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## NATURE POSITIVE TOURISM

### **Abstract**

The concept of nature positive tourism, simply defined as a means of describing a world where nature is being restored and is regenerating, rather than declining, is attracting increasing attention in the tourism industry. With this in mind, this review paper outlines the current global nature crisis, presents the results of an Internet search of academic research and consultancy company reports on nature positive, summarises the World Travel and Tourism Council's recent report on nature positive travel and tourism, and offers some critical reflections on nature positive tourism. The reflections focus on the concept of nature positive itself, the industry's commitment to nature positive tourism and concerns about greenwashing, and the relationship between tourism and sustainable development, which might all be seen to call the nature positive tourism into question.

**Keywords:** nature crisis; nature positive; nature positive tourism; tourism industry; sustainability

### **Introduction**

The concept of nature positive, simply defined as a means of describing a world where nature is being restored and is regenerating, rather than declining, is attracting increasing attention in a number of industries. In 2023 the World Economic Forum, for example, produced three major reports on sector specific actions that companies should take to transform their businesses and contribute to reversing nature loss by 2030, in the chemical sector, the cement and concrete sector, and household and personal care products sector. That the concept of nature positive is gaining increasing traction reflects growing concerns about the global nature crisis, which has seen the planet *'experiencing a dangerous decline in nature', in which 'one million species are threatened with extinction, soils are turning infertile, and water sources are drying up'* (United Nations Environment Programme 2023).

There is certainly growing interest in nature positive tourism within the tourism industry, In her *'Foreword'* to *'Nature Positive Travel and Tourism'*, subtitled *'Travelling in Harmony with Nature'*, Julia Simpson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the World Travel and Tourism Council, for example, claimed that *'travel & tourism are intrinsically linked to biodiversity and nature'*, and that *'over half of travel & tourism demand is driven by the desire to explore nature, whether it is an international safari of a lifetime or a day trip exploring the countryside'* (World Travel and Tourism Council 2022a). However, nature positive tourism has, to date, attracted no attention from academic researchers, and this represents a gap in the academic tourism literature.

With this in mind, this paper offers an exploratory review of the concept of nature positive tourism. The paper includes, a summary of the scale and severity of the nature crisis, a description of the simple methodology, a review of the definition and meanings of

nature positive, an examination of the academic and professional business perspectives on the concept of nature positive, a review of developing thinking around to nature positive tourism, some wider reflections which can be seen to call into question the future of nature positive tourism, and a short conclusion.

### ***The Nature Crisis***

The warnings about the scale of the nature crisis are clear, and set the context for the growing interest in the concept of nature positive. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2019), for example, reported that *'nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history, and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating with grave impacts on people around the world now likely.'* The World Wildlife Fund's (2022) *'Living Planet Report'* noted that *'nature loss is now rarely perceived as a purely moral or ecological issue, with a broadened sense of its vital importance to our economy, social stability, individual well-being and health, and as a matter of justice'*, and that *'we are leaving a terrible legacy to our children and future generations to come.'*

At the same time, there seems to be a broad consensus on the principal causes of the global nature crisis. Typically, the United Nations Environment Programme (2023), identified *'the top five drivers of nature loss'*, as being *'changes in land and sea use'*, *'climate change'*, *'pollution'*, *'direct exploitation of natural resources'*, and *'invasive species.'* More specifically, the major driver of biodiversity loss is how people use the land and the sea, including the conversion of forests, wetlands and other natural habitats for agricultural and urban use, and harvesting minerals from the ocean floor. Pollution has a particularly devastating effect on freshwater and marine habitats. Marine plastic pollution was seen to have increased dramatically since 1980, and to have affected a range of animal species, including marine turtles, seabirds, whales, dolphins, and porpoises. At the same time plant and insect populations continue to decline because of the commercial use of insecticides.

### ***Methodology***

Nature positive tourism is a new, and largely unexplored, theme within the tourism industry, and in an attempt to obtain a preliminary picture of, the concepts of nature positive, and of nature positive tourism, a simple qualitative approach was adopted. This approach drew on a series of searches conducted on the Internet using either Google, or Google Scholar, search engines in September 2023 and January 2024. Using only the two Google search engines seemed appropriate in an exploratory paper. In part and perhaps as might be expected in an exploratory study, the search process took what might be termed an iterative approach in that the findings from some of the originally planned searches led to further searches.

The first search, which used the term nature positive, was designed to explore the origins, and meanings, of the concept of nature positive. The second search, firstly used the key term nature positive, and secondly, the key term nature positive tourism, both with the

key term, consultancy reports, in an attempt to discover if the concepts of nature positive, and nature positive tourism, had attracted attention from tourism industry bodies or consultancy companies. The nature positive tourism search suggested close links between nature positive tourism and sustainable tourism, green tourism and ecotourism and a third search was conducted using these two terms. In a similar vein, the search for reports from tourism industry bodies and consultancy companies suggested that Deloitte, one of the major consultancy companies had published a report on the role of nature in the travel and tourism industry, and the names of the major consultancy companies, namely, McKinsey and Company, EY, KPMG, the Boston Consulting Group, and Accenture were used in a fourth search process along with the terms nature positive and nature positive tourism. Finally, Google Scholar, was employed using the terms nature and nature positive tourism, to explore the extent of academic interest in the two concepts.

This information from these five sets of searches provided the source material for this paper. Although this information is drawn from a variety of sources including, academic journals, consultancy companies, industry reports, and conservation organisations, they are all named in the paper and/or in the list of references at the end of the paper. The paper draws on a number of direct quotations taken from corporate websites, and the aim here is to add authenticity to the narrative by exploring how consultancy companies, conservation organisations and industry bodies publicly expressed, and looked to evidence, their understanding of, and their approaches to, nature and nature positive tourism, in their own words.

### ***Definitions and Meanings of Nature Positive***

Quantis (2023), an international sustainability consultancy, recognised that the concept of nature positive was gaining traction, but argued *'a lack of definition, guidance, and ways to measure nature impacts'*, meant that government and corporate claims to be moving towards a nature positive future, might, at best, be difficult to validate, and at worst be misleading. In a similar vein, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (2022) suggested that *'a nature-positive future is an essential goal, but as yet an undefined one'*, though Greenen and Butterworth (2023) argued that there are three types of current definitions of nature positive, namely target-based, process-based, and conceptual. Target-based definitions have specific quantifiable outcomes, process-based definitions look to specify the operational steps required to achieve nature positive, while conceptual definitions are aspirational but look to put nature at the forefront of everyday actions and decisions.

More specifically, a number of organisational definitions of nature positive can be identified. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (2022) proposed the following definition, namely, that, *'a nature-positive future means that we, as a global society, halt and reverse the loss of nature measured from its current status, reducing future negative impacts alongside restoring and renewing nature, to put both living and non-living nature measurably on the path to recovery.'* For the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2022) *'becoming nature positive means reversing the current declines in*

*biodiversity, so that species, and ecosystems can begin to recover*, which was seen as *'an essential first step on the path to full nature recovery.'* The World Wildlife Fund (undated) simply defines nature positive as *'having more nature in the world than we have now.'*

Greenen and Butterworth (2023) suggested that the concept of nature positive has its origins in the idea of *'no net loss'* introduced in public pollution and wetland trading in the US in the 1970s. Here, the focus was on compensating for environmental goods and services that were previously removed from the environment, which, in turn, paved the way for not just compensating, but adding value, to the environment that was lost. Within the last 50 years the thinking behind the concept of nature positive has gathered momentum, initially amongst conservation organisations and much more recently in the world of business, but it is now very much part of the lexicon of sustainability transition.

In December 2022, a commitment to halting, and reversing, biodiversity loss was formally agreed by almost 200 countries in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and though nature positive does not receive explicit mention within that framework, it effectively underpins it. Here, the aim is to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, and to achieve full recovery by 2050. The following year the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2023) produced *'Roadmaps to Nature Positive'*, subtitled *'Guidelines to Accelerate Business Accountability, Ambition and Action for a Nature Positive Future'*, which were designed to complement and help to deliver on the Global Biodiversity Framework.

In September 2023, 27 of the world's largest nature conservation organizations, institutes, and business and finance coalitions, including the African Natural Capital Alliance, Business for Nature, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the World Wildlife Fund, and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, came together to launch the Nature Positive Initiative. The aim was to drive alignment around the definition, integrity, and use of the term, nature positive, and to support broader, longer-term efforts to deliver nature positive outcomes.

### ***Perspectives on Nature Positive***

The concept of nature positive has received some attention from academics and consultancy companies. On the academic side, Booth et al. (2023), for example, recognised that nature positive was emerging as a rallying call for businesses, but argued that tinkering with businesses will not bring about transformative change in business's relationship with the environment, and that there was a lack of clarity in how to operate such transformative change. That said, Booth et al. (2023) proposed a framework, to support companies to understand and develop transformative actions in the context of contributing towards a nature positive future, with case studies from food retailing and mining, which are grounded in robust social science theory and empirical evidence, and they offered some suggestions to promote integrity and innovation, whilst guarding against greenwashing.

zu Ergmassen et al. (2022) suggested the low levels of adoption of nature positive practices is not surprising given that the concept is new, that it has been subject to

numerous definitions, and that little operational guidance has yet been provided. Although it is inevitable there will be on-going debate about the meaning of nature positive. The authors made the case that firms that do not address biodiversity impacts along their supply chain, set robust and measurable biodiversity targets, aligned with global goals, meaningfully engage with biodiversity at board level, and address single environmental issues in isolation, cannot credibly be considered nature positive, and call for more specific and careful use of the term in order not to dilute its transformative potential.

de Jaramillo et al. (2023) looked to provide an overview of the evidence in favour of nature-positive food systems. The authors concluded that current global food systems were driving habitat and diversity loss, and undermining the productivity, sustainability and resilience of such systems, and that this vicious circle could only be broken if fundamental steps are taken to realign food, feed, and fibre production to achieve positive agricultural production at scale. More specifically, de Jaramillo et al. (2023) make a number of calls for action, including, increasing policy coherence and strengthening natural governance; improving sustainable soil management; adapting and intensifying the knowledge-sharing of farmers, farm advisors and farm teachers; and empowering rural areas by cross-farm cooperation and through high local value creation.

Taylor et al. (2023) argued that while organisations are committing to biodiversity protection targets, with a focus on nature positive outcomes, there are few examples of how to feasibly achieve such targets. In a case study of Lady Margaret Hall at Oxford University, UK, Taylor et al. (2023) put forward an approach to achieve nature positive targets with respect to the biodiversity impact of food consumption. This approach involved using a comprehensive database of lifecycle environmental impacts and mapped strategies to meet targets structured according to a mitigation and conservation hierarchy. Taylor et al. (2023) concluded that delivering ambitious nature positive targets within the existing constraints would be challenging, and perhaps, more tellingly, that however committed an organisation is to being nature positive in its food provision, this is unachievable in the absence of systems change.

On the consultancy side, four of the selected consultancy companies, posted material on nature positive. For McKinsey and Company (2023), for example, being nature positive means *'that the world interacts with nature in a way that restorative and regenerative rather than just extractive'* and the consultancy claimed that *'becoming nature positive is the world's next big challenge.'* More specifically, it is argued that while climate change is generally discussed in terms of the carbon emissions and the carbon budget, scientists are beginning to come to a consensus about the planetary boundaries that regulate the stability and resilience of the environment, there are a number of ways of looking at nature risk. Using water as an example, there was a recognition that people rely on freshwater supplies, but that if such supplies are diminished in some locations, this will have a damaging impact on various ecosystems, which will lose their ability to provide a number of essential ecosystem services for human populations.

EY (2023) argued that *'the environment is being destroyed at an alarming rate, threatening the global economy and the future of mankind'*, and that *'although some companies are taking steps towards nature-positive strategies, corporate action must*

*accelerate to meet the challenge*, and the company claimed to have *'the latest thinking and experience with implementation strategies for nature positive value creation.'* More specifically EY (2023) identified *'six steps corporates should take toward achieving nature positivity'*, namely becoming familiar with forthcoming regulations and reporting frameworks; understanding the company's impact boundaries and its operational control for dealing with nature; mapping the company's value chain footprint and assessing its impacts and dependencies; evaluating potential risks and opportunities in relation to stakeholders; developing key performance indicators; and acting to address impacts and to report on progress.

Fredeau et al. (2023), writing under the Boston Consulting Group banner, suggested that the economic value produced by biodiversity was nearly twice the world's Gross Domestic Product, and that the drive to nature positive was especially pressing for a variety of industries, including agriculture, energy, forestry, food, fisheries, mining, manufacturing, retailing, and pharmaceuticals, that have a significant impact on nature and are heavily dependent on nature. Further, Fredeau et al. (2023) claimed that the business case for nature positive was compelling for four reasons, namely that nature positive was central to business resilience; that it can add substance to Economic, Social and Governance Reports; that it can generate demand side opportunities; and that it can enhance employer brands. Accenture (2023) recognised the *'everything depends on nature'*, and argued that *'we must work together to shift the current economic system to be more nature positive, and organisations must embed nature positivity, alongside their other sustainability priorities, into the heart of their strategy, operation s, and culture.'*

### ***Towards Nature Positive Tourism***

There is widespread agreement that tourism relies heavily on nature, and while tourism can be seen have an exploitative and destructive relationship with the natural world, there is increasing interest in the development of harmonious relationships between tourism and nature. A variety of terms, including sustainable tourism, green tourism and eco-tourism have been employed to define such harmonious relationships. In some ways, sustainable tourism is an umbrella term for other terms, some of whose meanings seems to have changed over time. For the Sustainable Tourism Development Council (2022) *'sustainable tourism refers to sustainable practices in, and by, the tourism industry. It is an aspiration to acknowledge all impacts of tourism, both positive and negative. It aims to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones.* Here, negative impacts to a destination are seen to include damage to the natural environment and overcrowding, while positive he impacts include job creation, the preservation of cultural heritage, and landscape restoration. The term green tourism was originally used to refer to small scale tourism that was focused on visits to natural areas while minimising environmental impacts but it is now taken to refer to tourism activity that is environmentally friendly. Ecotourism is defined by the International Ecotourism Society (2019) as *'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education.'*

More recently, the concept nature positive tourism, has attracted growing attention, but there is, as yet, no widely agreed definition of the term. The World Travel and Tourism

Council (2022), for example, claimed that nature positive tourism is concerned to *‘protect nature while preventing further damage to nature and promoting a regenerative approach to tourism.’* For Responsible Travel, an activist travel and tourism company founded in 2001, *‘nature positive holidays are those which directly contribute to, and advance, the protection of habitats and wildlife, and support the re-wilding of the planet’s natural spaces.’* Skutka (2023), writing under the banner of the Rewilding Society, nature positive tourism is *‘a path towards sustainable travel.’* Looking to the future, it seems likely that interest in the concept of nature positive tourism will gather increasing momentum, but to date it has received no attention in the academic tourism literature. That said, one of the business consultancy companies and a leading organisation within the travel and tourism industry, have focused on the concept.

Angelidis and Roxburgh (2023), writing under the Deloitte banner, suggested that as the nature crisis continued to escalate, many travel and tourism companies were increasingly looking to adopt activities to become more nature positive, and that such activities included setting nature related objectives and in identifying strategies and investments to realise these objectives. Further, Angelidis and Roxburgh (2023) argued, *‘with ambition and action’*, the travel and tourism industry could play a leading role in a more nature positive future, and they highlighted the role of the framework launched by the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures. This framework, a global market led initiative, is designed to help organisation better understand their relationships with nature, and to maximise the opportunities created by the drive for a nature positive future.

More substantively, the World Travel and Tourism Council’s (2022a) report, *‘Nature Positive Travel and Tourism’*, looked to explore *‘how our sector can protect nature.’* The report was created *‘to serve as a resource for travel and tourism businesses and as a springboard to ensure nature positive strategies are employed throughout the travel and tourism value chain and in every region’*, and *‘to facilitate a more co-ordinated global effort to living in harmony with nature while enabling global travel and tourism.’* In the course of compiling the report, the World Travel and Tourism Council surveyed over 180 global travel and tourism companies, including tour operators, travel agents, destination managers, cruise lines and hotel owners, and the two main audiences were seen to be governments and campaigners, and businesses. In addressing the first set, the report focussed on the evidence and ideas needed for policymaking at the local, national, and international levels, while the second set focused on ways in which business leaders could spark change within their companies, and the provision of a roadmap to guide nature positive tourism journeys.

In addressing *‘the importance of nature’*, the report recognised that *‘nature is the very fabric on which all life on Earth is based and is essential to human existence. It includes both non-living natural materials such as soil, water and stone, and all living things from bacteria to blue whales’* (World Travel and Tourism Council 2022a). More specifically, the report argued that nature *‘provides destinations with unique identities and is a core part of their appeal to travellers’*, and that *‘the business benefits of a nature positive agenda include improved reputation and consumer trust; brand enhancement and competitor differentiation: appeal to socially conscious and environmentally aware employees and customers; an inspired, experiential product portfolio; strategic positioning in a growing marketplace of responsible travellers; and progress towards to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.’*



The report sets out a nature positive road map for travel and tourism. This framework, which is designed to guide the travel and tourism sector, from small and medium sized companies to multinational organisations, in adopting a nature positive approach, has four phases, namely, assessment and definition; reducing impacts on biodiversity and restoring nature; monitoring and reporting; and collaboration and communication. In addressing monitoring and reporting, for example, the importance of defining the baseline and monitoring is seen to be essential in seeking to operationalise the impact on nature, not least because investors and other external stakeholders need to understand how a company measures, and monitors, its nature related risks and opportunities. Here the accent is on setting objectives and key performance indicators, on implementing these objectives and key performance indicators, and on effective reporting.

Specific examples are used to illustrate the monitoring and reporting process within the tourism industry. All Marriott's International hotels complete their own reporting on local ecosystem restoration activities. This is seen to reflect the global diversity in biodiversity in the company's estate, as well as the differences between urban and rural hotel locations. The Carnival Corporation's reporting process employs an Economic, Social and Governance framework to separate individual biodiversity goals. The company's environmental and biodiversity commitments are clearly specified, with measurable actions, under 2030 goals, and 2050 aspirations, under the Environment banner, while the company's community-based projects are reported under the Social umbrella.

More practically, the report has a hyperlink to a toolbox of tools and resources to support the roadmaps, which demonstrates how theory can be applied, and provides some appropriate resources, support services, and business case studies (World Travel and Tourism Council 2022b). The toolkit focuses in turn on each of the phases of the roadmap. In the assessment and definition phase, for example, one of the sets of guidance highlights the problems of animal exploitation. Here, the report claims that the illegal trade in wild animals and plants, for commercial use, is a significant driver of biodiversity loss, and has the potential to threaten the survival of species, and could result in the spread of invasive species, and businesses are encouraged to consider how they can eliminate animal exploitation in the supply chain. The use of captive animals in tourism is also seen as highly controversial, not least in that few captive facilities provide an environment that meets an animal's welfare needs. In contrast, genuine animal sanctuaries, which take in rescued animals and return them to the wild wherever possible, which protect animal welfare, and which can help to educate tourists about animal exploitation, are seen to be a positive way forward. The toolkit also has a hyperlink to guidance on how to distinguish a genuine animal sanctuary from a bogus one.

The World Travel and Tourism Council reported a high level of support for its nature positive tourism agenda across the sector, but that there was a limited understanding of how to put this support into practice. By way of a conclusion, the report emphasised that a nature positive approach to tourism does not need to be complicated, and included six corporate recommendations. These recommendations are:

- Assessing current business operations and activities against the five drivers of biodiversity loss,

- Working with destination partners and suppliers to halt any exploitation or degradation of the natural world,
- Committing to mainstreaming and integrating biodiversity safeguards throughout the business.
- Creating a nature positive strategy
- Taking a proactive role in nature protection and restoration, and
- Delivering simple, yet effective, communications to shareholders, employees, destination partners and suppliers, affected communities and customers.

However, arguably the most telling argument from the World Travel and Tourism Council is that a nature positive future for tourism requires a shift of focus and significant investment.

### **Reflections**

There is growing interest in nature positive tourism and the World Travel and Tourism Council (2022a) has argued that the increased international attention on commercial impacts on nature will present the travel and tourism industry with an opportunity to demonstrate its potential in making an important contribution in building a nature positive future. However, three sets of issues, including, the concept of nature positive itself, the industry's commitment to nature positive and concerns about greenwashing, and the relationship between tourism and sustainable development, might be seen to call nature positive tourism into question.

Firstly, while the concept of nature positive seems to have widespread support amongst conservation organisations, it is not without its critics. Marien and Fernandez writing under the banner of Friends of the Earth International (2022), for example, posed the question *'how positive will nature positive be?'* Here, Marien and Fernandez argued that nature positive may sound good, but that its meaning is unclear, that its proposed measurement is extremely vague, and that its meaning becomes even less clear when broken down into its constituent parts. More specifically while biodiversity is seen to be clearly defined, nature is not, in that nature can be many things that are not biodiverse, but have natural elements. The term positive is described as ambiguous, and while it is seen to signal an optimistic approach, in reality it accepts the destruction and loss of biodiversity and ecosystems, expecting them to be offset by larger conservation or restoration projects.

In a similar vein, Silva (2022) writing under the Greenpeace banner, argued that no one really knows what nature positive means. Arguably more critically, Silva (2022) claimed that *'the nature positive agenda promotes the financialisation of nature, that there is a monetary value to nature'*, and allocating financial values to nature, and to elements of the natural world, *'could define all that nature means to us, and that we can start trading plots of nature like tokens and feeding into an ecosystem service, that only benefits some people in particular economies.'* Ultimately, Silva's (2022) arguments are that *'nature positive is more focused on saving a failed economic model than on protecting biodiversity'*, and that nature positive could be *'a bag of tricks'*, enabling corporate decision makers, and potentially governments, to *'distract, defer and obscure their harm for nature.'*

Secondly, there are a set of issues about the industry's genuine commitment to nature positive tourism. In reporting on its 2023 *'Nature Positive Travel and Tourism Survey'*, the World Travel and Tourism Council (2023) identified *'critical barriers to progress, including funding gaps, skills shortages and a lack of time and capacity.'* Further, respondents to the survey, highlighted the need for help in measuring and reporting impacts on nature, training, and in building political support. In addressing reporting, for example, almost half of the respondents to the survey expressed their willingness to undertake reporting on a voluntary basis, while 10% welcomed reporting requirements in principle, they would only undertake such exercises if, and when, reporting became a mandatory obligation. Looking more optimistically towards the future, although Do and Schlapfaer (2023), writing under the banner of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, questioned if tourism could be nature positive, and they called on tourists to put pressure on airlines to reinvest profits back into habitat conservation.

There is also the danger that the concept of nature positive tourism is subject to greenwashing, which deceptively, and falsely, uses marketing to portray a tourism company's products and services as restoring and regenerating nature, for business gains. While nature positive tourism can be seen to present many potential opportunities for green washing, the wide range of ways in which tourism depends on, and interacts, with nature, can allow tourism companies to highlight specific features of their positive approach to nature, as part of wider claims to be nature positive. While example below, taken from Carnival Corporation's 2022 Sustainability Report are not presented as greenwashing, it does illustrate how biodiversity achievements can be used selectively to portray nature positive tourism.

The Carnival Corporation's (2022) Sustainability Report outlined the development the new cruise port destination on Grand Bahama Island which is scheduled for completion in 2025. The company reported that they are *'committed to developing this new cruise port in a sustainable and responsible manner, meeting or exceeding all applicable environmental standards, while preserving a 100-acre wetland area and creating a beautiful nature path where visitors will be able to enjoy the unspoiled island wilderness and seek information on the island and its local flora and fauna.'* The sustainability report does not mention that once completed the new facilities will be capable of welcoming two million guests annually and that it will include extensive hospitality facilities, or any environmental deterioration or damage associated with these developments.

Thirdly, there is a thorny set of issues revolving around tourism and sustainable development. On the one hand, tourism can offer major benefits, and so seen, sustainable tourism development enables the industry to become a force for good. Benefits are seen to include, attracting the sustainable traveller, creating added value, generating competitive advantage, creating a dialogue with, and support for, local communities, helping to provide sustainable employment opportunities in host communities, improving the infrastructure of the destination, and providing new opportunities for innovative businesses. In theory, nature positive tourism might be seen to offer embrace many, if not all, of these benefits. Indeed, Animondial (2022), a specialist consultancy working with travel and

tourism businesses to improve animal welfare, halt biodiversity loss and ensure nature's recovery, claimed *'beyond sustainable tourism, the future is nature positive.'*

On the other hand, it is impossible to ignore the demands that all tourism, including nature positive tourism, is making on the environment and on natural resources, and the industry's focus on what its critics see as unsustainable consumption. While *'mainstreaming sustainable consumption and production in tourism'*, was seen as part of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (2023) *'One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme'*, the programme does not define sustainable consumption and production or outline how it is to be achieved. Here, although the World Travel and Tourism Council's argument that a nature positive future for tourism requires a shift of focus, and Taylor's suggestion that however committed an organisation is to being nature positive, this is unachievable in the absence of systems change, certainly resonate, it remains to be seen if the tourism industry is willing to countenance radical change. Such a change could involve abandoning economic growth, and prioritising the welfare of the planet, and more specifically, a dominant focus on local, rather than international tourism, a halt to new tourist development, the closure of many tourism facilities, and corporate and government investment directed to restoring and regenerating biodiversity in areas where tourism had been the dominant economic activity. Such radical changes might be the ultimate price of nature positive tourism.

### **Conclusion**

This paper, offers an exploratory review of nature positive tourism, and includes a summary of the scale of the global nature crisis, a description of the methodology, a review of the definition and meanings of nature positive, an examination of the academic, business consultancy and industry perspectives on the concept of nature positive, a review of developing thinking around nature positive tourism, some wider reflections, and a short conclusion. The review of developing thinking around nature positive tourism revealed some measure of consensus about nature positive tourism, including, the need for the tourism industry to move towards nature positive, the need for strategic and operational guidance in making such a move, and on the challenges that need to be addressed, but the personal reflections might be seen to call nature positive tourism into question.

That said, the paper has a number of limitations, not least that its empirical material is based on Internet sources, but it makes a modest contribution to helping to fill the gap in academic literature identified earlier, and it may provide a platform for future research enquiries. Such enquiries, might include, empirical work on how both large and small tourism businesses are approaching nature positive tourism in various locations, on how they are looking to address the barriers to adopting such an approach, on consumers' attitudes to nature positive tourism and on the factors influencing their patronage of nature positive destinations, theoretical approaches to nature positive tourism, and stepping sideways, on nature positive initiatives in the hospitality industry.

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