Graduation project

*Sustainable Tourism Development*

June 2010

Kofi Annan Business School

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*Sustainable Tourism Development:*

*Case study of the Hilton Curacao*



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# Preface

My passion for other countries and preference for jobs in the hospitality sector show an interest in tourism that goes back in time. But it was only during my first internship in Nicaragua, where I came in contact with sustainable tourism and the link between tourism and development of emerging markets. Even though I was there for a whole different research project, I was able to see my interest for this topic grow and I believed in its positive contribution to the economy. The Nicaraguan Tourism consisted of very small sized incentives in the hands of the western foreigners. But because of the employment that it created and the infrastructure development that it supported, I was very enthusiastic about this type of development. Back in the Netherlands I decided that ‘sustainable tourism development’ would be the topic of my thesis.

Curious about the possibilities, but also wondering about the threats, I was looking for a country where tourism played an important factor in the economy. Curacao, one of the ABC islands[[1]](#footnote-1) located in the middle of the Caribbean is a tourism boomer. It is a country with different reasons to attract people from around the globe. Because of its dependency on tourism, local culture and the environment are affected by the tourism industry in both a positive and negative way. Due to the influences that tourism development has on this island, it is very interesting to look further than its white beaches and big resorts and find the “real” contribution of tourism to Curacao, by assessing its socio-economic and environmental impact. With the need for a practical experience and my interest in the Hotel Business, I looked for internship opportunities at different Hotel Chains. Finally I got accepted to work for the Hilton Hotel Curacao, in the front desk and executive lounge department.

My time in Curacao has been a great experience, not only for my career but also on a personal level. The international environment on the Island and in the hotel brought me in contact with so many different cultures. Curacao has a lot to offer to tourists, and the tourists to Curacao. We can see these influences in the architecture, language and the way of life. But the rapid tourism development also results in irritations of the local inhabitants, due to the changes in their way of life. Not everything has been positive since I had a hard time combining my daily activities which were time consuming, with doing research that was not so closely linked to these activities. With a bit of flexibility in my research questions and the use of many personal experiences, observations and conversations, I was able to finish my research.

# Acknowledgements

Although a thesis is written individually, it is not possible to finalize a research by yourself. Therefore I would like to thank a few people who made it possible for me to finish this report.

First of all my supervising lecturer, Leendert de Bell, for supporting me despite his busy career. Since there has been some miscommunication with the management of the Hilton of Curacao concerning tasks, I did not perform my research in the way it was originally planned. I would like to thank Leendert for his understanding and support to continue.

I want to thank all the employees of the Hilton Hotel, who made me feel at home from the moment that I started my internship. Many cultures work together in different departments, but it still feels like a family. All the smiles and hugs that I received from housekeeping girls, the help from the front desk staff and the jokes from the storeroom really made me enjoy my work. Special thanks to my co-workers Julisa and Kimberly for teaching me everything and supporting me to learn more.

My best source and my favorite part of the Hotel business were the guests of the Hilton, I would like to thank them all, as they made this internship a success. Due to my work in the executive lounge, I was in contact with frequent and experienced travelers and business people for 18 weeks.

Figure 1: Hilton Guests

Source: My pictures

The appreciation that I received from the guests, motivated me to work harder and learn more. When I provided them information about the island and service at all time, they gave me access to their lives, travel experiences and opinions that contributed to this report.

Some external parties that I would like to thank are: Mrs. Anna Williams, from the company ‘sustainable travel international’, who helped me along the way without benefiting from the situation. Julie ‘captain good life’, who was a small local tour operator, that inspired me with his eco-friendly incentives. And further the rest of the tourists and tourism agencies that took the time to talk with me.

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# Introduction

In this chapter the topic of research will be explained. First I will start with a bit of pre knowledge on the concept of sustainability, followed by an analysis of tourism in Curacao and specifically in the Hilton Hotel. I will then introduce the problem definition, the research objectives and the research questions.

## Background information

The focus of this thesis will be on sustainable tourism development, but this includes many different topics. I would like to start by giving some background information on Curacao and its influences of Tourism for better understanding on the findings in the rest of the report.

#### Tourism growth & impact

The international tourism industry has shown remarkable growth in the past century. The growth in number of international arrivals began to take place from the 1950s, onwards with annual rates of 6.5%. Corresponding in a growth of tourist arrivals from 25 million 1950 to 806 million on a yearly base in 2007. The expectation of the UNWTO (2007, p. 7) is that until 2020 tourism will grow with 4.6% annually, leading to a total of 1.5 billion tourist arrivals per year. The modern tourism strongly contributes to the economic growth and is therefore closely related to the development of countries. The contribution of the tourism industry to the GDP is measured by the WTTC as US$5,751 billion, with a contribution to total employment of 235,785,000 jobs (2010, key facts at a glance). These results make tourism a key driver for socio-economic process.

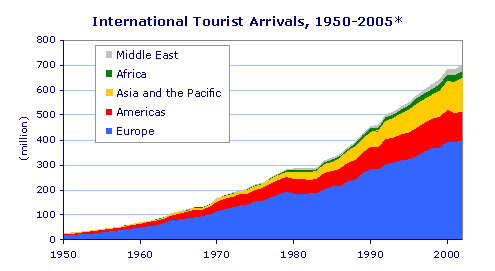


Figure 2: International Tourism Growth

**Source: Historical Perspecive on Tourism WTTC**

The shift towards mass tourism in the Caribbean began to take place in the 1960s, mainly concerning the colonial islands[[2]](#footnote-2). Due to the dependence of these states, they obtained a strategy of export substitution, where they replaced the traditional industries with mass tourism and related services. The tourism industry has experienced continued growth and increased diversification, because of the positive foreign investor’s climate. Tourists travel more often and expand economically their destinations. In my findings I will expand on the current economic impact of tourism in Curacao.

This growth of tourism does not come without consequences; we are already witnessing many changes as a consequence of modern tourism. Tourism is a flexible and moving industry, with many different angles that you can look at it from. But everybody agrees that its growth has both positive and negative effects. The billions of tourists that travel around the world, spend money, share knowledge and create employment. As such modern tourism has become increasingly linked to the issues of local development, often becoming a key driver for socio-economic development. Many countries depend to a large extent on the income of tourism. On the other hand mass tourism is using enormous quantities of energy, water and other natural resources. Summarizing the effects of tourism is felt at the local, the national and the global level. In the conference of sustainable travel international (STI, 2010) the major impacts of tourism are:

* Economic impacts
* Socio- Cultural impacts
* Environmental impacts

#### Tourism & Sustainability

With the growth of tourism in mind, it is desirable to support the positive impacts and minimize the negative impacts. Although there are many definitions on sustainable tourism, it all involves the establishment of a balance between the three impacts factors indicated in figure 1.

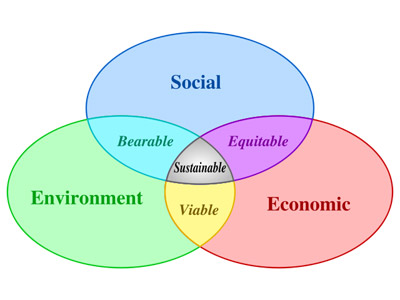


Figure 3: Sustainable tourism factors

Source: Wttc 2008

Along with the growth in tourism, there has been a growing awareness concerning sustainable tourism. It is promoted by member states, regions and specific types of destinations, for public and private sectors. The United Nations agreed on action for sustainable tourism development for poverty elimination in the world summit (WSSD 2002) and in the millennium development goals. With these international policies, the strong link between tourism and poverty, pollution, loss of ecological diversity and climate change, in a direct and indirect way is discovered. The WTO[[3]](#footnote-3) states three strategies that sustainable tourism development should include:

* Make optimal use of environmental resources - that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity
* Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.
* Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

#### P4280038.JPGTourism in Curacao

The Caribbean island of Curacao is one of a kind, a diverse island with an exciting and varied history. The 55 cultures that are blended in its population left its influences in the past and keep on playing a role in the future. From being a trading post in colonial times it has now become a very popular travel destination. Curacao is a beach and marine sports destination that exists of sun, sea and sand. There are very developed resorts in the centre of the island for tourists that simply want to relax, but on the west-coast there is also unexplored natural beauty, existing of small bays with clear water, for the more adventurous tourists that want to discover the underwater panoramas. Curacao also has a rich mixture of cultural and architectural heritage. The Dutch -Caribbean architectural beauty can be seen in the city (figure 2) and the plantation houses on the country side. According to the Tourist Board (2009) Curacao currently attracts 94,038 tourists yearly, mainly from Europe, but the Americas are getting more and more familiar with the beauty of Curacao, especially with regard to its diving possibilities. Tourism in Curacao contributes for 621.2 Million in Antillean Guilders, the equivalent of 284.703 million Euro[[4]](#footnote-4).

Figure 4: Willemstad, Curacao

Source: My pictures

#### Curacao and Sustainability

The tourism in Curacao started with Cruise ships. The first Cruiseship arrived in 1901 but from the 1950s it really developed. In the 1980s tourism stagnated because cruise ship tourism reached its peak. After this the air-trafic began to take off, and as a response the government adopted attractive incentives for foreign investors. The starting up processes for businesses and settlement on the island were simplified, which resulted in a rapid expansion of tourism in the early 1990s. This also strongly increased its socio-environmental impacts, which demonstrated a clear need for a development policy that included local development as well as environmental protection. The first to acknowledge this were foreign stakeholders, because of the dependence of the island on the stakeholders, the government wanted to keep them satisfied. Therefore the government started cooperating with the Dutch government for a Sustainable tourism policy. In 1996 the Policy of Sustainable Tourism in the Netherlands Antilles was carried out. In my findings on the role of the local authority I will expand on these policies.

## Research Question

### Main Question

With this research I want to find out, how one can implement sustainable business practices in the Hotel Business. Since my internship took place at the Hilton Hotel Curacao, my main question will be as follows:

***How to implement sustainable business practices in the Hilton Hotel Curacao?***

### Sub questions

The following sub questions will help to answer the main question. In order to come to sustainability implementations the following questions will be answered:

1. How sustainable is current tourism on Curacao?
   * What is the outcome of the Sustainability Plan from 1996?
   * Who are currently supporting sustainable tourism development?
   * Who are carrying out sustainable tourism incentives?
2. What is the policy of Hilton on sustainability?
   * What is Hilton’s worldwide policy on sustainability?
   * How is Hilton Curacao following this policy?
3. What do the Hilton guests demand?
   * What is the profile of the guests of the Hilton Curacao?
   * What do the guests of the Hilton Curacao require?

## Justification of the topic

The link between tourism development and socio-economic growth, identifies the importance of attention towards sustainability. A tourism accommodation promoting sustainable tourism, is beneficial for the island and for the organization. Due to the large worldwide coverage of the Hilton Brand (Over 3000 hotels in 80 countries) they are able to make a difference.

With the combination of research on Curacao’s sustainable situation, Hilton’s worldwide policy and the opinions of the guests, a strategy can be developed to satisfy different parties and therefore contribute to Hilton’s performance and the socio-economic development of Curacao.

### Out-line of report

Demonstrated in the previous part, the sub-questions relate to parts of a strategy. The objective of this report is to create a sustainability strategy and give recommendations to Hilton Curacao.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic** | **Findings** | **Strategy part** |
| Sustainable tourism development & sustainable hotel destinations | Theoretical information on hotel sustainable policies | Mission and vision |
| Current sustainable tourism in Curacao | Results of sustainability policies and examples of sustainable tourism activities | External analysis |
| Current sustainability policy within Hilton | The worldwide approach of the Hilton hotel chain with regard to Sustainable tourism. | Internal analysis |
| Guests profile and demands | What is the profile of tourists visiting the Hilton Curacao, and what do they want? | Segmentation |
| Recommendations | The steps Hilton Curacao has to undertake to become a sustainable tourism accommodation. | Strategy plan |
| Implementation | The way Hilton Curacao could implement sustainability | 4 P’s |
| Measurement | How to measure sustainability in Hilton Curacao. | Evaluation |

In the report a strategy will be developed for the sustainable development of the Hilton Curacao. I will use my findings for the analysis, questionnaires for the segmentation and my thoughts on a strategy for recommendations. Based on my field research, theoretical research and personal experience the implementation to become sustainable will be provided.

## Methodology

This is just a brief description of the methods used in the investigation. In order to gather most information, both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used.

To answer the first sub question, personal interviews with government and tourist boards were conducted. The second question will be answered more indirectly, by use of online interviews. The third sub question will be answered in 2 phases; the first part with questionnaires handed out and collected. The second part is researched by in-depth interviews with loyal guests.

# Methodology

## Theoretical research

To obtain more background information about Sustainable Tourism Development, the following organizations were approached, via internet.

**Sustainable Travel International**

* E-mail interview
* Reviewed information and manuals
* Online conference on Eco-certification

**United Nations World Tourism Organization**

* Information from the website
* Reviewed manuals
* Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

**Hilton Worldwide**

* OnQ training manuals
* Sustainability intranet
* Lightstay energy measuring
* SALT – Total results and progress

## Internal Research:

**Hilton Guests**

Questionnaire 1: Survey conducted among 50 Hilton Curacao Guests to establish a guest profile of the Hilton Guest.

Differentiation is made between Leisure guests and Business guests, both are questioned about their opinion on sustainable development.

1. Leisure Guests, evaluate the requirement for sustainable activities on the island
2. Business Guests, evaluate their opinion on the business climate

**Loyal Hilton Guests**

In depth interviews with 7 Loyal Hilton Curacao Guests of different Nationalities were carried out. These interviews were conducted as a personal interview, due to the long relation that these guest have with the island of Curacao and the Hilton Hotel. The interview is based on their experiences and opinions on sustainability, this to evaluate the need of sustainable development for Hilton Curacao.

**Employees**

Questionnaire 2: Survey conducted among 20 Hilton Curacao Employees to establish the sustainable awareness of the employees in the Hilton Curacao, their opinion on the importance of the topic and their willingness to cooperate.

## External Research

**Authorities**

In depth interviews were carried out with the local authorities/agencies engaged in the development of sustainability in Curacao. These were:

1. CTB – Curaçao Tourism Board
2. Government of Curacao – Nature and environmental policies

These personal interviews were conducted with the objective of obtaining information about the local policies and strategies that are currently in place or will be established in the near future.

These interviews served to provide the numbers on the current tourism levels and to ask questions relating to my findings.

**Sustainable tourism activities**

Personal interviews with tourism related companies promoting sustainability were also carried out. The companies interviewed include:

* Morena Resort Curacao, Eco- Friendly Hotel
* Captain Goodlife Tours, Local sustainable tour operator
* Curacao-Actief, Dutch owned Eco-tour operator
* Remain the Reef

In depth interviews were held with these companies which set an example. Information about their succesess and failures was obtained.

# Findings

## Sustainable Tourism

*Mission and Vision*

The consumer demand is growing; the travel industry suppliers are developing green programs and the government is working on new policies. This has resulted in many different parties involved in this area, making it hard to get to the core of things. On an international level 27 companies worked on a common understanding of sustainable tourism (2007). The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) is a response to the Millennium Development Goals and is developed by the: United Nations Foundation, the United Nations Environmental Program, the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the Rainforest Alliance.

http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org/images/stories/UN.JPG



**The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria[[5]](#footnote-5)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Demonstrate effective sustainable management | * Long-term implementation of sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scale, and that considers environmental, socio- cultural, quality, health, and safety issues. * Being in compliance with all relevant international or local legislation and regulations (health, labor and environmental aspects) * Customer satisfaction is measured and corrective action is taken * Promotional materials are accurate and complete and do not promise more than be delivered by the business. * Design and construction of buildings and infrastructure with respect to principles and nature and culture. * Information about interpretation of nature, culture etc. is provided to customers plus the explaining of appropriate behavior while visiting. |
| Maximize social and economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative impacts. | * Support initiatives for social and infrastructure community development * Local residents are employed, training is necessary * Local and fair-trade services and goods are purchased * Availability of means for local small entrepreneurs to sell sustainable products that are based on that area’s nature, history and culture * Code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities has been developed, collaboration with the community. * Implementation of policy against commercial exploitation * Equitable hiring women and local minorities, inc. management positions * International or national legal protection of employees is respected; employees are paid a living wage. * Activities of the company do not jeopardize the provision of basic services |
| Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts | * Following the established guidelines for behavior to visit cultural and historical sites, minimize visitor impacts. * Historical and archeological artifacts are not sold * Contribution to the protection of local properties and sites * Use of elements of local art, architecture or cultural heritage in operations, designs, decoration, food or shops. |
| Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts. | * Conserving resources (environmental products, reduce consumable goods, energy consumption, water consumption.) * Reducing pollution (Greenhouse gas emission, wastewater, solid waste management, reduce harmful substances, pollution of notice, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting and air and soil contaminants. * Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes (wildlife species, no wildlife is held, use of native species for landscaping and restoration, contributing the support of biodiversity. * Interactions with wildlife must not produce adverse effects on the viability of populations in the wild. No disturbance of natural ecosystems, rehabilitated and contribution to conservation management. |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Many guidelines and criteria from other organizations are based on the principles of the GSTC, but how they are implemented differs. This results in a common strategy with different extra points of attention. *Sustainable Travel International* is one of the companies who are working with the GSTC criteria as a baseline. They expanded these criteria to a Sustainable Eco-Certification Program called STEP. I will be working with the theoretical criteria of the GSTC and the STEP program in identifying needs for sustainability.

## Current Tourism Sustainability in Curacao

*External Evaluation*

### Impact of Sustainability

To begin the process of implementing sustainability into the Hilton Curacao, starts with the evaluation of the impact. According to the STEP method (2002-2009)[[6]](#footnote-6), there are 3 types of impacts:

#### Economic Impacts

In 2009, the collapse of the housing and credit market (the credit crisis) made households worldwide cut back on their leisure activities and this was shown in the travel and tourism industry. Although tourism was on a very low level last year, it still employed 235 Million people and generated 9.4% of the global GDP[[7]](#footnote-7). However, according to the April Interim update of the WTO – 2010 tourism is already recovering from this.

The year 2009 showed negative results on tourist arrivals, which went down with 4, 8%. Now after 2 months of measurement in 2010, worldwide tourism in showing positive results again. The long-term economic impact of tourism continues to be positive, and will probably grow in importance as an industry. The emerging economies are a trend in the forecast, with the focus on creating new sustainable products and services. Table 1 shows a forecast according to the World Travel Tourism Council.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Table 1: Impact tourism Industry

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Impact Tourism Industry | 2010 | 2020 |
| GDP | $5.751 Billion (9,2%) | $11.151 Billion (9.6%) |
| Growth | 0.5% | Average 4.4% per year till 2020 |
| Employment | 235.785.000 (1/12.3 jobs) | 303.019.000 (1/10.9 jobs) |
| Visitors exports | 6.1% of total exports | 5.2% of total exports |
| Investment | 9.2% of total investment | 9.4% of Total investment |

The impact of the tourism industry on the world economy is already very large, but a difference is made with the direct impact and the indirect impact of tourism, which accounts for an even larger contribution. Below we see graph nr. 2 and 3, in which the circles represent the total GDP and employment, inside we find the direct impact of tourism (the smaller section), and the indirect impact (both sections together).

Graph 1: GDP contribution

Graph 2: Employment contribution

**Curacao**

Moving to the economic impact of tourism on Curacao, will this have the same bright forecast?

The economy of Curacao benefited from the impact of tourism, as the economy grows in relation to the tourism. In the forecast of the World Tourism Council the economical contribution to tourism will keep on increasing up to 2020.

To get an idea on the numbers and nationalities of the tourists coming to Curacao, I will summarize some main facts on arrivals based on information of Chata Curacao[[9]](#footnote-9). What we can clearly see in the numbers is that 2009 was definitely a down-sized year for tourism on Curacao too. Looking a little bit back in the past, we can see that the growth of the tourism industry varies a lot. The present tourism wave started in 1997, from then on it shows some ups and downs of almost 20%, but since 2005 the tourism industry has been quite stable. Looking at the total numbers we see that the amount of tourist arrivals has dropped pretty much, but the impact on the GDP not that much. We do see that there was no increase, but a small decrease in the employment.

The Tourist Arrivals on a yearly base were:

Table 2: Yearly Tourist Arrivals on Curacao

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2008 | 2009 |
| 320,343 | 366,839 |

Source: Chate (2010)

Currently the information is available up to March 2010, so we compare the previous years with 2010.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Tabel 3: Tourist Arivals in a specific period

Source: Chata (2010)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Jan – March 2008 | Jan – March 2009 | Jan – March 2010 |
| 98,284 | 94,038 | 84,751 |

According to these results it appears like tourism is even dropping more, this is not the case. The results are from the beginning of 2009, in this stadium the crisis did not have a large effect on the economy, therefore the arrivals are still a large amount. On the results of reservations and planning, the recovery is expected to come soon.

What we do see is that currently the number of tourists from North-America is increasing; this is not only a good for Curacao but definitely for Hilton because of its brand familiarity in this area, I will elaborate on that later. In the following part, my findings to achieve a profile of the Curacao tourist are presented:   
**Tourist Arrival Profile**

**Graph 3: Purpose Tourist Arivals Curacao 2009**

Source: CTB Curacao 2009

The main purpose of the majority of the tourists visiting curacao is vacation. Although business and sports are both rising at the moment, most tourist are attracted to the combination of relaxation and activities. Hilton is a bit more focused on Business.

**Graph 2: Origin Tourists Arivals Curacao 2009**

Source: CTB Curacao 2009

Most Tourist in Curacao are coming from Europe, this is due to the direct flight from Amsterdam and the influence of Dutch Culture. The majority of the European tourists are Dutch. Curacao is also popular with the population from South- America, especially Venezuela and Colombia.

**Table 4: Average stay per continent**

Source: CTB Curacao 2008

the average stay on Curacao is only a little over 8 days. Especially for tourists coming from nearby countries e.g. Aruba or Venezuela, its attractive for short break. The European tourist generally spend a little longer on the island, because of the travel distance and available vacation days.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | North-America | South-America | Caribbean | Europe | Total |
| Average Stay (Days) | 7,28 | 5,28 | 5,38 | 12,35 | 8,34 |

**Graph 4: Gender per continent**

Source: CTB Curacao 2008

The last measurement is the gender of Curacao’s tourist arrivals. Most are Male, with the exception of Europeans who are in majority female. This can be partly explained due to the internship trend, which is still a majority of girls. Another trend which contributes to this, is the girlfriends vacations from Europe, and the high percentage of Business women.

#### This leads us to the following question: what is the actual impact on the economy of these tourists arriving at Curacao?[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Key Facts:**

Tabel 4: Key facts 2010 – 2020

Source: World Tourism & Travel Council (2010)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Key Facts | | 2010 | 10 year forecast |
| GDP | **23%, $1.260 Million** | | **28.6%, $2.357 Million** |
| GDP Growth | **0.7%** | | **44% per year** |
| Employment | **30,6%, 17.000 Jobs** | | **38,5% 24.000 Jobs** |
| Visitors Exp. | **44,4% of tot. exports** | | **46,4% of tot. exports** |
| Investment | **12,8% of tot. investment** | | **14.8& of tot. investments** |

Here you can again differentiate between direct and indirect impacts of the tourism industry. The tourism industry is only employing 7000 people, but indirectly it employs 17.000 people. We can therefore conclude that the economic contribution of the tourism industry on Curacao is very large, and will probably only become bigger in the future.

Graph 5: Direct and Indirect economic impact

Source: World Tourism and Travel Council (2010)

Above we see that the largest growth factors are in direct contribution to the GDP. The government expenditure and the investments are lacking behind in growth. We will evaluate this problem in a different chapter. As we saw on the previous page, most tourists visit with the purpose of vacation, but it is the business traveler that contributes most to the conomic growth.

Graph 6: Personal and Business tourist contribution

Source: World Travel and Tourism Council (2010)

The forecast of business travel is that the growth rate up to 2020 is expected to be bigger. For the personal travel the growth is 1% for the upcoming 10 years, but for business 2.2%.

#### Environmental Impacts

While the economy benefits from the rapid expansion of tourism, this rise has more impacts one of which is environmental. For governments this challenge of resource depletion and environmental degradation is very difficult. The problem is that most tourists are mainintaining their relatively high patterns of consumption when they are abroad. For areas without the means to protect their nature and ecosystems, this is a huge pressure. This paragraph describes the impact of tourism on the environment, affecting land, air, water, organism and other ecosystems. **Controlling, minimizing and protecting** are key words to sustainability in this sector. The environmental impacts are divided into three types:

## 

Figure 5: the 3 Environmental impacts of tourism

Source: United Nations Environment Programme UNEP (2001)

**Depletion of Natural Resources**

Natural Resources are of important value, especially for tourism destinations. The depletion of these natural resources is impacted by tourism, but will also impact tourism in return. Tourists choose the Netherlands Antilles as destination because of their natural attractions. The development of tourism puts pressure on the natural resources, due to the increase of consumption. Especially due to the limited space that Curacao already has, the sources are already scarce. With some different factors, I will describe the natural resources of Curacao impacted by tourism.

*Water resources:* The tourism industry is generally overusing the water resources for hotels, swimming pools, golf courses and the personal use by tourists. Currently the biggest water use lies in the hands of hotels and resorts. Most do not keep track of their water use and only use small water saving adjustments. According to research of Frouwke Smit (2007)[[12]](#footnote-12) most hotels are very behind on eco-certificate standards on water use. We will later on compare different hotels with Hilton. The cost of water is approximately 15 NAF/m3 (6, 8 Euro/m3), compared to Holland were this is under 2 Euros thus water is very expensive. Later on I will provide you the numbers of the Hilton Curacao. The normal level for hotels of water usage is 900 liters per room/per night.

*Waste (water):* The use of more water by hotels also generates more waste water. According to research done in 2007, the sewage system is not covering the total island. Currently 50% of the companies are still using a septic tank for water disposal. Advanced waste facilities are only usable for small volumes.Still a lot’s of improvements need to be made in this area. For solid waste, the island depends on the garbage dump “Malpais”. Recycling happens on a limited scale, only 5% of all waste in 1997. As a result the garbage dump keeps increasing in volume.

*Energy:* The consumption of energy is very high in the tourism sector since - the island depends on imported oil. The problem in the hotel sector is that the systems that are used are often very old, and they are in operation 24 hours a day, even when guests are not in. Energy from renewable sources is very rare, although there are sevaral renewable resources available. The normal level of energy use is 53 kWh per room/night.

**Pollution**

The impact of tourism on pollution is mainly indirect, and cuased by transportation of the tourists. If we look at how much polluting transportation is used the following is noted:

Air transport: As an island, air transport is the easiest and fastest way of getting to Curacao. As a result noise and air pollution is considerable. Airplanes also cause waste and wastewater, and the airport limits the island space. Although the airlines coming in are working on their own sustainability policies, the increase of tourism leads to more air traffic and more pollution. At the moment the international airport “Hato” has 18 airline companies arriving and departing between 2 up to 7 days a week.

Cruise ships: For 2010, 213 cruise ships are scheduled to stop over at Curacao[[13]](#footnote-13), which also strongly contributes to waste production. Cruise ships in the Caribbean produce an estimated 70,000 tons of liquid and solid waste during a year.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Road transport: Not being in possession of a driving license, I noticed how much local transport on Curacao is based on cars. Although there is an existence of public transport, for tourists this is not reliable - the schedule or route is not fixed. Therefore the industry of rental cars is huge, approximately 50 rental companies offer cars to tourist to explore the island.

**Physical Impact:**

The enormous number of tourists and limited regulations result in the lack of control on the tourist activities. Many activities are causing damage to the landscape and marine of Curacao. Due to the lack of planning and the lack of knowledge of tour operators and the tourists, they destroy Curacao as a tourism destination for the future generations. Physical impacts include the degradation of such ecosystems. Physical impacts are mainly caused by the construction & building industry and by the expanding tourist activities. According to the loyal guests of the island, Curacao has changed a lot. Even when you look around yourself, you see tourism expansion everywhere. Of course, the increasing income for the economy is a positive thing, but there are also negative physical consequences for the island.

Tourism development goes together with many physical activities, to start with there is:

*The construction of Hotels, airports and roads:* This is required for the expansion of tourism; otherwise there will be no capacity for future growth. Influenced by tourism is the threat for natural landscapes by deforestation and soil erosion. For Curacao the major factors are:

*Land competition:* I have noticed that the land close to the sea or near the center is become more important and also very expensive.

*Artificial beaches:* Due to the distance and also the natural rocks etc. at the natural beaches, it is a trend in Curacao to create beaches. But this is definitely not without environmental costs.

*Airport Expansion:* The airport of Curacao had a large expansion is 2006, but there are plans to increase its capacity due to the continuously increasing tourist arrivals.

*Tourism Activities:*

There are many marine and land activities possible on Curacao, involving the natural resources. The coastal and ocean tourism activities make use of the natural resources of Curacao, but without protection and guidance they are damaged and under serious threat.

The activities can impact the environment in two ways, by damaging the natural resources and by disturbing the ecosystems.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Natural Resources | Depletion |
| Land park | * Habitat and wildlife disturbance, hikers take tours outside the marked tracks. * Vehicles in the unprotected parts of Nature |
| Marine Park | * The construction of artificial beaches, loosing sand to the ocean contributes to coral death. * The leakage from wastewaters at hotels is contributing to coral-reef deterioration. * Inexperienced divers and photographers often cause coral damage. * The boat tours damaging coral |

#### Social Impact

Curacao has a long history full of intercultural mixtures, which help tourism to support cultural diversity and promote acceptance of different ways of life. Although this is one of the unique values of the island, the diversity is resulting in negative tension too. If the tourism is to also help locals to maintain their cultural integrity and traditions, there should be a strategy towards local culture promotion.The population of Curacao exists of 55 different nationalities, living together on a small island. The influences of these nationalities can be seen all over the island. To start with their language “Papiamento”, a mix of 8 languages combined in one, but most people also speak Dutch, English and Spanish. The Dutch have influenced the infrastructure on the island, the Spanish the cuisine, the African becomes apparent in dancing and carnival etc. Every piece of history is still vivid in Curacao.

These social impacts, are described as the effects on the communities who are directly and indirectly related to tourism. In reality Curacao is divided into the local inhabitants and the tourists, where the locals are threated as less important party by the government and other institutions. The social impacts of tourism on a community are very difficult to measure and also often hidden. Definitely this is an important factor to evaluate as it has many influences; on behavior, treatment, community structure, traditional life etc. The consumption habits of the tourists influence the local community. We will describe these negative social impacts in 4 divisions

Figure 6: The Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism

*Source: United States environmental Program (UNEP), 2001*

**Loss of Indigenous identity and Values**

Curacao has a broad culture, which includes many traditions and festivals, another unique value of the island, in which tourists are partly but could be more involved. Tourism can turn the cultures into commodities by reducing or changing traditions to please the tourists. The process called standardization is also familiar if it comes to satisfying tourist needs. In Curacao, I would take as an example the food, many restaurants are offering international and even haute cuisine, not based on Antillean cooking habits at all. The local culture is reduced and sometimes performed in such a commercial way that it loses its authenticity. Later we will elaborate on this with Hilton, offering Caribbean dancing. It is a common thing in tourist destinations that there are recognizable things, but if all is addressed to the needs and taste of tourists, what is left of traditional culture and values? Next to the tourist facilities, the tourist demand also impacts the products that are produced. The cultural souvenirs and arts that are offered become so popular that we talk about cultural erosion[[15]](#footnote-15). Small souvenirs that represented a tradition, a historic event or just pride for the country, turn into commercial trade goods with the only meaning being its price.

**Culture clashes**

The attitude of many locals of Curacao towards the tourists is not always enthousiastic, but it has its reasons. Tourism encourages the introduction of a lot of different cultures, which can result in a culture clash. For Curacao this is not very new, they have been in touch with the Dutch especially for many years now. The most difficult part in Curacao is the foreigners wanting to change the locals, especially business related visitors. But according to inhabitants and foreigners, the attitude of the locals comes in stages, where visitors were very welcome, through irritation and anti-tourist attitudes. Many travelers experienced the attitude of the locals as a negative value of the tourism in Curacao. This problem arose from different issues that the locals have with tourists:

* Tourist Behavior: Often the behavior of a person does not change when he or she crosses a border. In other countries this behavior can be different and at times annoying. In Curacao there is a lot of stereotyping about the tourists visiting the island, and especially living on the island.
* Consumption patterns:[[16]](#footnote-16) Tourist are on vacation, they are looking for fun and are spending a lot of money. Their consumption pattern is different from when they are in there normal daily life. I experienced in Curacao that they have an assumption (back to the stereotyping), that many western tourists are very rich and always behave like that. This creates two difficult situations, firstly, that locals create higher prices for western people and they blame them for not tipping etc. This is difficult for the westerns living on the island, since there is not a division made between them and the tourists. Secondly, the copying of the behavior, especially by young locals, who also want to behave and live in the same way as the tourists do – this becomes very visible in the night life of Curacao. For the elderly the biggest threat is the casinos, locals are very attracted by this tourist attraction. This causes an inequality in the economy of Curacao.
* Job level Friction[[17]](#footnote-17). Tourism is a big industry creating a lot of jobs, but it includes many international companies e.g. hotels. Later on we will take a more specific look at the Hilton Hotel. What is observable is that many local people predominantly work at lower levels, doing the more practical jobs. There are exceptions but generally the higher-paying and managerial jobs are occupied by foreigners. It’s mostly due to lack of training possibilities that experienced managers are being drawn from abroad. One can understand that this can create certain tensions in diversity.

**Physical influences**

The last issue concerning the social impacts is the physical influence of the tourism flow - what impacts does the current tourism and the development of tourism have on a local community. The same things that we have talked about in environmental impacts- the resources, the land etc. create social conflicts. Think about the competition between tourism organizations and local organizations for water and energy. Taxes rise to reduce use for the big companies, but these also have to be paid by the locals. In Curacao we see conflicts of land-use, as many coastal zones are reserved for the construction of hotels and tourist facilities. This cuts the access to the zones for the locals to go fishing or relax on the beach. Many times the locals loose the battle in conflicts over land, because tourism brings more economic value.

**Ethical Issues:**

Different ethical problems have become more apparent with the increase of tourism. Crime, child labor or sex and prostitution and often related to popular tourism destinations.

On Curacao crime has been a problem, but the areas have changed with the increase of tourism. Fancy resorts, casino’s and villa parks are now top targets by criminals and as a result they are heavily guarded. In my opinion this creates bad situations for the social relations. The tourists do not feel safe out of their resort, and the locals feel pushed away from their own island. This is an important issue as the problem goes backward too, meaning an increase in crime will cut back the tourism.

Prostitution and sex tourism has also become an increasing problem in Curacao. Tourism was not the cause of the prostitution on Curacao but tourism expanded prostitution and made it more available. The commercial exploitation of sex is a very tempting money source for many women. In most of the Caribbean prostitution is illegal, but an exception is Curacao, home of the biggest brothel “Campo Alegre Adult Resort”. Although this brothel on its own is not really viewed as a problem, the morality of paying for sex is. Again the social inequality among the locals contributes to the acceptance of this sex tourism and creates more places. Due to the weak policy and controls on the prostitution, the biggest problem arising is HIV/AIDS, with the Caribbean having the second-highest rate in the world[[18]](#footnote-18).

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### Role of the Local Authorities

Sustainable tourism is generally a global industry, but due to the unique destinations it has to be implemented by the local authorities. Because of the relation with the Netherlands, many policies were created together. We will start to look back at how the Local Authorities contribute to sustainable development.

With the recovery of tourism in 1990s followed by the rapid expansion, the different negative impacts as discussed became visible. The negative impacts were observed by stakeholders, who forced the authorities to look into the effects of the tourism development. The political interest was in the satisfaction of the stakeholders, but the implementation started with foreign and local companies who implemented their own sustainable initiatives. Different political parties also started to think about national strategies, and different plans were carried out. The parties involved were:

*Milieu & Natuur (MINA), representing the Ministry of Environment and Nature.*  A ministry established in 1995, being a part of the public health and social department of the Netherlands Antilles. In 2006 they carried out a policy document “Outlines of the environmental and nature conservation policy of the Netherlands Antilles”. The directions are set for a period of 4 years. This plan was mainly about everything involved with sustainable development of the island, but also had a topic of sustainable tourism development in it.

*Curacao Tourist Board (CTB),* non-governmental organization established in 1989, under the name of Curacao Tourism Development Foundation and had 7 employees of different organizations (also 2 from CHATA). Their goal is “Together creating a Dushi Kòrsou”[[19]](#footnote-19)(Mission CTB), with their vision to make Curacao the most sought-after Caribbean destination by the year 2020 (Vision CTB). Their document developed to present the CTDB’s strategic position is called “the Master plan for Tourism development” . It was developed in 1993 and accepted as policy in 1995. The master plan is a broad policy about all direct and indirect tourism developments, with a planning for 20 years. The plan was meant to identify the development principles, implement strategies and necessary action to achieve sustainable growth in tourism development.[[20]](#footnote-20) Topics like landscape, ecology, pollution and conservation were adopted in the paper, but were not implemented in the strategies in the next phase. Due to many changes, the master plan had periodical updates, most recently for the period 2005-2009. One of the major differences was a stronger economic focus on generating profits because of the rapidly increasing tourism. The sustainable focus lies on the communities, but it is the locals who are being educated about tourism, that it is a viable, attractive way to earn money for them.

Figure 7: The policy for sustainable trousim in the Netherlands Antillen

*Source: The “Nota Duurzaam Tourisme voor de Nederlandse Antillen”,*

*Policy for Sustainable Tourism of the Netherlands Antilles (ST).* In 1997 a conference took place to discuss the possibilities of Sustainable tourism “sustainable tourism of the Netherlands Antilles”. Experts in Planning, Tourism Development and Environment from the governments of the five islands belonging to the Netherlands Antilles, plus the Netherlands and some regional organizations participated. In relation to the conference a policy was developed and adopted by the Netherlands Antilles. The impact of tourism on nature and environment was the central points, divided into 10 chapters. The main goal was to make tourism sustainable in an ecological context, being as much in balance with nature and environment. The initiative of different parties involved, working together to create a main policy is a good idea to get to an agreement. The problem with this conference was that most parties had not yet thought about sustainable tourism beforehand, and their knowledge was very limited. Because of their growing interest for sustainability, the different parties wanted to improve their sector, but various factors of importance were not taken into account. This was a continuing problem for the government with the 4 departments; environmental, spatial planning, nature and public works all involved. The framework in Curacao was very unclear, so for the departments it was a battle over who had the responsibility over the design and implementation of the sustainable tourism factors. In this conflict, parties lost motivation. Therefore implementation of this policy was not so successful. Although the ideas were there, no serious legal instruments were adopted. There were no general legal guidelines for companies that they should follow. Ideas were given on water and energy saving, but as we summarized in the impacts, there is still much more to look at.

Although there was no general nature protection instrument, there were policies adopted on the main tourist activities, as in the Marine Park and the Cristoffel National park.

### Voluntary initiatives:

What was a very big reaction on the awareness and attention for sustainable management were voluntary initiatives that developed over the years. Several tourist companies and accommodations have acquired an internationally recognized Eco label. All the action taken into eco-tourism, were taken by the managers independently, so there is definitely potential for sustainability in the tourism sector. What is disappointing is that there is no overview in the government statistics of the incentives taken voluntary by the companies towards sutstainability. On interviewing a few ecofriendly companies, they confirmed the minimal relation, and the fact that there is almost no support from authorities towards their initiatives.

I approached a few companies that I observed have taken action for sustainability. Starting with the Dutch-Antillean project that was voluntary implemented “Environmentally-Aware Tourism” (NA); it was an initiative by the Dutch tourism Stakeholders, linked to the Dutch Association of Travel Companies.

**Environmentally Aware Tourism:**

*Enjoy our*

*lovely islands but help us to keep them*

*intact for future generations’*

Natuurlijk Antillen (2005)

The project was launched in 1999[[21]](#footnote-21) in Bonaire and Curacao, under the leadership of the Dutch TUI. Project was only aimed at the Dutch market and had basically two missions. First, to make the Dutch tourists environmental friendly, second to make the tourism activities environmental aware and last to stimulate environmental-responsible management. As they also own the brands Arke and Holland International, it was easy for them to spread information and awareness for their sustainable travel. They presented environmental tips in every area of the vacation, from at home, during the flight (KLM was a project partner); to the hotel lobby. Environmentally friendly excursions and activities were promoted.

Because of the trust in the project, the Ministry of Agriculture & Nature, the Antillean Department of Environment and the Dutch Centre for Sustainable Development invested a total of 52.000 euro but the implementation did not go perfect. The idea was to implement certifications for accommodations and attractions but the participation in this project was minimal, only 6 out of 67 hotels, 6 out of 16 tour operators and all 20 diving operators. Firstly the criteria were only conducted in Dutch, already not understandable for managers with other nationalities. Secondly, the rules were not internationally recognized therefore did not have credibility. Despite these problems the policy did result in the awareness of many tourist initiatives of the possibilities to become sustainable. The benefits in this project were the support of the Netherlands and the Government, the increased awareness of all participating partners, improved image of participating parties and the incentives to the practices in Curacao.

[](http://premier-direct.com/green_globe_21.gif)I will describe some eco-friendly activities currently performed in Curacao, which are setting an example for sustainablility:

*Hotels[[22]](#footnote-22):*

**Lions Dive**

The Lions Dive & Beach Resort is an environmentally aware hotel that was nature oriented from the beginning. But this hotel is not very different than others from its look and approach. But it has always been striving to maintain the hightest environmental standards. They present themselves as:

**"*The Natural Place to Stay*"**

They were rewarded for their efforts and were the first resort with the Green Globe 21 certificate, meeting the GG21 Standards.

**Morena Resort:**

A new eco-resort, with sustainablitly included in their core activities. There are built on the requirements of the Green Key environmental certification, and in August 2009 they were certified with the Green Key Label. Their mission is to offer accommodation in an eco-friendly way, by contributing to the awareness of sustainable tourism and the future of the tourism in Curacao. Their approach is to use technologies that are reducing water, energy and resources use without losing comfort for the guests. Examples are outlined in the table presented on the next page.

According to the owner of Morena resort, Marc Brummelhuis, the idea is working on the people and the environment. They attract guests who share the value for sustainability, and therefore it works as a unique selling point. The use of lots of wood was for the environment, but for example makes a lot of guest happy. Here the guests feel closely in contact with nature. Mr. Brummelhuis also points out the importance of motivating your employees to show initiative. The General Manager, Sabine Schijf, hightlights the quietness and easiness of the resort and the positive atmospthere that is around.

[[23]](#footnote-23)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Water savings | Construction | Energy | Other |
| Dual Flush | FSC bamboo floors | Energy Saving lights | Swimming pool without choler |
| Self-Closing crane | FSC wood | Isolated bedrooms | Car Free Resort |
| Water saving shower | Sustainable wood | Hot water by sun energy | Eco-friendly air co cooler |
| No bathtub, dishwasher and wash machine | Lightweight, recyclable roof | Cooking on Gas | Organic biodegradable cleaning |
| Water pressure measurements | Use of insulation | Fridge with energy label A | International recognized certificate. |
| Recycled guest water for garden | PVC is made of recyclable mat. | Inverter technique on air-conditioning | Composting garbage |
|  | Nontoxic Chemicals |  | Separating garbage |
|  | Fair trade Suppliers |  |  |

*Tour operators:*

**Curacao Active:**

The touroperator Curacao-Active is founded by the Foundation “Unique Curacao” in 2004. They have a mission of improving the marketing abroad of Curacao’s hidden treasures in an eco-friendly way.

The offer that they have consists of

* Eco Jeep tours
* Island Tours
* Snorkel Tours
* Beach Tours

They make a difference with their knowledge, local employees, showed love and care for nature and unique places were no other tour goes.

**Captain Goodlife Tours:**

One of the most beatifull westcoast beaches on the island is the location of this touroperator. A small local firm with 3 employees, that is working on the environment in its own way. Juni Obersi (Captain Goodlife) is living in a beachhouse on Santa Cruz and runs the company “Let’s go watersport”. As a local inhabitant, living all his life on the beach and as he says “in the sea”, he knows what locals and tourist want to see because this is also an expierence for the locals, seeing breathtaking places. Juni has created a tour himself of natural beauty that he takes you to: The Blue Room (underwater cave), Mushroom Forest (reef),

Lover’s Beach, Playa Pretu (Black Beach), Shipwrak.

The sustainability of his company is not measured by criteria or promotes it. Juni does not even want more customers because he values life too much. But his activities are

Environmental:

* Energy is saved by a Windmeal on the roof
* Sun Panels are installed on top of the boat that

he uses for the tours.

* Food is home made on fire, both fries and fish
* Rental of only kayak and water bicycles

Social:

* He will educate you about the history, the nature and culture of Curacao.
* He will teach you to be careful and tell about how to live in touch with nature.
* After the tour he (his wife) will show you the cuisine of Curacao

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**Conclusion:**

Sustainable tourism has played a role in Curacao since the 1990s, when the local authorities got involved to satisfy the stakeholders. The policies were never implemented accordingingly due to lack of pre-knowledge, communication and later on also interest. According to strategic management, a strategy should be implemented with motivation, information and resources. As all factors were incomplete the policies were not very successful. With Dutch initiatives, the importance of sustainability in tourism did raise awareness, and voluntary action hence tourism activities started their own path toward sustainability. The reason why it is hard to measure the impact is that there is no local network to observe measure and certify the sustainability of these companies taking effort. With the many international knowledge and guidelines available, the evidence of its serious environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts and the modern minded tourists in Curacao, it is definitely ready for a network of sustainability. The government of Curacao should decide upon the division of tasks within their ministries, make sure they are educated and motivated to perform their tasks. The local authorities should make use of all the international help that they are getting, including from international organisations e.g. UNWTO, as well as from the small NGO’s e.g. Natuurlijk Antillen. The tourism industry should also be informed and motivated and provided with the resources to be sustainable in their own way. Finally it should be measured and provided to the guests how sustainable the tourism associated companies are, this to reward them with this competitive advantage.

## The sustainability of Hilton Hotel

*Internal Analysis*

In this chapter I will specifically focus on the findings related to the Hilton Hotel - the global policies and the local observations. Starting with the global policies on sustainability of Hilton worldwide, continuing with the performance of Hilton Curacao and finally, the local guest profile and opinions. From the most general information to more specific I will get to the core of Hilton’s sustainability.

**Hilton Worldwide**

Hilton & sustainability have always been related, but different events have contributed to the way sustainability is now included in the Hilton Worldwide policy.[[24]](#footnote-24)This is shown below:

Just like Finance, Sales, Marketing, Development and

Technology, Sustainability is a lens, a discipline that supports

our core business objectives and drives economic value.

***Chris Nassetta***

The following sustainability commitments and mission statement are the responses to both the challenges and opportunities that come with the future. They provide a framework for our family of hotels around the world to enroll, engage, and educate all of the stakeholders as sustainability becomes a core part of how to do business

*Mission:[[25]](#footnote-25)* Hilton worldwide will manage our business through a lens of sustainability to benefit this generation and those that follow. Through action and innovation, we will lead our industry in products and programs that:

* Enhance guest experience - Engage our employees

Hospitality is our business. Sustainability is a tool to enhance our position as the global leader in hospitality.

***Mr. Corpuel***

***CEO HWC***

* Improve operational efficiency - Advance building design
* Strengthen our partnerships - Serve our community
* Protect our global environment - Enrich our family of hotels

The goals that are supporting their ideas are short term and long term. Long term basically is sustainable building and operations, chemical management and purchasing and the renewable energy as source of power. In the short term (2009-2014), they set the goals of reducing energy consumption, CO2 emissions and output of waste by 20% and water consumption by 10%. According to Mr. Corquel (VP sustainability), of main importance in relation to these goals is the engagement of their team members, the impact of the initiatives on the guest experience and the network with sustainable business partners. He does think that the plans should be adapted per country, according to their culture and way of doing business. The CEO of Hilton Hotels Corporation Chris Nasetta, is trying to motivate the managers daily. He is very much behind sustainability, not as the new marketing approach for the Hilton, but seen as a profit making smart business. I asked him if it was a social issue, but for Mr. Nassetta it is a business strategy. Mr. Corpuel is working on this global strategy, and emphasizes on 4 fundamentals that represent the importance of sustainability:

* 1. Efficiency, reducing operational costs and to decrease the impacts on the environment, with this the risks of global warming, resource depletion and rising utility costs.
  2. Risk Mitigation, with a sustainability strategy Hilton can reduce the exposure to many of the risks to the business.
  3. Revenue Generation, by looking through the ‘lens’ of sustainability
  4. Brand Equity, is a result from the efforts that are compelling drivers of a sustainable business.

Mr. Corpuel states that it is not easy for a hotel to be sustainable, because their core business is consumption and sustainability is about conservation. Also hotels do consume a lot of energy and water. Finally it is very risky to quantify whether guests are choosing Hilton because of its sustainable policies. This results in difficult situations of pros and con’s to be sustainable; their answer is to create a network. The only way that they can positively experience those changes of sustainability is by cooperating with the guests, business partners, team members and communities.

There are currently some sustainable initiatives that are being done by the Hilton Worldwide, globally and also locally:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Global Initiatives |  |
| Buildings & Operations | * Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) new building tools * Light stay, internal measurement * Tips by department |
| Renewable Energy | * Green power Partnership, a received certification * Renewable choice, meeting their environmental and consuming standards. * Native energy, partner and investment of projects in wind, biomass, fuel and hydro energy projects. |

*Measurement:*

Hilton Worldwide uses a centralized, global system for measuring and reporting on the environmental social performance. Previously this was called the HEAT, but since 2009 the system is called “Light stay”. Without measuring the performance, it is not possible to react and reduce. Let’s look at the progress of performance for Hilton Curacao. After the worldwide sustainablitly plan was carried out, Hilton Curacao started to track their progress towards achieving the reduction goals. Since January of 2009 the management measured:

**Energy Reduction: 5.38 % decrease**



Figure 8: Energy decrease Hilton Curacao

Source: Internal measuring program Light Stay, Hilton

As we can see Hilton is on track with their progress on energy reduction, only we do see a slowdown in the progress. Many changes have been made in different departments, to achieve this result. Important were first of all the tracking and reports that are made up now, with continuous evaluations. A few other important sustainability features include:

*Energy Efficient Lighting:* Installed in interior areas (Lobby, restrooms, offices, kitchens, restaurants, meeting rooms, guest rooms etc.); and in exterior areas (Parking lot etc.)

*Energy Efficient timers and sensors:* Occupancy sensors in guest rooms, master switch at entry door.

*Training:* The housekeeping and maintenance staff is trained on energy saving e.g. turning lights off, adjust temperatures etc.

*Informing:* The guests are being informed about the energy saving policy in their room, this by a note to inform them about possibilities to help.

**Co2 emissions: 4.29 % decrease**

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Figure 9: CO2 emission decrease

Source: Internal measuring program Light stay, Hilton

**Water use: 2.91% decrease**



W Figure 10: CO2 emission decrease

Source: Internal measuring program Light stay, Hilton

Efficiency Features

Some water saving policies observed include:

*Re-Use Systems:* Water is being re-used for landscaping, like the garden.

*Indoor water efficiency:* Water facilities are performing efficient: water closets (1.5 gal/flush), urinals (0.5 gal/flush), showers (0.5 gal/minute) and sinks (0.25 gal/minute).

*Pool and Spa:* The temperature and conditions are controlled and maintained optimally, an alternative treatment to minimize chlorine.

*Efficiency towel and linen reuse:* Guests are informed about towel reuse possibilities.

*Training:* The housekeeping and maintained staff are trained to check for leaks, and to close water facilities.

**Waste output: 26.65% decrease**



Figure 11: CO2 emission decrease

Source: Internal measuring program Light stay, Hilton

This is the biggest success factor in the sustainability policy of Hilton. Because of the limited space on Curacao waste is a big issue. The Hilton reducing it so rapidly is an example for other tourism activities.

*Recycling of ongoing consumables:* The waste streams of the hotel have been identified and recycling bins have been placed at the back of the hotel. Glass is recycled in areas of the hotel, but not in all yet.

*Sustainable Office practices:* Email and webmail is used to minimize paper usage, and the ability to make online reservations. Also the confirmations, rooming lists and the plans are carried out digitally. The paper that is printed is printed two-sided or one sided and reused for internal communications.

*Food and beverages:* In the restaurants, table linens are used instead of paper napkins. Reusable table decorations are used. There is a donation stream for leftovers.

**Community:** Hilton Curacao is working on community awareness by promoting community service activities to guests and staff voluntary programs, in the past year 120 hours of community work was done by staff. Over the past year (2009), 9200 US dohas been donated to charity. The food used in the restaurants is based on local availability and is locally sourced. The guests are educated on the local culture by special Curacao and Caribbean nights organized in the Hotel.

**Communication:** The communication of sustainable practices to employees is done through formal means. Policies and goals are displayed in manuals, but not provided individually.

**Performance:**

In the time when these policies were implemented, the performance of Hilton was not greatly influenced by this. Underneath we see the graph of the same time line and with the sustainability increasing the performance did not decrease. Of course we want to arrive at a point where performance goes up with sustainability.

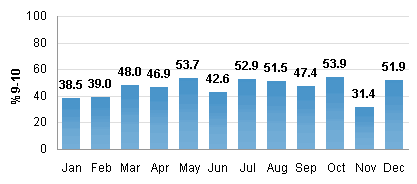
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Figure 12: Performance Hilton Curacao '09

Source: SALT scores overall Guest experience.

If we compare to other Hilton Hotels, the Hilton Curacao performs quite weak, on all points they score “underperform” or “neutral”. Most negatives guest responses are on: :

* Overall accommodation, the building is inside and outside very old and boring.
* The Food and Beverages are boring (every night the same) and there is no atmosphere is the restaurant. The lack of variety and the speed of service are also often mentioned.
* The Meeting rooms are a weak point due to lack of outlook and food served.
* The Spa is also lacking in variety and guests are dissatisfied with the facility.

## Guest Profile

Graph 7: Purpose of Stay Hilton Curacao 2010

*Segmentation*

To decide upon how we can satisfy the guests and improve performance, by implementing the sustainability strategy. We have to know what kind of guests we are positioning on.

On the right we see the purpose of stay, compared to the general tourist in Curacao and it is clear the Hilton is more attractive to business guests.

Most guests are reserving their stay by telephone or through the worldwide website of Hilton. 63.7% of the interviewed guests are staying combined weekdays or weekend, but division in short or long stay is split. 52% stays less than 5 nights, and 48 percent more. Although Hilton is attracting more Dutch than Americans nationals, the Americans tend to stay the longest. Most children come from the Netherlands Antilles itself, but almost never from Germany. Other big amounts of Guests are from Latin-America, specifically Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela.

**More general information**

Graph 9: Age of guests Hilton Curacao (2010)

Graph 8: Gender of guests Hilton Curacao (2010)

Another question in the survey was "what does the guest value in the hotel?" If we want to cut down on the number of departments, we need to know which ones are most important to our guests. The 4 most important facilities are:

* The Breakfast area, this is most used in the Hilton Hotel
* The Bar, second on importance to guests
* The Restaurants are 3rd on the list.
* The Pool, the last but certainly not least.

## Guest Demands

By talking to the guests at Hilton Curacao, I made the observation that they are involved in the process of sustainablility. They want to be involved with the island and the culture, and make it a different experience. Of course this opinion does not count for everyone, but when I asked 50 guests about their general information, sustainability awareness and their preferences I observed some interesting things.

**Sustainability:**

69.1% of the guests find it important that their hotel accommodation promotes sustainability.

They are paying attention to what companies do towards the environment.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question | Yes | No |
| The Hotel should be creating a more Caribbean atmosphere | 27 | 13 |
| The food provided should be more local and regional | 38 | 12 |
| There should be more promotion on cultural activities | 35 | 15 |
| Guest should be informed about sustainable tour operators | 33 | 17 |
| Guest should be informed about local restaurants | 40 | 10 |

98% of the guests are interested in the local culture, and want to be involved in this.

With regards to the in depth interviews with loyal guests of the Hilton Curacao, the findings are similar. 5 out of 7 of the interviewees did see a change in the Hilton Curacao. They highlighted the energy saving and water reduction policies that are transparent and communicated to the guests. A positive reaction comes out of this. On the question whether the hotel implements the local culture in the right way, 6 out of 7 answer no. The guests feel that the resort is isolated from the local environment and that the differences are huge. Because these loyal guests are mainly business guests they are not very involved in excursions and day trips, but they are very involved in the local culture with doing business in it. Mr. Wong is a loyal guest of the Hilton and thinks that Hilton Curacao is stuck in the middle right now. They can’t position themselves the same as in the United States because they have to adapt to the local culture. But they also cannot completely be led by the local culture because of the western Hilton policies. He explains that the Hilton should find a better balance between their roots and their future approach. The cultural promotion that is done by the Hilton Curacao is received very well by the guests and is also shown by the participation numbers of for example Caribbean Night. The last response of the guests that I want to highlight is there opinion about service. The Hilton scores pretty well on this, but generally in Curacao and in some departments of Hilton the guests are complaining about slow services and de-motivated staff.

## Communication:

I conducted an interview with over 20 employees, working in different departments in the Hilton Curacao, to evaluate their awareness on sustainability and their willingness to cooperate. I defined sustainable development as: A policy with regard to the environment, the socio-cultural development and the economy of Curacao.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question: | Yes | No |
| Awareness of Sustainability Policies | 9 | 11 |
| Education on Sustainability | 5 | 15 |
| Are you willing to cooperate with a sustainability plan | 18 | 20 |

From the interviewed employees there were 18 Locals and 2 interns. Among the locals there were 3 Latinos who are living on Curacao. From the rest of the interview came a positive response, that the employees really care about the future of Curacao and the Hilton, and they are therefore willing to adapt a more sustainable policy. The more aware employees are from the departments: housekeeping and maintenance since they are most facing electricity and water usage. The negative response on the survey is when it comes to the socio-cultural factors. 17 out of 20 employees feel that there is inequity within the Hotel. Different local employees explained this to me later as the problem of western management. According to the employees, there are less growing opportunities for locals in the Hilton Curacao and management positions are mainly for western/foreign people. This brings us to the issue of de-motivated staff, as many only care about maintaining their jobs but not about growing; they are not very motivated to work.

Figure 13: Organization Hierarchy Hilton Curacao

Source: Internal Network Hilton Curacao, 2009

The hierarchy of the Hilton Curacao is an organization with a functional structure; the communication flow goes in these functions. Everybody communicates to his supervisor or manager and these communicate to their director or General Manager. We can conclude that communication is done in steps by two positions higher or lower, this is where you listen or report too.

# Discussion:

In the research there are many conclusions which can be drawn. In this part I want to outline the most important conclusion and the relations they have with each other. The main conclusion which we see in every chapter is that sustainable tourism development is not an easy task; it is a long and complex process that involves several parties and several phases. To reach the goal where sustainable tourism is positively influencing all three factors of our research; the economy, environment and the socio-cultural development, there is a local strategy needed.

In the first part of our findings; about the current situation of sustainable tourism in Curacao, we can conclude that the impacts are both positive and negative. Tourism contributes positively to the economy of Curacao, where it increases the GDP and the employment possibilities. It clearly also leads to negative impacts on the environment of Curacao, by the increase in use of natural resources and the uncontrolled tourism activities. The culture of Curacao is very international and many international influences have made Curacao unique, but the rise in tourism is now causing conflicts with the local inhabitants as they are not as involved as they should be. The policies that have been made by the government of Curacao and Dutch initiatives have raised some awareness about sustainability in the tourism industry, but they did not implement a legal instrument or a local strategy. This was due to the lack of knowledge about the subject and lack of structure and network within the authorities. The voluntary initiatives that were set up by awareness of sustainability and interest of western stakeholders are a positive movement in Curacao. However due to the the lack of measuring tools by these incentives and the non-availability of reporting by the authorities, they do not get enough rewards for their efforts and this can lead to a decrease in motivation to continue. In the second section on findings presented, we looked at the policies of Hilton Curacao on Sustainability. We can conclude that a sustainable strategy is present, and that the results of their process are being reported. Here we also see the Hilton Curacao performing quite well, especially on their environmental progress. Due to the lack of involvement of a local strategy, the part of socio-cultural impact is not included. The worldwide policy is promoted in the Hilton Curacao, but has not been updated with the local and cultural factors, that would make it personalized and successful for the Hilton Curacao.

In the third section of our findings, we see this exact problem coming back when we interview the guests. They are aware off some policies of Hilton Curacao on their environmental sustainability, but the cultural awareness is lacking in the hotel. Due to the western segment of most guests, they are mainly interested in sustainability and also in local culture. The problem is even expanding if I understand from the employees of Hilton Curacao that they are experiencing a culture clash; focused on job level friction. The relation of (western) management and local employees is a contribution to the problem of communication. The western sustainability policies are not being communicated to the employees and the local awareness of the employees is not represented in the policies. This cause loses on both sides, where it could be in balance hence presenting a great success factor for Hilton Curacao.

The steps of action for Hilton Curacao are based on the contribution of the local culture to the Hilton worldwide policies, to achieve a policy that will increase the performance of Hilton Curacao on a level to satisfy all stakeholders.

# Recommendations

In this final chapter I will define my recommendations based on the research performed. The main recommendations are focused on the Hilton Curacao, but because of the outline of this report, we will include some different parties.

## External Analysis:

*Local Authorities:*

The local authorities should take up their role to support and guide the sustainable incentives of local and international companies.

*“As the level of government closest to the people, [local authorities] play a vital role in educating and*

*mobilising the public around sustainable development.”*

***Agenda 21***

* Composition of authority for sustainable tourism, being organized with members from the sectors; economic development, special ordering and social & environmental development.
* Create a strategy on sustainability involving the tasks:
  + Regulation, the implementation of a specific Agenda 21[[26]](#footnote-26), together with certifications and standardizations using as a baseline the **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria[[27]](#footnote-27)**
  + Facilitation of the changes towards sustainable tourism
    - Develop more local attractions and cultural events
    - Decisions made with regard to the tourism industry, should be evaluated on their impacts on the economy, environment and the community.
  + Partnership- the local authorities should create partnerships for themselves and for the tourism activities. A network to supply and share information on sustainable initiatives will not only create knowledge but also transparency in the system.
    - The government should look for partnerships to help and support them on creating and implementing their strategies towards tourism development. Due to the trend, many countries and organizations are struggling with this, and a partnership can be a win-win situation. Also the partnership with an international certification program in their regulations would help in building international credibility in their legal instrument.
    - The government should be a partner to the non-governmental tourism institutions and the tourism initiatives and create a transparent network with forward and backward information streams.
    - The authorities should partner with foreign authorities and travel agencies to promote their sustainable tourism (incentives)
  + Reporting, the measurements should be continuosly reported to the stakeholders (Businesses, Tourists and Community).
    - The policies that are created and their process of implementation
    - The initiatives that have been taking and their progress.
  + Communication- the reports and certifying of sustainable tourism incentives needs to be rewired by communicating this to the important stakeholders. The communication of sustainable tourism should be done towards, business (educational), Tourists (informational) and communities (promotional). This comes back to the partnerships of the local authorities with the authorities of foreign countries and their travel agencies to make it possible for tourists to choose sustainability.

## Internal Analysis:

*Hilton Worldwide:*

Hilton worldwide sets the international goals and the sustainability policies, but to promote sustainability in the different resorts they should promote the individual initiatives

* Adopt an internal criteria system which presents credibility
* Appoint sustainability managers per area as there are also performance managers for different continents. E.g. Sustainability manager Latin America-Caribbean for Curacao.
* Hold regular meetings with the general managers of the resorts.
* Share individual resort initiatives and reward them on a contests base.

## Strategy & Action Plan

*Objectives & Implementation*

The steps that need to be undertaken by the Hilton Curacao:

* + 1. Establishing commitment, state the worldwide Hilton goals and objectives, together with the individual goals and objectives to achieving environmental, socio-cultural and economic performance. This should create a solid network for an effective management plan.
* Hilton Curacao can use the worldwide goals as the quantitative goals, where there are performing percentages, and this is creating a possibility for global measurement.
* For their qualitative goals they should focus on stakeholders as; creating environmental and cultural awareness to the guests, communication of the sustainability policy with the employees etc.
  + 1. Impact assessment, determine the Hilton Curacao’s positive and negative impacts and promote the importance of the most significant ones. The policy should provide relations to the business operations, which everybody knows which impacts their department is causing.
* **Economic:** Hilton Curacao should measure their performance and the contribution of this toward the economy of Curacao. It will motivate employees if they have a better understanding of how their work is improving their economy.
* **Environmental:** The policy of Hilton Curacao is mainly focused on reducing environmental impacts. There are 2 more important factors that can be beneficial towards reducing impact; reuse and Recycle.
* **Socio-cultural:** The preservation of social norms and cultures of the local communities is a new topic for Hilton, which they can already improve by communicating more with their employees. Learning experience would be if the local employees can educate the rest of local customs and social norms. Second topic here is the provision of economic benefits to local communities. This is the promotion of local companies and attractions towards the guests.
  + 1. Balancing Stakeholder input, how to cooperate with the stakeholders.

**Guests:**

**Segmenting:** evaluating the guests profiles and the guests demands

**Educating:** Teaching the guests about the local culture; a small language class, a dance class etc.

**Promoting:** Promotions of local food, Caribbean atmosphere and local amenities can be done by the hotel. They can also carry out promotion of local restaurants and activities outside the hotel, by providing a summary of these in an activities book.

**Business partners:**

**Selecting:** Selecting sustainable business partners

Suppliers: Cooperating with eco-friendly or fair trade product suppliers

Car rental: Choosing a car rental company with more environmental friendly cars, or cooperating with a bicycle renting company or providing bus tours.

Tour operator: Choosing a tour operator such as Curacao Active as a business partner, to ensure eco-friendly tours. Also having a dive partner that cares about the marine parks.

**Employees:**

**Selecting:** Choosing employees with local awareness and care

**Training:** the training of the employees should be as well based on the worldwide sustainability policy and goals, as well as on the local possibilities.

**Involvement:** To receive good suggestions and also commit the employees to the Hilton, you should involve them in the process. By making employees do what they are good at and have value for, they are more motivated and work harder.

**Measuring:** Measuring the efforts that employees take to increase sustainability in all factors, have the supervisors watch their department and reward initiatives that employees undertake.

**Communities:**

**Development:** Working toward the development of infrastructure and restoring of resources that are taken by tourism.

**Involving:** Hiring local musicians and such to perform at shows in Hilton, having volunteer working projects were guests and employees can participate in.

**Donating:** The donation of left over to charity, not only in terms of food but also furniture, office supplies etc.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strategy | Implementation |
| Facilitation strategy | The facilitation of all stakeholders just mentioned, by educating, assessing and rewarding. |
| Promotional strategy | The setup of promotional programmers to communicate message of sustainability at Hilton Curacao. |
| Positioning strategy | With the segmentation, we make a division of the origin of tourists so as to create the best messages for the promotion of the sustainability. |
| Long term-view | Hilton should focus on the quality of the tourists that are visiting them, instead of the maximum number of tourists. |
| Marketing Mix | Price: Remains in the beginning the same, but due to the cost reductions of sustainability, it could be lowered in the long-term.  Place: The place should be a lot more related to the actual place the tourists are located. Hilton Curacao representing Curacao.  Promotion: The promotion is done by a campaign with sustainability as Hilton “doing things right”, promoted in the countries differently according to their trends and awareness.  Product: The product is still the core; to provide travelers with excelled hospitality. But we can add: with regard to the sustainability of the economy, environment and culture. |

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