. Following this statement, libraries have an important role in the preservation of valuable documentary heritage and local culture which strengthens the local communities (Adhikary & Adhikary 2021).

Cultural sustainability has become a growing priority within sustainable development agendas and is now often depicted as a fourth pillar, equal to social, economic, and environmental concerns. Museums and libraries play a unique role in cultural sustainability by preserving their communities' heritage (Loach, Rowley & Griffiths 2016).

Libraries are part of the global cultural heritage – memories of the development of our civilization. In our world of gobbling capitalism and pervasive consumerism, libraries continue to be islands of humanity and spirituality. Library tourism is a form of economic, social, and cultural phenomenon that gives tourists access to the destination's information and gives them a glimpse of the writer's perspective. Library tourism nexus is comparatively an unexplored area in tourism literature (Sinha et al. 2023).<sup>6</sup>

The Libraries for Peace (L4P) web portal was created to advance the mission of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs “to strengthen international ties among libraries and librarians worldwide for the promotion of international education, understanding, and peace. Libraries as information, education, and cultural centers, and community anchors have a role in advancing peace internationally.”

For the most part, libraries are known for their secure and welcoming environments. As they serve as a fundamental knowledge gate of civilizations, the national libraries, especially, may give valuable insights into the nation's historical memory.

Library tourism has a long historical precedent. Italian humanists undertook journeys throughout Europe during the Western Renaissance to salvage unique manuscripts that had been discarded during the late Middle Ages in abandoned monastic libraries. In the eighteenth century, libraries constituted a significant aspect of the Grand Tour and were the subject of considerable travel literature.

Librarians also extend a welcome to library tourists, regular users, and other visitors. In 2016, the New York Public Library was reported to have hosted 18 million visitors, a significant proportion of whom were from other municipalities, states, and countries. In the same year, the National Library of China, the largest library in Asia, is estimated to have welcomed 5.6 million visitors (Kells 2019).<sup>7</sup>

In the last several years tourists have changed their behaviors becoming more curious about the information about the destination they decided to visit. This fact increased the role of library tourism. There are many ways to develop this kind of tourism like the presentation of the cultural and historical heritage of the destination as well as the library itself (Tosic & Lazarevic 2010).

Libraries are key companions of tourists trying to delve into the places they visit. Through a mix of materials, services, programs, and expert support, libraries allow tourists to relish the history, culture, and attractions found at their destinations thus making traveling an enriching and memorable experience. With guidebooks and maps to digital archives and cultural events, there are many ways tourists can get involved with the world around them as they set off on meaningful journeys of discovery from one country to another (Khaydarova 2024).

From a worldwide perspective, many high-quality museum tourism brands have been formed (Poria, Butler & Airey 2003), giving a lot of references for the integration of libraries and tourism. Ozinsky (2002) believes that libraries play an important role in providing the visitor with information and reservation services.

The flexibility of library institutions allows them to be accommodated in a variety of buildings, including historical, contemporary, and university buildings. Additionally, libraries differ in their field of knowledge profiles. The diverse collections, architectural styles, and historical significance of library institutions around the globe make them attractive and suitable as tourist attractions and cultural hubs (Adhikary & Adhikary 2021).

In the context of tourism, libraries may be viewed as points that could be incorporated into a tour itinerary, stopping points within a tour route, or heritage landmarks that allow tourists to access distinctive collections and rare books. Furthermore, they may serve as venues for cultural and tourist events. Moreover, libraries may engage in presenting exhibitions, creating narratives, podcasts, and guided tours led by librarians. Libraries may serve as the focal point of special programs meant to reveal less-known cultural treasures. In summary, library tourism represents a subset of literary tourism, to enable travelers to appreciate their potential (Traficante 2023).

Libraries, as cultural information institutions, are integral to the cultural landscape of urban areas. They are assuming an increasingly prominent role in providing tourism services, extending the scope of library services.

Libraries can boost the cultural understanding between the visitors and the local population, promoting the cultural identity of the destination (Terziev & Vasileva 2018).

Libraries not only provide information resources, but they are also part of the tourist resource. As a symbol of the culture and history of their city, region, and country, they are inextricably linked to national traditions and regional culture, which makes it possible and necessary to expand the products and services that libraries can offer in the field of tourism (Tokić & Tokić 2020).

Libraries could play a crucial role in the building of a sustainable future regarding environmental, financial, and social aspects. Now the main challenge is how to create through new technologies smart libraries supporting sustainability as a prerequisite for global peace (Yunus & Ismail 2024).

#### NOTES

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