Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally

What is tourism for? Growth, sustainability and regeneration in Canadian tourism policy

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Introduction

In 2019, overtourism and tourism's significant contribution to climate change were raising serious alarms (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Hall et al., 2013; Higgins-Desbiolles, Carnicelli, Krolikowski, Wijesinghe, & Boluk, 2019; Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019), but tourism continued to grow. International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) worldwide grew 4% in 2019 to reach 1.5 billion (UNWTO, 2019). Canada saw its third consecutive record-breaking year with 22.1 million travellers, generating an estimated $104.9 billion in tourism expenditures (Destination Canada, 2019).

And then came 2020. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimated 2020 would see a 58-78% decrease in global tourism because of Covid-19 travel restrictions. The sector is stricken with job loss and closures in businesses ranging from accommodation to transport to attractions. Yet, various scholars and tourism practitioners have observed that this crisis is also an opportunity to revisit tourism's purpose and consider alternative models and approaches, such as regenerative tourism, that better respect ecological limits and better support human flourishing (Cave & Dredge, 2020; Cheer, 2020; Nancy Duxbury, Kangas, & De Beukelaer, 2017; Haywood, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). For example, the United Nations World Tourism Association (UNWTO), 2020) appeals for countries to re-build post-COVID-19 with inclusive, regenerative tourism while the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association's (TOTA, 2020) annual summit in British Columbia was titled *Moving Forward Better - Recovery, Resiliency & Regeneration* and framed the crisis as an "opportunity for transformation."

Now is a critical time for deep reflection about tourism's social, cultural, economic and environmental purpose. A better understanding of how tourism's purpose is conceptualized and operationalized in tourism policy is urgently needed to support critical conversations, policy actions and business development that reorients post-Covid 19 tourism culture towards positive social, economic and environmental contributions.

This longitudinal analysis of tourism policy examines how language and linguistic devices are deployed to maintain and transform understandings of tourism's purpose. Federal level Canadian tourism policy documents from the 2011-2019 are examined. The concepts of growth, sustainability and regeneration are analyzed as measures of tourism's perceived purpose and as reflections of the cultural values which shape tourism policy.

This research address three specific objectives. First, to conduct a Corpus Linguistics computer-aided text analysis of selected tourism policy documents to quantify the frequency, dispersion, clusters, and collocates of the terms growth, sustainable/sustainability and regeneration; second to conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis of selected tourism policy documents to interpret how tourism's purpose for growth, sustainability and/or regeneration is conceptualized and reflects

underlying cultural values; and finally, to analyse how tourism policy discourse reflects, reinforces, influences, challenges or transforms cultural values related to sustainability over time and within social, economic and environmental contexts.

This paper presents the findings from preliminary research analysis of two federal tourism strategies: *Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy: Welcoming the world* (Industry Canada, 2011) and *Creating Middle Class Jobs: A federal tourism growth strategy* (Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada, 2019). Presenting and receiving feedback from the TTRA audience will inform subsequent stages of this research on growth, sustainability and regeneration in Canadian tourism policy.

Literature Review

Tourism has grown enormously over the past 50 years (UNWTO, 2018). It is a major economic sector with significant cultural, social, and environmental impacts (Archer et al., 2005; Mason, 2012). The most urgent global concern is tourism's significant contribution to climate change (Hall et al., 2013; Mundt, 2011). In addition, overtourism has become a serious issue in rural and urban tourism destinations alike (Adie et al., 2020; Dodds & Butler, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019). Canadian examples include: the impact of 1.3 million visitors in Banff National Park in 2018 which threatens park ecology, visitor experience and livability for residents in adjacent communities (Doll, 2018); the smelly consequences of a summer tourist population that exceeds the sewage system capacity in Osoyoos, British Columbia (Leritte, 2019); and, gentrification in historic Quebec City as apartments are converted into more lucrative vacation rentals squeezing out long-time residents(Page, 2018). At the destination level, tourism development affects the entire community and their collective resources, regardless of whether they are directly involved in, or benefitting from, the development (George et al., 2009).

Sustainable tourism emerged in response to the impacts of the growing industry and the greater societal concern for sustainable development that was first formally articulated by Bruntland (1987). The meaning attributed to sustainability and sustainable tourism reflect the different disciplines and policy aims of individual scholars and organizations (Ehrenfeld & Hoffman, 2017), but a common interpretation is that of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) which is explicit about sustainable tourism entailing "striking a balancing" between economic, social, and environmental pillars which are simultaneously complementary and in competition (UNWTO, 2012). Balancing these spheres is the foundation of much of the current sustainable tourism policy paradigm as is the need for continued economic growth (Bramwell et al., 2017). Tourism's operating system continues to prioritize growth and profit with success measured financially (Cave & Dredge, 2020). While reports and policies have proliferated, tourism remains unsustainable which challenges the so called 'balanced' approach that continues to promote limitless economic growth (Dwyer et al., 2020; Hall, 2011).

Regenerative tourism has emerged within research and praxis related to sustainable tourism. Regenerative tourism focuses on tourism's role in supporting community well-being, revitalization, and environmental sustainability rather than being focused on the sustainability of tourism itself. Regenerative tourism challenges the growth/profit focus of capitalist economies/markets (Duxbury, Bakas, de Castro, & Silva, 2021). Regenerative tourism has transformational aspirations which go beyond sustaining what is "to the proactive regeneration

of communities, cultures, heritage, places, landscapes, and so forth" (Duxbury et al., 2021, p. 3). Tourism thus conceived often has human flourishing as its objective advocates various tactics such as "de-growth, enhancement of community engagement and agency, preservation of sense of place, elevation of the worth of the nature and the wider non-human world, acknowledgement of spirituality and conscious consumption and production" (Cheer, 2020, p. 519). However, human flourishing cannot ignore economic concerns and economic growth is sometimes required to achieve the social foundation required to create a "safe and just space for humanity" (Raworth, 2017, p. 9) there is some place for regenerative growth, but growth is understood holistically as increasing net benefit and well-being (Duxbury et al., 2021; Pollock, 2019). Regenerative tourism requires behavioural change by individual tourists and hosts and deep-seated cultural changes at the policy level if tourism is to actually enhance local and global sustainability, and wellbeing in the face of the dual issues of climate change and overtourism (Bramwell & Lane, 2013; Higham et al., 2013; Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen & McGee, 2013).

Earlier work by Torkington, Stanford, & Guiver (2020) which used critical discourse analysis to examine the language used to resolve the seemingly conflicting goals of economic growth and social and environmental sustainability in the national tourism policy discourses of 7 European countries is foundational to the research proposed. Torkington et al. found wide scale adoption of sustainability language without clear definitions of what was being sustained, by and for whom, and to what end. Tourism policies conceptually appropriated sustainability language and used it to suggest continued competitive growth as the objective, rather than respecting environmental limits or fostering community wellbeing and various linguistic devices were used to perpetuate neoliberal narratives such as metaphors which equated growth with health and lack of growth with illness.

Robinson (2020) found similar patterns in a content analysis of the Canadian federal tourism strategy *Creating Middle Class Jobs* (2019) which used language firmly entrenched in a competitive, growth-oriented battle metaphor. For example, Canadian tourism is described as "falling behind as other countries ramp up their efforts to compete in what is an increasingly crowded field. We need to stand out from the crowd and fight harder for our fair share of the international market" (Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada, 2019, p. 20). Significantly, however, it is "our fair share" (whatever "fair" is?) of growth and the growth now has a specific purpose: middle-class jobs. Tourism strategies at the sub-national and regional levels also revealed the hopeful seeds of change (Horlings, 2016) in the sustainable tourism discourse (Robinson, 2020).

This research is situated in the context of scholarly literature which increasingly recognizes that culture is a critical facet of sustainability because environmental issues are rooted in cultural values (Ives et al., 2020). Culture needs to be explicitly integrated in sustainability discourse because "achieving sustainability goals essentially depends on human accounts, actions, and behavior which are, in turn, culturally embedded" (Soini & Dessein, 2016, p. 1). A deep shift in values is needed for tourism to be truly sustainable. Linguistic framing is a foundational aspect of cultural sustainability (Bianchi, 2017; Nancy Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2012; Mariola, 2005; Redclift, 2005). which both conveys and shapes culture (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2012; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016).

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative methods of discourse analysis will be used to critically examine how language and linguistic devices maintain and transform understandings of tourism's purpose following the model provided by Torkington et al. (2020) and drawing on Baker (2006) and McEnery & Hardie (2011).

A Corpus Linguistics computer-aided text analysis was conducted, to provide a quantitative overview of linguistic patterns and trends related to how the terms growth, sustainable/ sustainability and regenerative are deployed in tourism policy documents understood broadly as documents that exemplify governments' intentions. AntConc, a free corpus analysis software for concordance and text analysis (Anthony, n.d.) was used to generate lists of words and clusters ranked by frequency and to identify collocation to determine the most significant relationships between words.

Critical Discourse Analysis is then used in the discussion to interpret and contextualize the language and discursive practices in tourism policy (re)produces, shape, contest or alter what is seen as tourism's purpose and critique the political and social framing of the issues (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016; Torkington et al., 2020) as well as the underlying cultural values which reflect inner dimensions of sustainability (Grenni et al., 2020; Horlings, 2015; Ives et al., 2020; Walsh et al., 2020).

Results

This paper presents the findings from preliminary research. Two federal tourism strategies, *Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy: Welcoming the world* (2011) and *Creating Middle Class Jobs: A federal tourism growth strategy* (2019), were analyzed as part of the first stage in the research process.

The terms growth, sustainability and regeneration were searched for using a wildcard* to include variations of the term (e.g. grow, sustain, regenerate). Table 1 shows the frequency of these terms in the 2011 and 2019 tourism plans as well as the occurrence per 1000 words for comparative purposes.

Table 1. Word frequencies in 2011 and 2019

Term	Frequency 2011 (11333 words)	Frequency 2019 (9360 words)
Growth + growing + grow + grows	17 (1.5 per 1000 words)	63 (6.7 per 1000 words)
Sustainable + sustain + sustains + sustained + sustainability	7 (0.6 per 1000 words)	7 (0.7 per 1000 words)
Regenerative + regenerate + regenerates+ regeneration	0	0

The most frequent 2-word clusters for grow* and sustain* were generated to show the immediate

co-texts of these terms. Table 2 shows the most frequent 2-word clusters with growth while Table 3 shows the most frequent 2-word clusters with sustainability. As the term regenerative did not appear in either tourism strategy it is not analysed further.

Table 2. Most frequent 2-word clusters on left or right with grow*

2011	2019
economic growth	growth strategy
growing tourism	tourism growth
major growth	growth rate
demand grows	high-growth
fast-growing	GDP growth
high growth	grow Canada
growing consistent	ambitious growth
growing outbound	economic growth
global growth	grow Indigenous
growth potential	export growth

Table 3. Most frequent 2-word clusters on left with sustain*

2011	2019
sustainable tourism	sustain/sustainable growth
sustain Canada	sustain existing
sustainable communities	sustainable potential
sustainable competition	sustainable sector
sustainable new	sustainable tourism

A collocate is a word that co-occurs with the search term more often than would be expected by chance. Tables 4 and 5 give the 20 strongest collocates of grow* (limited to collocate frequencies of 2 or more), and the 15 highest collocates of sustain* ranked using information from the calculation of the Mutual Information (MI) score with articles and prepositions removed.

Table 4. Collocates of growth.

2011	2019
double-digit	pillars
tremendous	compared
outbound	rate
India	measured
emerging	fast
tourists	class
revenues	GDP
Brazil	why
China	standing
potential	moving
been	dispersion
increase	arrivals
strong	federal
number	jobs
many	strategy
economic	high
visitor	measures
years	empowering
economy	significant
markets	approach

Table 5. Collocates of sustainable.

2011	2019
takes	overlooked
environmental	look
aims	advantages
mind	viable
value	toward
temporary	structural
November	screening
guided	robust
encouraged	gaining
top	efficient
tourist	continues
term	assistance
principles	addressing
innovative	step
workers	standing

Conclusion and Discussion

Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy (2011) and *Creating Middle Class Jobs: A federal tourism growth strategy* (2019) are separated by an eight-year interval and were produced under different political parties, Conservative and Liberal respectively. However, both tourism policy documents reflect similar patterns. In term frequency, clusters, and collocates, both plans appear grounded in economic discourse which echoes Torkington et al.'s (2020) analysis of European tourism policy. There is no distinct change of language between these two policy documents reflecting an evolving orientation or ideology between 2011 and 2019.

It is not surprising that economic discourse dominates since tourism is obviously an economic activity, but social and environmental problems arise from this economic activity. Discursive analysis highlights the absences of terms expected to feature (Partington, 2014). There was a marked absence of ecological discourses including the complete absence of the term regenerative. These documents use 'business as usual' language to maintain a neoliberal capitalist status quo. When the term sustainability was used, its use was divorced from concepts of environmental or societal wellbeing. Rather it was directed at sustaining tourism. Sustainability was combined with growth to produce the sustainable growth oxymoron (Daly, 1990). *Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy: Welcoming the world* (2011) and *Creating Middle Class Jobs: A federal tourism growth strategy* (2019) make some limited attempt to utilize the terms and language of sustainability as a way of branding existing policy approaches as environmentally sensitive, but to a lesser extent than the European tourism policy documents which used linguistic strategies more extensively to appear concerned with environmental and societal wellbeing. For example, "sustainable development" was the most frequent 2-word cluster in Torkington et. al. (2020), but Torkington et. al. describe this sustainable language as "lip-service" since the strategic focus was not actually sustainable given its endorsement of continuous growth. Canadian tourism policy documents but did not even engage with sustainable development language at a superficial level.

This research begins to answer Torkington et al.'s (2020) call for longitudinal discourse analysis of the concepts of 'growth' and 'sustainability' (and 'regenerative') within tourism policy by applying Corpus Linguistics computer-aided text analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis to two federal tourism strategies: *Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy: Welcoming the world* (2011) and *Creating Middle Class Jobs: A federal tourism growth strategy* (2019). The linguistic strategies used in these tourism policies endorse economic growth as the purpose of tourism. The term sustainable was used occasionally, but to support this ideology rather than used to bring forward environmental or social concerns while the concept of regenerative was completely lacking. Sustainable language was tacked-on rather than reflecting cultural change.

A limited understanding of tourism's purpose jeopardizes the possibility of truly sustainable tourism that is regenerative and resilient. Critical reconsideration of tourism's purpose is necessary to truly build back better. Whether this critical reconsideration has occurred at a federal policy level is questionable given the Canadian federal government's 2021 *Tourism Relief Fund* (Government of Canada, 2021) intended to support tourism businesses and organizations recover from the effects of Covid-19 is explicitly aligned with the objectives of *Creating Middle Class Jobs: A federal tourism growth strategy* (2019).

Presenting and receiving feedback from the TTRA audience will inform subsequent stages of this research on growth, sustainability and regeneration in Canadian tourism policy as the longitudinal design is further developed to incorporates multiple planning/policy cycles to measure changes in growth, sustainably and regeneration narratives over time as well as the possible acceleration of change caused by the global pandemic. Future research can also explore key themes through key informant interviews and with additional cases in different countries and/or at sub-national and regional scales.

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