

Tourism in ledc`s

Sport & Tourism



Tourism is now the world's biggest industry. It may be defined as the temporary visit of people to a region in which they do not live, for a period of more than 24 hours. Tourism has been promoted by the wealth of the developed countries, aided by the cheap flights offered by low cost airlines, and peoples increased leisure time and their desire to visit more exotic locations. The very nature of tourism brings large numbers of people to an area about which they may know very little. Many regions suffer environmental and social problems and this can be exacerbated by tourism.

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Tourism to Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDC's) is generally by wealthier people from More Economically Developed Countries (MEDC's). There is often a vast disparity between the relative poverty of local people in LEDC's and the wealth of visitors from MEDC's. The vast gap in wealth and a lack of respect for the natives by the tourists can cause resentment, but the LEDC's depend upon the income, which the foreigners bring to the areas they visit. LEDC's as the term implies, suffer from weak economies.

Tourism is therefore particularly valuable since it is an export earner, bringing new money from foreign countries. Many LEDC's are now dependent on tourism as a source of revenue. However the flow of visitors can cause considerable problems for popular destinations. Social problems frequently arise from a clash of cultures between the tourists and the indigenous population. Tourists arrive at their destination and expect western food, standards and accommodation. This demand for a home environment brings about the gradual westernisation of shops and services.

Local shops and family owned businesses soon find themselves unable to compete with the global dominance of large western firms including fast food chains such as McDonalds. The invasion of tourists particularly in smaller locations undermines the local way of life, resulting in the erosion of indigenous cultures. Such an influx of tourists can be degrading. In Papua New Guinea, ethical issues are raised when the poor natives are pressured into performing for tourist groups. Other islands such as Tonga and Fiji are suffering in the same way.

The undermining of culture can lead to alienation, drunkenness, burglary and violent crime among natives. Bangkok and Pattaya in Thailand have become centres of the sex industry. Young girls are taken and even sold from poor agricultural communities and forced into prostitution at a young age and even child prostitution has developed. In Pattaya the beach resort has seen uncontrolled development of hotels and this has caused pollution of the sea to a point where swimming has been unattractive.

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The vast gap in wealth between the tourists and the residents causes considerable resentment and as a result tourists are often targets for theft and crime. The behaviour of tourists can also prompt attacks at popular clubbing destinations. Tourists often become drunk and are offensive to residents, starting fights and causing damage to property, creating conflict between the locals and the foreigners. In places such as the island of Bali, which is part of the world's largest archipelago of Indonesia, the inadequate

coverage of clothing worn by tourists when they go out for the evening is insulting to the locals.

Places such as Bali often have conservative dress codes as part of their religion and the tourists make no attempt to respect the customs of the locals. Western tourists are often attacked by extremists seeking to publicly display their opposition to the western culture. The most recent example was in the Bali bombing of 2002 by Al Qaeda, who are opposed to western values and their perceived impact upon Muslim countries. The attacks often have political motives and are an attempt to put pressure on the government to implement change.

Environmental problems are also an issue for LEDC's. Airports are built, dramatically increasing the flow of tourists and often overwhelming local infrastructures. The vast numbers of visitors arriving at destinations put considerable pressure on the environment and national resources. The need to accommodate the tourists increases the demand for land. Often LEDC's do not have well developed legal and regulatory infrastructure so building regulation and planning laws are less stringent.

Western companies and even native companies will exploit the country environmentally, constructing buildings in picturesque, sensitive and vulnerable environments. For example, in the Maldives, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean, luxury hotels have been built on formerly uninhabited islands attracting divers and fishermen who are endangering vulnerable species and the coral reefs. Simply the number of people visiting an area can cause

erosion of beaches and footpaths and the damage to local habitats. Tourists often lack respect for the environments, which they visit.

Mount Everest in Nepal is a popular destination for climbers and walkers, receiving up to 100, 000 trekkers a year on popular routes. The tourists cut fuel wood, which has led to deforestation and consequent soil erosion. Also as they climb, tourists cast off items they do not wish to carry and as a result the paths towards the summit of Mount Everest has become littered with detritus and other rubbish discarded by trekkers. Popular tourist destinations suffer from a large influx of visitors causing seasonal congestion and demand for natural resources.

There is a need for land, water and energy and in LEDC's people tend to provide these resources in the cheapest way possible, regardless of the environmental damage it may cause. Golf tourism creates problems because the landscape is manicured to provide the greens and fairways while vast amounts of water are required to maintain the courses. This has aggravated the existing water shortage in Thailand. Water shortages and water quality are major problems for developing countries and tourism can exacerbate these problems.

Many countries depend upon tourism as the principal source of foreign currency. Some islands in the Caribbean such as Barbados rely on tourism but tourists come by cruise ships which can pollute the sea and beaches destroying the reefs and adversely affecting the life cycle of the flying fish which is the main fish stock of Barbados. Tourism brings vital economic benefits to LEDC's. The inflow of foreign money is valuable to the local

economy. In Egypt and Jamaica over 60% of export income is derived from tourism.

When a new demand is realised, goods and services are promoted in the area, resulting in a growth pole effect and the rapid expansion of tourism. It is beneficial because it provides income and employment for the residents. The demand for accommodation generates employment in construction and service industries. Once money is being spent in LEDC's the amount of money in the economic cycle has increased. The locals can then spend this money improving their businesses and homes. As the money continues to be spent, it will generate more demand for goods and services and thereby promoting economic growth.

This multiplier effect will eventually have an effect on the overall development of the country, enabling the government to increase its tax revenue, improve the balance of payments and aid the overall development of the country. The improvements to services and living conditions, brought about by tourism may be shared by the local population. The transport and communications infrastructure is often the first improvement to be made followed by an increase in the range and quality of facilities offered. Better food is available, water supplies are installed and basic services such as waste disposal are introduced.

All these can be enjoyed by the locals, and will increase their quality of life. If the money generated by tourism can be ploughed back into the country's own economy, then the economic benefits of tourism greatly outweigh the environmental and social problems. However this is not always the case.

Leakages occur in the economic cycle depriving the country of the revenue vital to continued development. Foreign workers will send their wages abroad and payments to foreign owners of establishments such as hotels, restaurants and nightclubs will contribute to the Gross National Product of foreign countries.

One of the greatest losses to regions in LEDC's is through costs to tour operators and the travel fares of airlines and ships. This means that in reality, LEDC's only receive a small proportion of the money spent on tourism. Jobs are often very poorly paid and therefore do not contribute significantly to the development of the country. The income may not filter down to the majority of the population but it may be siphoned off by the ruling elite. The problem of westernisation is considerable.

Western companies, can exploit the tourism markets in LEDC's more effectively and more rapidly than any local businesses. The large western firms enjoy economies of scale making it difficult for smaller businesses and local entrepreneurs to compete. The western visitors demand western goods, many of which would be regarded as luxury goods to the locals. These have to be imported from abroad causing yet another leakage out of the economy. Another example is the beautiful island of Phuket in Thailand, which has been over taken by tourist developments in what could be described as 'neo-colonialism'.

This is where the hotels and beaches are owned by multinational companies and most of the profits are taken outside the country. In these circumstances tourism can alienate the local people by drawing them from their traditional

agricultural employment but having a negative impact upon their local culture and environment. This has been the case in Gambia on the west coast of Africa. Problems also arise in LEDC's because there is inadequate infrastructure to control growth. The sudden demand by tourism promotes a dynamic expansion, which cannot be sustained if there is a downturn in the tourist flow.

The areas receiving money can also become so dependent on the money derived from tourism that a change in fashion and the decline in visitors and revenue may result in the collapse of the local economy. For example the instability caused by the disputes between the Turkish and Greek populations has undermined tourism in Cyprus LEDC's often have vulnerable government structures and a change in the political climate can have negative impacts on the tourist industry. The regime introduced by President Mugabe in Zimbabwe has destroyed much of the tourism industry.

His policy of returning farmland owned by white farmers to the native population has destabilised the country. There has been a massive downturn in tourism and the game reserves and associated tourist facilities have closed causing unemployment and a knock on effect on the protection of the environment and the wildlife. For economic benefits to be obtained by LEDC's from tourism, there needs to be an effective distribution of income, towards improving the structure and balance of economic activities. Money invested in valuable schemes and projects can generate more income for the country.

However this requires a certain level of organisation and only those LEDC's with more sophisticated levels of development are effective in promoting greater economic prosperity. Often the money generated by tourism is widely used to improve some of the problems it actually causes. The revenue which tourism generates can lead to a sustainable long-term use and investment in the environment. For example in Zimbabwe, prior to recent political developments, ecologically sustainable tourism has been pioneered through innovative schemes known as 'Campfire' projects.

These projects have allowed the local people to have greater control over both tourism and poaching. The locals are given control and management over the wildlife in the National Parks. They can set up hunting trips for tourists and charge them for the privilege. This is beneficial because it ensures that the revenue from tourism goes to the local people. However it also means that it is in the residents' own interests to look after the wildlife and has therefore resulted in a drop in poaching. Money can also be used for the benefit and protection of the environment in other ways.

Trends towards eco tourism can arrest the worst excesses of tourism. The government of the Seychelles has developed strict laws to protect the island's beauty and unique wildlife. Money can be spent on the restoration and protection of beaches. For example boardwalks have also been installed on the beach at Goa to prevent people from eroding the footpaths. Other places which have unique and sensitive environments, such as the Galapagos Islands have undertaken to protect the endangered species and their habitats.

Specific trails have been marked out to avoid areas known to be inhabited by animals and guides are employed to ensure that the tourists keep to the routes. As a result both in Zimbabwe National Park and at the Galapagos Islands, animals receive better protection as a consequence of tourism. Tourism can also have social benefits. Contrary to the fears that indigenous cultures are eroded by tourism, it can actually sustain traditions. Tourism promotes the development of art and craft industries to reinforce local cultural identity. Tourists are often interested in the native dances and will pay to view traditional dances and customs.

This also ensures that the dances are passed down the generations and are not lost. The jewellery produced and worn by locals can be sold and therefore there is an incentive to retain the traditions. Tourism also increases the demand for guides and workers who are knowledgeable about the area in which they live. As a result there has been an increase in the training, skills and general education of the people living in popular tourist destinations. International tourism can bring great economic benefit but it is vital that stringent controls are introduced to direct and limit levels in areas of environmental and social sensitivity.

Tourism can only generate economic benefits if the region and its inhabitants are the recipients of the revenue. It is therefore vital that leakages in the economic cycle are limited and that the money received by the region is used effectively to promote and monitor tourist levels. If the income derived from tourism is used productively many of the side effects can be limited. Ultimately the economic benefits must outweigh social and environmental problems; otherwise there would be no incentive to promote tourism.

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