

Case study – sustainable tourism in lagos, portugal

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Executive Summary

The reason why I choose Lagos for this case study is because I was living there from May 2012 - October 2012 and I think it is a good example for some problems which may occur due to tourism.

However it is not an example for the typical mass tourism associated problems, because the nature of tourism in the Algarve is water sports related and therefore reflects a different lifestyle and attitude to the local environment. Lagos is a harbor town in the Portuguese Algarve coast. The region Lagos has about 30000 constant inhabitants, but due to the fact that Tourism brings 3 million people to the Algarve every year the amount of inhabitants may be tripled at certain times of the year. Furthermore it has the highest share of residents with foreigners in the whole country.

It is probably the most popular destination in the Algarve, because it offers a great diversity of activities for the whole family but mainly the younger generation (water sports: surfing, kiting, wakeboarding, diving, kayaking, as well as a huge gastronomic repertory with countless English bars, restaurants (mainly foreign cuisine), but still kept its old flair in the carless old town due to its 2000 year old history. There are several beaches, one km long sandy beach and more small bays, which are although it is quite a big town still not the typical city beaches.

There are only separated single restaurants directly at the beaches, keeping the "original" coastline, while buildings are only few hundred meters behind. As you can see the problem is obvious as tourism caused kind of an invasion

of foreigners on Lagos. A s very tough example: I did not use the Portuguese language ones because there were more foreigners around in town than Portuguese and even them adapted the English language so well (in the most important daily functions) that it was absolutely not necessary.

This overcrowding of foreigners leads to a couple of tensions with the locals but there are some opportunities arising of tourism there as well which I am going to explain in the following study. First of all I am going to analyze all the problems occurred by tourism differentiated by their nature. First the problems occurred by the amount of foreigners (- socio cultural impacts) and then the environmental impacts and their economic consequences. Furthermore I am going to point out the opportunities which are already given but not used in this area.

These opportunities lead to the solutions I may suggest to overcome the problems and finally I am going to write about the implementation, how the solutions may be adopted.

Findings

The main problem of Lagos is that the tourism sector and therefore the main business sector is ruled by foreigners. Most hotels, surf camps and water sports providing facilities as well as bars are owned by foreign people, mostly English and Germans which is the reason why most of the tourists are English and German too.

Other than in most other vacation spots the tourism facilities are not only owned but run as well solely by foreigners. The reason for that is the new “ fashion” of employing foreign interns rather than locals for every department

in hospitality and gastronomy, because they are even more cheap (mostly board and lodging and a little pocketmoney) than locals. This phenomena is not used in lower quality accommodation but, as I experienced in former internships, in up to 5 star hotels as well.

Of course it is a profitable way for the owners, because interns are highly motivated to learn, therefore they accept every kind of work for a very low compensation. Furthermore they are usually highly educated, studied in the field of operation and speak more languages. This is why owners of in this case surf camps and hotels employ mainly interns for the seasons. Another advantage of interns is to avoid the problems of seasonality, because they can primarily work in semester breaks or after high schoolgraduationexactly in the time when the (high) season is.

However this sounds perfect for accommodation facility owners it is a huge problem for the local community. Like this the positive impact of tourism in generating jobs for the community is missing due to the fact that even the lower quality jobs are given to foreigners. As well with the low wages for interns it is impossible to actually live a normal life in the area. My experience was that ONLY if it was really necessary (end of the season when everybody has gone home) owners are willing to employ locals for a couple of weeks as well on a higher wage (almost double), but solely if there is no other choice.

Another problem arising of this is that most of these interns are not registered or on a no-payment base for what the owners do not have to pay taxes. This induces a lack of income for the community as well. In higher quality hotels it also creates an image of not trained staff (“intern flair”)

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which degrades the quality of services. But not only the accommodation facilities are run and owned by foreigners, almost every single bar in town as well. Also because of the majority of outgoers are foreigners the barmen and waiters are 90% foreigners, youngsters working the seasons, who only need money for their next trip.

My observation was that only some restaurants but rather bistros and breakfast cafes are owned and run by Portuguese. The lack of jobs (unemployment rate in the Algarve is the highest in the whole country: 20%) leads to crime generation of the locals, who as kind of a revenge rob and break into foreign-owned houses. Other socio-cultural problems arising from the impacts of tourism are due to the above mentioned: the standardization and commercialization of the Portuguese culture. A very common phenomena is the building of outlets or well known chains in gastronomy or commerce sector (e. . McDonalds, Pizza Hut, Aldi, Lidl). The gastronomy of Lagos is ruled by all imaginable foreign The Green Room (Mexican Restaurant) in the old town of Lagos countries cuisines (Italian, Japan, Thai, English, Turkish, Romanian, Mexican...) but a very small part of real Portuguese food. An economic disadvantage is furthermore that there are loads of foreign supermarkets as well like Aldi and Lidl, which are cheaper and more familiar to tourists and the great number of English residents in this area.

This means that the positive impact of the multiplier effect of tourism is missing, because foreigners do not go grocery shopping in local shops. As already mentioned the Portuguese language is starting to get lost due to the number of foreigners not willing to learn and not forced to learn it because everybody speaks at least the necessary communicative English needed to

manage everyday life. This adoption of tourist demands leads to a slow but very significant decrease in Portuguese culture. Environmental Impacts

The problem of pollution is steady everywhere where people are and of course more people create more pollution and waste, this makes it to a fundamental problem of tourism. Water consumption in watering gardens of hotels, camps as well as pools and golf courses is an essential problem in the rainless months of the summer. Moreover is there no regulation for recycling in Portugal. Waste is collected in one huge ton for every street. There is no refuse collection for every house, however there are quite a lot recycling stations but this is only volunteer.

Seasonality as in almost every tourism destination is an issue in Lagos as well. Low season starts in May + June, July + August are high season and September + October are low season again. From November - End of April most of the hotels, camps are closed or operate only partly. This provokes an even higher unemployment rate and of course lack of income.

Discussion

The main problem of the foreigners "stealing" the jobs of the Portuguese is a very serious issue and can not be solved without the interaction of the local government.

In my opinion there should be a regulation, setting a specific percentage of employees, who must be local. There are several examples where this governmental interaction lead to advantageous outcomes (GCC member states). In the Oman for example, the government set a guaranteed employment quote of locals, called Omanization, aiming the reduction of the

portion of foreign employees. This way the unemployment rate would be decreased and therefore the tensions between locals and foreign business owners would be reduced as well.

Difficulties may arise with the European Union, whose four main aims (free movement of people, capital, goods and services - jobs) are in contradiction with not allowing foreigners to work in a country different to their home country. But realizing the bad financial situation of Portugal and the statistical data has a lot to commend it. Also is employing locals a very important cultural aspect in the guests satisfaction, who lacked the involvement of Portuguese culture during their stay. As well do people living their whole life on the spot of course have a better knowledge about natural conditions, which are very important for water sports.

Furthermore there should be a tax reduction for employers hiring locals, to make the employment of them attractive and economically advantageous. Due to this business owners are hopefully keen to officially reinvolve locals rather than foreign interns and therefore pay taxes on them. As well education in Lagos must be enhanced. There is only one University in the Algarve (in Faro) with an extension to the nearby Portimao which is public, all other higher education institutes are private.

Furthermore most of the international schools are private as well and there are barely high quality state-run secondary schools. This means that mostly only the children of foreigners are getting a good education in this area, locals mainly have to go further away (Lisbon) and when they are already gone, they most of the times are not coming back, being aware of the bad employment situation in the Algarve. So even if the youth has the <https://assignbuster.com/case-study-sustainable-tourism-in-lagos-portugal/>

opportunity to be educated quite far away, they afterwards go abroad (a phenomena we can observe in Hungary as well).

My suggestion would be to make the access to higher and good quality education available for everybody (mainly with European Union tenders) and put an effort in the education of occupations needed in this area: Tourism and water sports. Economically surf camps can help as well in producing income for the local community, for example in sending their guests to nearby cafes to have breakfast there. These breakfast possibilities are around almost every corner and owned by locals, because locals love to eat breakfast outside and combine it with a casual chat with friends.

Thus guests have the opportunity in learning about the culture and habits as well as add to the local economy. Economically this won't affect the camps, because breakfast is absolutely not the main income source and rather eases up the work in camps and helps to concentrate on the major activities. Discounted firm prices may be negotiated, sometimes even with a commission for the camps. Problems would occur for camps outside the city center, there are a few camps (Algarve Watersports, The Surf Experience) which are located far away from the old town and therefore do not have the opportunity to send guests away for breakfast.

The standardization problem of the local restaurants, who barely serve typical Portuguese food occurred due to the fear of local business owners. There are a few Portuguese restaurants (e. g. Casinha do Petisco) with great Portuguese cuisine, enormous portions and good prices. Every single night this restaurant is full of people and there is barely never a less waiting time than 45 minutes to get a table. Although it looks quite unimposing it is the <https://assignbuster.com/case-study-sustainable-tourism-in-lagos-portugal/>

best going restaurant in town (even in the off season) full of a mixture of locals and tourists as well.

This means that the demand for Portuguese cuisine is present and a great opportunity, which only has to be captured. Here the camps might help again, due to the fact that they normally do not serve dinner. Making agreements with local business owners serving Portuguese food, will probably emphasize others to at least serve Portuguese food as well, because many guests complained about "not being in Portugal" regarding the food supply. The environmental threats may be solved due to small interactions of the government again. For example the recycling of waste should be obligatory.

As it is seen in several European countries since decades (Germany, England), those guests and foreign residents even do it voluntarily in Lagos. We made it obligatory in our surf camp, but every time I brought the separated waste to the recycling stations, I only saw Recycling station in Lagos foreigners, who did the same. This is a good opportunity of tourism to promote recycling. It may be made obligatory intern by single camps, but there is a need of governmental intervention to make locals recycle as well.

Due to the fact that there is no regular garbage collection for every house making it very difficult to control who is throwing his waste how away. Therefore it should be (e. g. as in Germany), that there should be a garbage collection for every house and every household gets different recycling tons on a yearly payment. Thus if people do not recycle his waste won't be taken away. As a matter of course this is combined with enormous costs, but may

be covered by e. g. higher annual payment of foreigners and European Union contributions.

It would furthermore create jobs, because the garbage collection of every household requires more people. The pollution due to water sports activities is in proportion very low, because the main activity of surfing comes with an environmental friendly lifestyle. This green close to nature way of life is promoted and educated in the surf camps in encouraging their guests to be very careful with the environment, recycling, low water consumption etc. and advertise to respect the locals (with t-shirts for example).

In a surfing society these things are so evident, that people react very upset on people ignoring these unwritten laws. ("Leave nothing but footprints and take nothing but memories") Surf camps and locals know that the beaches Beach of Zavial are their main income source, this is why they are absolutely protected, no waste is left there and they are almost totally untouched, mainly only one restaurant. Even the beachboys and lifeguards use surfboards and not motorized lifeboats in cases of emergencies.

This statement is as well proved by the fact that even robberies hardly ever occur on the beaches, it is possible to stay hours in the water while nobody looks after one's belongings and nothing happens, but if one once do not lock the windows in his apartment, it is 99% sure that he won't find his apartment as it was left. The only thing which could be reduced are the daily long drives to the west coast. Every surf school in the Algarve has only one or two licenses (only The Surf Experience (first surf school in the Algarve) has the right to go to almost every beach) to teach surfing at a beach.

This is actually a very good thing, so the carrying capacity of the beaches is balanced and there are never too many schools, people at the beaches. But many schools have licenses for far away beaches (e. g. Algarve Watersport in Lagos has a license for the beach in Monte Clerigo - 40 km away) they have to drive there every day. Surely the possibility of surfing must be secured, but there are geographically closer beaches for the differently located camps as well. Also the public transport opportunities should be enhanced. Currently there are barely busses to the beaches, only to the major cities.

As well the accessibility of Lagos from the airport after 20. 00 is poor, only with private shuttle busses. Due to the extension of the public transportation air pollution may be reduced. The problem of seasonality, in Lagos due to the climatic variations of a continental area, are that serious that most of the tourism related businesses have to close down the operation for the winter months, to avoid financial loss. Resulting in Lagos becoming a " ghost town". An opportunity to avoid closing down the whole operation may be to offer discounted packages for this time, because actually the natural conditions for surfing are the best from November until March and the air temperature is still mild and springlike. But it is always hard to measure if it is worth to even run the operations on a very low level, because the " real surfer" for whom these conditions are advantageous won't come to a surf school or camp. This is why I would suggest a steady operation especially for apartment rentals, rental car providers, surf shops and restaurants. It is as well important to consider that people working during a season do not have the chance to rest or even think about holidays.

Off season is the only time these workers can think about themselves, go on holiday, visit their families or even make doctors appointments. So people are actually looking forward to the end of the season (if they have an alternative job or earned enough to bridge the income less winter months). In addition may these time be used for maintenance works in the accommodation facilities. On these grounds I think that seasonality in this area has indeed a very powerful impact, but not in an absolutely negative way.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As already mentioned is governmental intervention essential to solve the problems of the Lago's community. To avoid the negative economical impacts occurred by tourism and to achieve more positive impacts of it some regulations must be appointed: The introduction of an obligatory guaranteed employment rate of locals in every tourism related business and a tax reduction for businesses employing more locals than required, so the unemployment rate can be controlled and the thereby emerging socio-cultural conflicts may be reduced.

In addition should recycling be made obligatory and the public transfer to the beaches should be enhanced. Also should the state-owned educational system be improved and specialized on available occupations, so that locals are able to stay in their home towns or areas and still receive effective education and have a belief in a future there. All in all are surf camps ecologically sensitive accommodations that work to preserve the local environment, culture and surf. Those camps help ensure that tourism is sustainable and that the spot will be around for years to come.

This great opportunity given by tourism must be captured. Surf camps can contribute economically and environmentally to make tourism in Lagos more sustainable. Economically and socio-culturally by encouraging their guests to go to local restaurants and put their breakfast into local cafes and environmentally while staying educative and teach the environmental friendly surfer's lifestyle to their guests.

Implementation

The implementation of these solutions must be "SMART": Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely. To specify the goals I have to answer the following questions: What: To make Lagos more sustainable, while balancing the amount of local and foreign workers, therefore encouraging business owners to employ more locals, ease up occurred tensions between locals and foreigners and promote the "green" surfer lifestyle. Who: With the regulative and financial help of the government and the educative support of local surf camps When: Regulations should be set for the next season already, education during the season Where: Lagos and its affected beaches, Portugal

Why: Lagos is one of the most visited cities in the Algarve, not capturing the potential of being more sustainable would occur in an absolute invasion of foreigners, the loss of Portuguese culture and the excess of Lagos' carrying capacity. Measuring: How much? How will I know when it is accomplished: The unemployment rate should be reduced down to max 5-10 %. Local tourism related businesses should have a percentage of min 30% of locals working for them.

All the surf camps in town should if possible transfer their breakfast to local cafes. Attainable: How can the goal be accomplished: The goals may be accomplished with the interaction of the government, the surf camps and the locals as well. Relevant: Does this seem worthwhile: Implementing these solutions will make Lagos more sustainable and keep it as an attractive destination in the future as well. Is this the right time: It is definitely the right time, because the problems will get worse and worse if nothing is to be done.

Does this match other needs: It perfectly matches the most important need of reducing the negative and increasing the positive impacts of tourism. Time-bound: When: ASAP What can be done today: Inform and encourage to do something: governments, authorities, camps and locals.

References

1. Personal experiences while working at Algarve Watersports http://www.carvoeiro.net/news-reader/items/2011-01-01_arbeitslosigkeit_an_der_algarve.html <http://topachievement.com/smart.html>