

Good example of essay on ecotourism, the savior of our environment: steps towards...

[Sport & Tourism](#), [Ecotourism](#)



Introduction

Tourism, like any other human activity, has its fair share of positive and negative impacts. Hall & Lew (p. 192) provide a myriad of effects of tourism. Among the positive effects are those of cross-cultural interaction, self-fulfillment and monetary gain by the visited place/country. For the negative impacts, these range from pollution of the environment and culture, change in local economies such as market values of housing and rise in vices such as sex tourism. The environmental effects of tourism are more severe as they threaten the very existence of man as a species. Issues such as climate change, pollution, loss of agricultural land for development and loss of biodiversity among others deal a huge blow (Hall & Lew, 192). This essay looks at the environmental effects of tourism and assesses how the concept of ecotourism can help to mitigate these effects.

Effects of Tourism on the Environment

The environment consists of two major aspects, one physical and the other is social. Our physical environment consists of the atmosphere, the earth's land mass, and the natural nonliving resources, and naturally occurring life-forms. The social environment, on the other hand, consists of the environment created by a specific society. This includes infrastructure and systems put in place where people live.

Hall & Lew (2009) define tourism as a form of human movement that is voluntary and not work-related, and that the person visiting a given site or attraction moves from their home environment but is always bound to return. (p. 5). Ecotourism is a form of tourism that encompasses the

appreciation of the natural environment while causing the least impact (tourism that is friendly to the environment).

Eco-tourism calls for responsibility from both the tourist and managers/ local community of the destination in question. Most of the attractions considered in ecotourism are endangered flora, fauna and the cultural heritages of small communities. Among its foremost agendas, apart from conservation of the natural environment, is a push to embrace recycling and use of efficient energy sources.

Hall & Lew (2009) postulate that “ physical and social processes” makeup the environment and both impact change simultaneously. This thus makes it harder to isolate the environment (p. 188). Our immediate environments are influenced by our culture, the climatic conditions we live in and the nature of natural resources that lie within our boundaries. Thus, while one country or region might have a dependent on climate, natural resources, and activities, etc. coasts and deserts.

Loss of biodiversity is also common in most toured destinations. This loss is a result of factors such as genetic modification done by alien species (Hill & Lew, 202). Flora, fauna, and disease species are subject to changes in biodiversity. “ Tourists often unknowingly - can bring in new species of insects, plants and diseases that are not native to the local environment” (p. 194). This can affect inter-species interaction, although after long periods of time. These changes have resulted in many other occurrences such as one, reduced production of agricultural produce and other raw materials e. g. wood; two, disruption of ecological balance and three, reduced productivity of ecosystems.

Biotic exchange and species' loss. Threats from alien invasive species of plant and animal invasions lead to loss in agricultural yields and forest coverage. Some pests and diseases have also been observed to form mutations that have caused them to be drug resistant. The inclusion of biosecurity strategies in most points of entry to specific countries such as in airports, helps, to a great extent in countering these effects. Screening at points of entry, limits mobility (Hill & Lew, 202.)

“ Ecologically fragile areas such as alpine regions, rain forests, wetlands, mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass beds” face grave impacts as they are among the most sought after destination. This impact is not only posed by tourists alone, but also key stakeholders such as managers of tourist-related establishments. (Hill & Lew, 218).

The issue of climate change has received extensive coverage in most environmental conferences world over. The ever increasing depletion of fossil fuel reserves, notwithstanding, has seen governments and the UN put more pressure on limiting greenhouse emissions. Greenhouse gasses bring about the greenhouse effect-trapping of the earth's temperatures due to depletion of the ozone layer.

Among the chief gasses responsible for the greenhouse effect is carbon dioxide (CO₂). CO₂ is emitted after combustion of most fuels. With the transportation industry being credited for about 30 % of the total fuel usage and air travel leading the way in this sector. Tourism thus directly contributes to this menace. It (tourism) accounts for about 70% of air traffic and contributes about 3% of the production of CO₂ (Hill & Lew, 194).

Climate change, though a slow process, has dire consequences. Variations in

the global climatic condition is due to increased temperatures in the earth's atmosphere. Changes in precipitation and sunshine hour have adversely led to a shift in leisure activities. Indoor activities in controlled environments are becoming popular with each passing day. Establishment such as indoor ice rinks and pools (Hill & Lew, 216). Dire consequences can also be noticed through increased heavy rains and storms, floods and drought.

With increasing levels of tourism in most economies, land resources are continually under pressure. Among the most visited destinations around the world are those close to the coasts. This has increased pressure on aquatic ecosystems in these areas (Hill & Lew, 198). Agricultural land use has also decreased due to change of focus to tourism related ventures. Thus "habitat loss and change" is common. More and more land is being devoted to the construction of infrastructure (such as roads, airports, and hotels) and "leisure-influenced attractions" such as golf courses and resorts.

Urbanization has also been boosted by tourism. More people keep moving to areas having high tourist influxes. The lure of interacting with other cultures and experiencing life "in the fast lane" motivates people to migrate to these areas. Cities like Las Vegas are known worldwide for their nightlife. In Europe about a third of the population live less than 30 miles from the coastline. This leisure-oriented migration, and demand second-hand homes by retirees and tourist puts more stress on the limited land and the aquatic ecosystems (Hill & Lew, 218).

Being among the most consumed natural resources, water is synonymous to tourism. From beaches and swimming pools to bottled water and watering of golf courses, tourists seem not to get enough of it. This increased demand

leads to shortages and may sometimes be wasted. Oceans, lakes and rivers that receive a great number of tourists are also prone to pollution. Countries in the Mediterranean are in constant need of freshwater (Hill & Lew, 201).

This demand for water for general consumption laundry and recreation puts stress on treatment plants. Factors such as siting of hotels, residential and recreational facilities along and above wetlands (though attractive) does not auger well with maintaining these ecosystems.

Other resources like energy (fuel and electricity), food, and other raw materials that may already be in short supply are not left out either.

Seasonal commodities such as fruits and vegetables are sometimes subject to high inflation during times of peak tourism. Overharvesting of natural resources such as timber to construct cabins puts excessive pressure on land too.

Remedies of Environmental Change

Among the measures that institutions and governments have put in place to manage the environmental effects of tourism include: creation of protected habitats, minimizing human pressure on land, curtail the encroachment of invasive species and rehabilitation of endangered species. These strategies can be done both in-situ and off-situ. (Hill & Lew, p. 210). By creation of animal sanctuaries, establishment of botanical gardens and reducing anthropogenic effects, a cleaner and safer environment is created.

Reduced anthropological pressure in and out of the premises is vital. New Zealand and South Africa among other nations are at the forefront in fight against environmental pollution. Both New Zealand and South Africa have

22% and 11% of their respective land use put aside for conservation purposes (Hill & Lew, 201). Rehabilitation of endangered species will also bring about restoration of biodiversity.

Ecotourism and the Environment

Ecotourism constitutes visit to attraction sites that are aimed at not only, limiting possible damage to the natural and physical environment, but also improves the well-being of people in these settings (Ezebilo, 10). The choice of an eco-tourism destination, like any tourist visit, is mostly a personal choice. Although this choice can be determined by outside influence. Factors such as family, friends and the availability of information on eco-tourism is bound to ease this process. Thus is respective tourist agencies and responsible governments and groups avail this information to the general public, the choice of suitable destinations can be induced.

Some of the factors that attract and influence the choice of eco-tourists to choose a given destination include: “ family, friends, societal values, preferences, safety and promotions related to the destination” (Ezebilo, 12). These choices are mostly influenced by personal preferences. Promotions and/or advertisements, and putting in the place infrastructure and ensuring the security are bound to attract eco-tourists. The inclusion of a theme such as promoting education or conservation of the environment or cultural values is bound to attract eco-tourists.

Cultural values, environmental attitudes, and benefits segmentation tend to score high as among the influencers of choice of eco-tourism destinations. Strategic advertising that targets a specific group is also bound to bear fruit.

This should go in line with a “ careful crafting of the advertising message” (Ezebilo, 10). Limited resources necessitate for this discriminative approach. Taking note of tourism trends, such as summer vacations and providing alternative forms of attraction can also lure more eco-tourists. These alternatives should not only affordable but also offer the best service. Being a small subsector of the tourism industry, eco-tourism requires constant and stimulating information to attract tourists. By embracing information communication technologies such as the Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP), websites, blogs and social media to ensure the information reaches the consumers (eco-tourists). The carrying out of advertisements in the tourist’s country of origin is also encouraged.

Customer satisfaction

As in any business venture, a satisfied customer has trust in the firm and is bound to come back. And for some of the decisions to travel to eco-friendly sites is initiated by family and friends, they ought to provide family-friendly packages to encourage widespread acceptance. A clear evaluation should be done to determine measures they have put in place so as to improve the customer experience, and its consequent effect on the environment (Ezebilo, 12).

Conclusion

Hall & Lew (2009) identify that there exists a multifaceted correlation between the environment and tourism. There is an effect portion where tourism adversely affects the environment; second, coexistence of the two where measures are put in place to remedy the impacts of tourism and

environmental effects individually without influencing each other. Lastly, is a symbiotic relationship. This is brought about by coordinated conservation where measures put to counter the effects of one aspect trickle down to the other. These symbiotic approaches include the establishment of conservation areas and alternative methods of land use and care. The rehabilitation of endangered species and their reintroduction into their natural environment are also practiced. Thus by embracing the ecotourism, both the physical aspect of our natural environment and the social context of human existence are taken care of and bring prosperity to Mother Nature.

Works Cited

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