

The fragility of tourism



Tourism is fragile, the 7/11 tragedy had a very severe, almost devastating effect on the industry. Climate conditions are able to influence visitor arrivals for the Mediterranean beaches. Sometimes it is political and economic instability that is the determining factor (e. g. Argentina) almost ruining a traditional and established industry. Tourism can have both positive and negative effects. Positively it creates employment and economically enables the conservation of valuable space; restrains a migratory tendency within the home population improving their socio-cultural education. It encourages support of local commercialisation resulting in the free interchange of ideas, customs and sensitization of issues concerning the eco-environment. The reduction of working hours, the ever present threat of unemployment because of technological advancement and the globalisation process enables the tourism industry to provide an interesting and stimulating intensive alternative. Just as significant as the positive effects is the rising cost of natural resources, water, energy. The spoiling of landscapes with land reclamation; rising levels of waste disposal; alterations to ecosystems; the extinction of rare species of animals and plants; the loss of traditional values and rising levels of prostitution, that is sex tourism. There is the narcotics trade, forest fires, together with the rising cost of housing.

Rising levels of carbon dioxide and other contaminating gases from increasing frequencies of airflights with ozone erosion and acid rain. All kinds of ecosystems are becoming affected. Thailand is littered with golf courses that consume large amounts of pesticides and water. There is hardly anywhere in the world not affected by tourism impact. From the Antarctic to Mount Everest visited with huge amounts of garbage the reminder of

previous expeditions. Tourism is an aspect of globalisation most sensitive to any repercussion. In the eastern region of Spain, Benidorm has a great concentration of hotels, accommodating nearly half a million tourists in August within an area of little more than 12 kilometres. There is a large proportion of the population of many countries who do not participate in tourist flows but who nevertheless will become part of such flows with the emergence of new markets in Latin-America and Asia.

The level of impact relates to the class of tourism. A family hiking trip in the Alps cannot make the same impact as a collection of caravan vehicles situated in the same area, or a vast Mediterranean hotel complex. It is therefore prudent to analyse the main categories of tourism and their effects the solutions to such problems. Business tourism has little impact except for the consumption of aircraft fuel. Beach tourism, very popular but quite dangerous for the environment as there is a large congregation of people within a relatively small zone. There is a high turn-over of resources, increased waste, escalating house prices as impact factors. Adventure tourism is the most harmful; usually visiting virgin zones with a rapid degradation because of high consumption of resources. Matters escalate with the waywardness of track vehicles who go off the beaten track. Rural tourism or mountain tourism consists of small hotels serving a small percentage of tourists. Reorganisation of these areas is gaining momentum with a redirection of flow from the cities to such zones. Eco-tourism contributes in the effort of sustainable tourism possessing an awareness for nature and attempts to reduce any impact. Agricultural tourism is concerned with sustainable tourism. The tourist takes part in activities on the farm and

like places. Tourists are introduced to aspects of the life and empathy with the animals and plants. This injects a life into such environments and agrees with the immediate habitat. The other varieties of tourism are minority, seasonal and impacts are therefore diverse, dependent upon type. In this category there is that of the religious, gastronomy, events, cultural etc.

All the above have common factorial problems. Ever increasing usage of natural resources, generally unrecyclable. Raw materials and combustibles originating from elsewhere, that is non local. The problem of water, energy. Consuming of territory from agriculture to infrastructure. The generating of contamination. Residual wastes. The factor of residual waters and the pollution of subterranean reserves. Atmospheric pollution. Noise contamination and the loss of biodiversity.

Future development must become sustainable in the long term and economically viable. Efforts should be made to channel such mass flows to reduce transport emissions that develop into global repercussions with local cooperation to support sustainability against loss of biodiversity and depletion of natural resources. But the word sustainable has many definitions when applied to tourism.

Although respect of the environment is meant there are some principles involved. There would be three aspects. Ecological, Social and cultural and economic sustainability. Ecological sustainability means the tourism must respect maintenance of the essential biological process, of biodiversity and of biological resources. Social and cultural sustainability entails respect of local culture with the local population's values and the retention of the

community's identity. Economic sustainability means that there must be economic efficiency present.

There is no one clearly acknowledged method of analysing the impacts of tourism and there are a number of different criteria for its measurement. The factor of economic costs based on indicators lends itself to compactness needing no previous knowledge of ecology or sociology. Most studies are able to display the benefits generated and contributive to the balance of payments to income contributed by the government and its deployment. Yet few have included the analysis of negative effects. Negative economic impact has an effect on the local scale. Destinations that suffer economically when dependent on tourism. Diversification if applied to the local economy is able to positively revert such consequences with the development of tourist goods and services replacing the previous gains of traditional activities. The way is open to instability due to alteration of tourist routes, ineffective publicity, the influence of ever changing tourist fashions in response to seasonal variation of production. Before such situations develop the small economies decide whether to resort to dependency within the sector or proceed with a duality strategy. Here they will try to balance two sources of income, the traditional with economic activities. This involves a more rational choice of possibilities. If there is no duality then it frequently becomes an inflationary situation. This inflationary aspect is sublimative with prices and taxes affecting the local population. It has no regard for anything existant before and it becomes patently obvious in the escalation of food prices and that of goods etc. Those who are directly involved in the industry experience improved benefit but not the local population. In the areas of tourist

development, capital destinations there is disruption of traditional production sectors. Foreign capital is not limited to a local effect as it leaves the receiving country contributing to a loss of currency. Some authors assert that for the long term, low potential productivity from a tourist company has a depressive effect on local economic growth. Clarifying we have possible inflation from such tourist activity, purchasing potential being greater than that of the resident population leading to escalating prices for food and services. The loss of potential economic benefits with a high dependency on foreign capital. Distortions of local economy. Concentration of economic activity into one type of activity. Impact on employment produces fluctuating levels.

Social impacts again consist of both positive and negative effects. Positively there is the recovery and conservation of cultural values that but for the visiting tourists would have disappeared. Funds as a result are made available for preservation of artefacts and restoration of forgotten historical monuments. Local communities would be unable to provide such resources. Yet various tactics are applied in such privileged places of tourist interest. Many local customs have been revitalized and tourist resources are being made available for the reappearance of folklore, festivals, craft pursuits and gastronomy. There has occurred marked improvement in facilities and services such as sanitary, modes of transport, parks etc.

Nevertheless again negative impacts exist. The immediate negative factor is that of the social disparities between the indigenous population and that of the visitors. For some destinations essentially those to be found in the underprivileged countries there is a kind of imperialistic relationship with the <https://assignbuster.com/the-fragility-of-tourism/>

inhabitants becoming servants of the tourists. Inevitably there arises social tension and resentment. A new kind of colonialism appears with dependency upon the foreign currency. Outside workers obtain contracts possessing better qualifications. With such clear indications of the socio-economic differences the negative impact takes effect. Gaming, increasing prostitution, drugs appear previously non-existent and all related to the arrival of tourists. Such negative impacts lead to loss of culturization. The local population observes the tourists and then seeks to adapt to their customs paving the way for the destruction and disappearance of the very thing that the tourists originally arrived for.

The tourism impact to the environment is the most negative aspect.

Wholesale damage has been caused to large areas that will be very difficult indeed to reclaim. Tourism, tourist activity as a phenomenon of mass flows requires substantial infrastructure supported by intricate service networks. Careful planning has not always been applied with a resulting deterioration of the natural and social environments. There has been a transformation of infected zones with the destruction of ecosystems; diminution in the quality and quantity of water; soil contamination; the extinction of many species of fauna; severe infection of flora, fishing depletion and the contamination of the sea.

Destruction of ecosystems arises with a massive presence of visitors.

Originally the mass influx promised a get-rich-quick attitude. Nature was defenceless. Those destinations with an image of a tourist paradise have become victims to ecosystem destruction. Natural clean water has been severely affected and reduced with tourist arrivals. In many instances the

amount of tourists arriving has been unsustainable to local resources. The many many golf courses and residential swimming pools all affect agricultural development and the zonal ecological balance.

Soil contamination arises in many instances with substances derived from human activity that alter the chemical environment and reduces crop yield.

Many species of fauna are becoming extinct. The effect upon tree populations, unregulated city-planning, hunting present ever present and overwhelming danger to endangered species. The mighty ocean's yield of fish is becoming seriously affected. Population along the coasts has mushroomed together with second residences. To prevent an ecological disaster careful and superior planning is necessary; beyond local expertise. An overwhelming presence in the natural zones is affecting/impacting the flora in the same way. The presence of tourists in natural zones with a deluge of sporting activity such as motorbikes, mountain bikes, all land vehicles causes severe erosion of surface land inevitably affecting the flora.

Are there solutions to such problems and is sustainable tourism attainable? Or is tourism an impact generator advancing to disaster.

A global entity that is attaching attention to such a problem and attempting to fulfil objectives for a sustainable tourism is the European Union. The rest of the world has economic problems of its own as in Africa. The EU with its agenda 21 has invited the local administrations to act. It recommends the following: Promotion of local production, offering ecological foods of the region containing no additives. Reduction of waste garbage and separation of the various categories for possible recycling. Usage of various

technologies to save water. Purification of residual waters for irrigation and agriculture. The saving of energy with efficient washing machines, heat insulation. Respecting the environment and landscape. Promotion of public transport and bicycling. To establish pedestrian zones in areas of historic value. The promotion of local tourism and to reduce air schedules of the flight industry thereby reducing carbon emissions. Planning to facilitate contact between the visiting tourists and the local inhabitants but to deter the formation of any tourism ghettos. Planning to benefit all the local population.

It therefore appears from the previous account that the main aims concerning tourism management are to maximise economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits of tourism but to minimise costs associated with such a strategy. The contemporary theme that has been introduced above is sustainable tourism. According to the Brundtland Commission(1987) development is sustainable when “ it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Another definition was offered in Vancouver at the Globe Conference. “ Sustainable tourism development is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that we can fulfil economic, social and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and the support systems”.

Three objectives should be achieved concerning tourism development. To increase the economic value of tourism. Improving the quality of life for the people and the protection and responsible usage of natural resources.

It appears that tourism development within a country relates to an assumption of economic gain. Only tourism management with its application of various methods and principals can determine whether any economical gain will outweigh the cost factor. There are staffing costs, overheads and utilities to take into account. To reduce costs to a minimum might involve improved staffing rotas, energy saving.

There can be a number of positive impacts of tourism such as an improvement in the balance of payments, easier access to foreign exchange, the contribution to GNP and the multiplier effect. Also job creation and increased revenues for the government. Direct taxation with revenues. There are negative impacts including costs for infrastructure development; an over-dependence of the destination on tourists. The aspect of low skilled work. Again repeating here that it seems clear there is a simple principle involved. Namely that of minimising costs and maximising profits. High leakage is most likely to occur with NMEs(multi national enterprises)where there is the need to promote tourism but in order to do so there is import of food and beverages, capital technology, repatriation of staff and therefore a capital outflow, investment of capital infrastructure by the host government. It may be argued that with restriction/control of such NMEs there will be reduced capital outflow, reduced repatriation, together with switching on of a multiplier effect stimulating more spending by the tourists in the local economy. Again debatable, there is the hiring of as many local residents as staff, ensuring proper salary levels with provision of training to support promotion opportunities. With the resulting reduction of staff repatriation there will occur an increase in the levels of local staff remuneration and so

immediately contributing to a multiplier effect with the possibility of enhancing the destination socio-cultural aspect. Economics entails making and providing for the making of choices with influence and guidance being preferably applied. There is a need for professional marketing expertise at destinations to increase the average length of stay, the daily expenditure per head, with the diminishment of seasonality. Yet very searching evaluation is required here for these actions while producing economic benefits may in fact harm the environmental, socio-cultural aspects of the destination causing indirect costs.

It is claimed by some sources that tourism development can be identified as the cause of environmental degradation in every case where there is tourism present. Such damage consists of air and water pollution, the accumulation of garbage on the streets and beaches; biodiversity damage, congestion of traffic, decline of wildlife. A number of these effects are irreversible harming not only the tourist destination industry but contributing to the cumulative effect of global pollution itself.

The physical and cultural environments comprise the essential attractions for the visiting tourist to the destination. It is the responsibility of tourism management to minimize environmental damage and so ensuring future business. There are a number of methods that may be applied to diminish environmental impacts. Energy saving measures eg light bulbs, toilet flushes, cleaning detergents that are environmentally friendly. The limiting of visas thereby reducing immediately the number of visitors. Educational programmes of awareness both for the visiting tourists and the locals. An increase in profit may result with the reduction of costs, applied to utilities.

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Yet even if the limitation of visas does significantly affect profit it may be considered a better option so that there is still existant the possibility of future gains with the preservation of the destination's natural resources that are there to attract the tourists in the first place.

To conclude one of the main ingredients for success of environmental policies is government involvement itself. Again it may be arguable there should be laws on land usage and the extent of building construction for the destination. The necessary infrastructure should be installed to meet anticipated volume of tourist flow with protection of natural heritages.

The socio-cultural impacts can be measured with resort to crime rate statistics, the ratio of tourist to locals etc. A management method used to measure the level of socio-cultural impact is Doxey' Irridex Model. The model has a four stage process wherein there are diminishing returns in the local inhabitants attitude towards the visitors. Firstly there is the exploration stage where contact between both parties is of frequent occurrence and here the attitude is referred to as euphoria. There is a welcoming of contact with the outside world and there is the possibility of supplementing the household income as a result of such inflow. With increasing flow there occurs diminishing contact with the early arrivals. The tourists become part of everyday business concerns that transforms the initial attitude into one that seeks contact and liaison for personal gain. Those residents of such a destination develop an apathetic attitude to such matters.

A further development of the model presents annoyance. The significant inflow of tourism disrupts everyday life with developing queues experienced

in the local shops, traffic jams. Local business accommodates to souvenir promotion emanating a sense of alienation to the local population. A subtle imbalance is occurring subconsciously activating antagonism towards the tourists. There is a loss of control within the community because they have now become dependent upon such tourist inflows. Destination facilities as a result of increasing volume deteriorate and contribute to the attraction of a down-market visitor. The tourists now become the focus of blame for such developments. The increasing deterioration in attitude becomes a mirror of reflection and comparison of the effect of such tourism influx.

Tourism management methods applied to assist in maximizing positives and minimising negatives of impact for the socio-culture consist of educating about tourism; promotion of cross-cultural exchange; imposition of visitor codes; ensuring that locals have access to cultural facilities; preservation of local architecture; maintenance of authenticity; providing for the more sensitive cultural tourist with appropriate marketing; limitation of tourist numbers.

One principal that has gained attention is the carrying capacity assessment. It may be used to control and implement frontline sustainable tourism. There is a variety of applications such as the determination of a tourism development limit for a particular place and the limitation of actual visitor numbers. It attempts to balance economic goals for physical and facility capacity of the destination. The social goal for social carrying capacity of the destination, and environmental goals with the ecological carrying capacity of the destination. Hopefully to achieve sustainable tourism development as a working reality. It has not met with the anticipated success because of

unrealistic expectations, faulty assumptions and misplaced value judgment with an inadequate legal support system.

Efforts of management to achieve a sustainable tourism system consist of a number of principles consisting of environmental impact assessment, limits for acceptable change, visitor impact management, visitor experience and resource management.

It perhaps has become clear to the reader that tourism management should not function alone in these matters, but work together with local government and public bodies. Legal implementation is a central issue because if there is to be a restriction of visas for example there has to be assistance from such a quarter. Success breeds success and so tourism management and government will hum the same tune.

The methods referred to above all have the same principal; that of protection for the host destination rather than a focus upon tourism demand. Obviously the demand has to be considered but it is the design of the tourist product that should be the main focus. Application of such principals referred to in the foregoing discussion will hopefully result in sustainable tourism for the future.