

Planning and Management of Sustainable Tourism Spaces

Assignment 4

17.10.2025

Student Name: Deepak Chand Ramola

ID Number: DE240295



Visitor Management Plan at Machu Picchu, Peru

Main Reason for Development and Implementation

The Machu Picchu visitor management plan was made with a major aim of dealing with the menace of over-tourism that is a huge threat to this 15th-century Inca palace. Machu Picchu was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983, and the number of visitors increased exponentially, as the number of visitors in 1992 was approximately 77,000 per year, but almost 1.5 million in 2017. Repeatedly, UNESCO cautions that uncontrolled tourism was subjecting archaeological buildings, soil erosion and degradation of the surrounding cloud forest ecosystem to irreversible damage. In 2016, UNESCO had threatened to add Machu Picchu to its List of World Heritage in Danger unless Peru put in place effective carrying capacity limitations and visitor management. This threat, combined with observable damage to stone buildings and paths, led the Peruvian government to create and adopt a compulsory visitor control system beginning in 2017, and being updated in 2019 and afterwards.

Key Challenges

Machu Picchu had several challenges, which were interrelated. There was physical decay in the form of worn out pathways, dilapidated terraces, instability of structures due to the continuous movement of feet on 500-year-old stones. On the most widespread paths, especially to the Sun Gate (Inti Punku) and Huayna Picchu mountain, severe erosion was observed. Excess in carrying capacity was a common occurrence where visitors were as many as 5,000-6,000 people a day even though an expert had advised that the daily limit of the area should not exceed 2,500 people to maintain sustainable tourism.

The problems encountered by visitors were tourists climbing walls, touching delicate carvings, littering and leaving marked paths, which destroyed archaeological features and vegetation. Crowd control made visitor experience poor and posed safety risks due to the congestion in photo areas such as the "postcard view" that is considered as iconic. Impacts on the environment were not confined to the citadel itself- access road leading to the citadel was

always hit by landslides and town was being undeveloped uncontrollably putting pressure on water and waste management facilities.

Visitors were resisted by the economic pressures since tourism is the main driver of the economy in the region. Hotels, transport services, and local businesses were afraid of losing their revenues due to capacity restrictions. Other administrative issues consisted of insufficient personnel to monitor, lack of enforcement and organization of multiple agencies that deal with various parts of the site.

Strategies and Measures

Peru introduced a multi-layered system of management. Open Access was substituted with timed entry tickets with definite time slots (morning 6:00 AM-12:00 PM, afternoon 12:00 PM-5:30 PM), and distributed visitors all day long. Obligatory group tours with 16 or less persons guaranteed professional supervision, educational interpretation as well as behavioral compliance. Tourists were no longer free to roam in any direction; there were circuit paths that have specific entry and exit points to avoid going back and overcrowding.

Circuit differentiation provided three varying length routes (2-4 hours) that serve different sections of the site, dividing visitor traffic across a variety of routes instead of having everybody traveling the same routes. The complicated booking system did not allow visiting on the same day on a spur of the moment, which made it possible to plan the capacity and minimize congestion.

The official limit on the daily number of visitors was 4044 (since revised to about 3800) distributed among circuits and time slots. Other limits were put on sensitive sites- 400 visitors per day were only allowed at Huayna Picchu mountain and 300 in Machu Picchu mountain each with separate tickets and guided path to the summit. Stay was limited to 4 hours at a time so an individual visitor could not stay all day.

Outcomes and Success

The managerial plan had a lot of positive results. The number of visitors remained at the level of 3,800 daily, which is a very high decrease compared to pre-2017 levels, yet it still allows to be considered cost-effective. Physical preservation had been enhanced by a measurable amount - the rate of pathway erosion was lessened, structural loading of the sensitive areas was lessened through the redistributed traffic patterns. Less frequent wear of those surfaces that were touched regularly and less trampling of vegetation were recorded in archaeological monitoring.

The quality of visitors experience improved ironically even with restrictions. It was surveyed that people were more satisfied because of less crowding, enhanced interpretation by the required guides, and more reflective experiences. Circuit system eradicated bottleneck at spots where people took photos so that more visitors can take the pictures that they want without having to wait so much. The safety was enhanced by the controlled crowd categories, especially on the small mountain roads where there used to be a congestion and this posed an accident risk.

The effects on the economy were not as bad as it was anticipated. The number of visitors per day dropped, but long average occupancy in Aguas Calientes and increased amount spent on each visitor compensated losses. The high-end positioning: better quality of experience and exclusivity did not justify any significant price cuts and left the demand levels fairly high. The

international recognition has been enhanced by the fact that the UNESCO has eliminated any immediate threats of the World Heritage status, which proves the effectiveness of the management plan.

However, challenges persist. The consistency in enforcement is inconsistent with some guides accepting violations. Demand pressure is also a permanent issue, particularly in peak season (May-September), where there is a need to monitor capacity. COVID-19 had a negative short-term effect of reducing visitors to 675 per day in 2020-2021, which has offered recovery opportunities but posed an economic burden that created pressure to ease restrictions after the pandemic.

On the whole, the visitor management plan of Machu Picchu can be regarded as a good example of using carrying capacity limits at a popular tourist location to show that restrictions when properly created and used can both protect the heritage values and improve visitor experiences.