

THE IMPACTS OF TOURISM ON SOCIETY

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Tourism is one of the most important components of the global economy. It generates billions of dollars in revenues and millions of jobs worldwide. It is considered by many communities, especially in emerging countries the only tool for development, and the only chance for increasing the quality of life. Thus the tourism industry has stretched from seaside to mountain resorts and from small villages to big metropolises. But at the same time, tourism started to show its uglier side. Both the actions of investors and of tourists are having negative impacts on the socio-cultural values and environmental assets of host communities all over the world. In the present paper we are trying to observe the impacts of tourism on society from three perspectives: economic, social and cultural, and environmental. From the economic perspective, tourism generates wealth and jobs, but the wealth leaks from the community and the jobs are mainly low-income. From the socio-cultural perspective, tourism brings together people from different backgrounds, cultures and traditions and promotes peace. But at the same time, due to globalization, many communities have lost their cultural identity and gave way to a Disneyfication of their village or town. Last but not least, tourism helped create national parks and protected areas, where unique examples of flora and fauna can be found. But tourists have been proven to be a problem, because of the pollution they generate. Tourist entrepreneurs can also be blamed for a total disrespect to local traditions and the environment. The main problem from these negative impacts is that the local community is the only side that picks up the check for all the damages on the culture, tradition and, most importantly on the environment.

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Introduction

Since the second half of the twentieth century, tourism has been gaining momentum and in 2011 total revenues from tourism activities have reaches 1000 billion dollars (UNWTO, 2012). So we can firmly say that tourism: 1. compared to other industries, it has a superior capacity to distribute wealth and promote regional development, 2. it has a high multiplier effect, 3. it generates a varying consumption of goods and services.

But a series of scholars and researchers have found a growing number of examples of negative impacts of tourism in the host regions. In the present paper we are trying to present a series of positive and negative impacts of tourism from three points of view: economic, socio-cultural and environmental.

Tourism activities take place in a natural and manmade environment, which is extremely complex. The manmade environment consists of economic, social and cultural processes and factors, and the natural environment is made up of the natural landscape, climate, flora and fauna present in a certain space. Mason (2003: 27-28) argues that there can be made a clear delimitation between the two environments, which is necessary when we talk about tourism's impacts.

1. The economic impact of tourism

In the '60s and '70s the first studies regarding the impact tourism could have on regions or destinations have been focused on economics. This singular point of focus was based on two

facts: 1. the economic impact was easier to quantify and 2. there was a general optimism regarding the benefits that tourism generates. But tourism in its nature is drawn by unique and fragile destinations, and it became clear that in some cases the economic benefits can be shadowed by the negative consequences on the community and the environment, which were never estimated in the past (Dwyer et al. 2004: 307 – 308; Archer et al. 2005: 79-80)

The benefits and costs generated by the tourism activity should be viewed from three sides: tourists, local community and authorities. On one side we have the tourists, who pay to enjoy a certain form of tourism. On another side, we have the local community who enjoy the benefits (mainly financial) from the tourism activity. At the same time, they are the ones who have to face the hidden costs tourists leave behind. Last but not least, we have the government and the local authorities. For them, tourism generates revenues through taxes, the creation of jobs and contribution to the balance of payments (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2012:24, Lickorish and Jenkins, 1997:65-66; Saarinen, 2007:42).

If we go further into details, we can talk about a fourth side: investors. From their perspective, the benefits are solely financial, based on the incomes of the businesses they have set up in the host-region. Regarding the costs, investors are immune to any other cost, than the financial one.

The tourism industry seems to be the most efficient branch of the economy in generating jobs and income in less developed, peripheral countries / regions, where development opportunities are limited. In these regions, the economic impact of tourism is felt most strongly. People from these regions are generally farmers or fishermen and the involvement in tourism activity can substantially increase their household income. Also an increase in the local tourism industry can provide an incentive for related activities (agricultural products or souvenirs that could be used for the accommodation and catering). According to some authors (Archer et. al., 2005:81-82), the introduction of tourism industry in these regions may have a greater effect on the welfare of the resident population, compared to a more developed region in the same country. For such a development of tourism in an emerging country or region the following are need: basic infrastructure (access roads, drinking water etc.), lodging (hotels, pensions, etc.) and other facilities and services necessary for tourism (catering, transport, etc.).

Archer et. al. (2005:83) believes that some of these utilities are indivisible in the sense that they are provided the tourism industry, and at the same time they are used by local people. Thus, in many emerging countries, motorways and airports built for tourism, now offer easier access to more distant markets for many local products. Unfortunately, the local population enjoys little benefits from this development. This is essentially a problem of distribution, both physical and economic.

The market does not ensure that development will keep up with demand. It is imperative that realistic and accurate planning is made and the enforcement of rules and laws to reduce conflicts and, where appropriate, preserve and protect the unique features of the nature tourists and residents can enjoy. This is a lesson that was learned quite recently by emerging countries. At a superficial level, the economic benefits of tourism seem obvious."In recent years an increasing number of authors have expressed reservations about the nature and extent of the benefits of tourism and expressed skepticism about the potential of tourism as a catalyst for growth and development as a means of maximizing the welfare of local people" (Archer et al., 2005:82-83). In a study conducted in Turkey (Tosun et. al. 2003:155-159), it was noted that although tourism – as an economic development strategy - increased the rate of economic growth and created inequalities between regions and social classes. The inequalities were caused by economic incentives for coastal tourism development at the expense of rural areas. In essence, this is a problem of allocating resources and whether the developing of the tourism industry represents the optimal use of available resources - natural, human, etc.

Rural areas are generally lacking economic diversity and adequate infrastructure, and are based on a limited number of economic activities, and have a less educated population. All this

contributes to the limitation of the rural population to secure jobs, promote investment, etc.. Also, in these regions there is some lack of planning, management and monitoring of economic activities – including tourism. In terms of jobs the ones supplied by tourism they are to some extent seasonal, with low wages and limited opportunities for promotion. If we compare it with other industries, tourism requires employees with a low level of specialization, which determines the relatively low salary (Mathieson and Wall, 1982, Lickorish and Jenkins, 1997:73, Muller and Jansson, 2007:4).

In conclusion, from an economic perspective, the objective of the local community should be to obtain higher results than the costs they have to pay.

2. The socio-cultural impact of tourism

Tourism has often been associated with the contact between cultures, behaviors, values and traditions. Tourism is considered a framework where hosts and tourists can learn better about from each other, through direct interaction. Also, tourism requires host communities to be more responsive and educated to provide quality services to tourists. In addition, interactions between locals and tourists generates the emergence of new ideas, values and motivations for social and economic progress (Brown 1998: 237-238; Bersales 2005:239; Nyaupane et al. 2006: 1373). Tourism can revitalize a community's cultural life, as art and traditions are an attraction for foreign visitors (Mason 2003:43).

The attitude of local people on tourism crosses four stages, as they were defined by Doxley (quoted by Fennel 2007:47-48):

- euphoria – tourists are welcomed by the community, without control or planning;
- apathy – tourists are considered a given by the community, and the tourists – locals relationship becomes formal and commercial;
- discomfort – reaching saturation with the tourism industry, the community starts to change its attitude towards tourism. Decision makers further develop infrastructure instead of limiting growth;
- antagonism – locals show their irritation with tourism and tourists. Planning should be the remedy, but increased promotional activity is contracted to change the deteriorating image and reputation of the village.

We cannot talk about the socio-cultural impact of tourism without talking about globalization and its effects on local cultures. One result of globalization is consumerism. It is defined as an increase in demand for consumption in an increasing variety of products and services. Consumerism affects tourists, who are a part of the consumer-oriented society, characterized by: modern urban lifestyle, expectations for high-level services and an attitude characterized by the expression: "everything is for sale"(Reisinger 2009:11-13).

There are authors (Reisinger) who argue that consumerism destroys culture and generates environmental and social problems: traffic congestion and queues at natural and man-made attractions. An example of this is Venice, which is overwhelmed by tourists, generating an increasing number of environmental and social issues. "Venice is full of tourists. The invasion of tourists in San Marco Basilica caused damages to the frescoes due to the condensation created by the breath of the visitors. Also, the stone floor was constantly eroded by the river of travelers. Unfortunately, this type of problem is often accepted by tourists as an important part of the personal experience."(Richards, quoted by Reisinger, 2009:20)

Globalization is accused of destroying the socio-cultural identity of the local communities and indigenous values, traditions and lifestyle (Macleod 2004:15; Reisinger 2009:21). Cities visited by tourists in developing countries are not authentic, but rather disinfected and McDonaldized (Paramo La Haine 2008). Diversity gives way to efficiency and local culture to global culture. A small village, which is facing many economic problems can succeed a change of 180 degrees, by capitalizing on several features: beautiful scenery, tranquility and lack of congestion.

Unfortunately, for many communities the change equals with the loss of local traditions and values by replacing them with a false rural culture (Hester, 1990:5).

In rural areas, land and coastal areas are purchased by developers / investors, who transform farming and fishing communities in tourist resorts, replacing farms and forests with apartments or shopping centers. Modern hotels, highways and recreation centers have no local charm. All the resources that have attracted tourists in the beginning - the beauty of the landscape, peace and tranquility – are continuously eroded by tourism development and the rapidly increasing pace of life. For this reason, the meaning of local culture might dilute and dissolve (Macleod, 2004:16). Today, tourists experience fishing on "authentic boats", while fishermen work in supermarkets. This situation causes a fracture between the locals and the socio-cultural environment. Also contributing to the fracture are the growing number of tourists and the new technology and modern life.

Also, the need for "authentic" has tarnished to some extent the traditions of certain civilizations. The Keechak dance, interpreted by the Hindu community in Bali on some special occasions, was shortened, and performed out of the religious context, daily for the foreign tourist groups. In theory, tourists may feel cheated by such non - authentic events, but that would require a good knowledge of the cultural traditions of the area visited by foreign tourists (Mason, 2003:46). In the cities and urban concentrations, the response to consumerism is the emergence of a growing number of stores or shopping centers in central areas. The transformation of spaces into tourist attractions was called by Paramo - La Haine *Disney-fication*. "Through this process, a general feeling of security was created with an excessive control combined with increased attention. Security cameras are installed, alarm systems are engaged and security services are hired, to ensure that tourists are not bothered by the negative realities such as poverty, begging, social issues or ecosystem degradation. The less beautiful face of the world has no place in this controlled environment (Paramo, Le Haine, 2008).

Liu (2003:468) states that tourism is not the main culprit for the loss of cultural identity and traditions: "The globalization and homogenization of culture, often referred to as Coca-colaisation, Hollywoodisation or McDonaldisation may not be caused only by tourism. The media, by means of modern communication and information technology often play a more important role in shaping the values, opinions, lifestyle and fashion of the world."

3. The environmental impact of tourism

If the positive impact of tourism can be observed most easily on the economy, then surely, that the negative impact on the environment is the most evident. Compared with the economic impact of tourism, the environment has become a theme for studies and research recently, joining in the ecologist stream at the end of the '80s and early '90s (Holden, 2003:94).

For an accurate overview of the relationship between tourism and the environment we must take into account a large number of actors involved in tourism activity(Holden, 2009:17): authorities (local and central), private sector (local and external contractors), non-governmental organizations, with the focus on tourism activity, local community, tourists/visitors.

"The common denominator of these actors is the man. Consequently, when we talk about the relationship between tourism and the natural environment it is necessary to consider that this relationship is the expression of human interaction with nature ... [so] to determine the effect of tourism on the natural environment we should take into account the following: the price we attach nature, cultural stereotypes about nature and the ethical relationship of man with nature." (Holden, 2009:17)

Sharpley (2006:22) believes that the environment is a fundamental element of the tourists' experience. Tourists are looking for attractive natural resources, different and special, allowing specific tourism activities. At the same time, the development of tourism consumes resources,

creates waste and requires a certain degree of infrastructure development, which in some cases can lead to the degradation and destruction of the environment.

The relationship between tourism and the environment crossed four stages over time (Sharpley 2006:122):

- coexistence in the beginning of tourism activities, the impact was minimal;
- conflict: mass tourism was seen as a destroyer of nature;
- idealism: symbiosis possible by developing "green" tourism;
- realism: different approaches to development that put in balance the needs of the tourists, the locals and the environment.

Sharpley (2006:121) argues that there is a high degree of difficulty to pinpoint the negative impacts that tourism can have on the environment because:

- it's not always clear if the environmental degradation is caused by tourist activity or other human activities;
- the impact of tourism on the environment is rarely visible immediately; tourism development may cause an indirect impact that is felt in some cases in other regions;
- often we lack references to measure the consequences of tourism on the environment.

On one hand, Swarbrooke (1999) and Holden (2009:22) believe that the natural environment has benefited from tourism, through the conservation actions and protection of nature (natural and national parks, protected areas etc.). Also, tourism causes a deeper appreciation of the nature of the tourists and the local population. Tourism is considered a "friendly" alternative to other industries that could benefit the locals.

On the other hand, tourism has direct negative effects on the natural environment and it puts a high pressure on the carrying capacity of host regions and indirect, from development of tourist facilities (Ioannides, 1995:583).

It becomes obvious that the environment consisting of the countryside will suffer from the construction of hotels, parks, shopping malls or amusement parks. Most common consequences of tourism on the environment are:

- changing the structure of flora and fauna (ski slopes);
- pollution of water, air and soil, etc.;
- soil erosion (landslides or disappearance of beaches);
- depletion of natural resources;
- traffic congestion and public transport;
- visual impact (anarchic/chaotic urbanization of seaside and mountain resorts).

Unfortunately, the local population is one that has to "pay" the costs of the resulting environment degradation from tourist exploitation and the degradation is most of time observed or felt only after a period of time (Beeton 2006:19; Holden 2009:19).

Conclusions

We can conclude that tourism has various consequences, which are influenced by a large number of factors, especially the ability and willingness of the community to accept changes (Beeton, 2006:21). For some communities, tourism is one of the few options for economic survival. For others tourism is a combination of positive and negative factors (the most common situation). Finally, there are communities where tourism has generated a large number of negative externalities, for which the population was not ready. To avoid these unpleasant situations planning and strict control by the community and authorities are needed (Statzu and Strazzera, 2011:58; Roberts and Hall 2001:55). Goeldner and Ritchie (2012:25) believe that the challenge for the tourism industry is obtaining benefits that will outweigh the costs, and taking measures to

mitigate negative effects. "Tourism development should be part of an economic development and must be done in a manner that is sustainable."

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