

## AN OVERVIEW ON THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF TOURISM

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### Abstract

Besides the well known positive impacts of tourism (e.g. job creation, income generation, cultural and natural heritage preservation, etc.) one must be aware also of the negative effects of tourism (e.g. congestion, prices increase, pollution, etc.). The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the negative impacts of tourism classified by economic impact, social (socio-cultural) impact and environmental impact. When planning and developing a tourism investment all stakeholders in a destination should realize also the negative aspects that might be associated with tourism development. Moreover, it is necessary to have an approach to minimize the negative effects of tourism along with maximizing the positive ones in order to make tourism an efficient and sustainable instrument for the economic development at local, regional and national level.

**Key words:** tourism, negative impact, economic impact, socio-cultural impact, environmental impact

**JEL Classification:** L83; Z32

### I. INTRODUCTION

Most often tourism is seen in a positive manner exclusively through its benefits especially economic ones. It is well known the positive role of tourism in terms of job creation, income generation for the local communities, diversifying the economic structure of a region/country, encouraging entrepreneurship, preserving natural and cultural heritage. However, tourism development in a region/country implies also some negative aspects which can put serious problems once tourism becomes a well-established activity. Moreover, Lundberg (2015) argued that “the negative impacts of tourism development are perceived by a larger share of the population (a.n. even) at destinations with lower levels of tourism development” (p.288). In these circumstances, an awareness of the negative impacts of tourism becomes a necessity for all the stakeholders involved in tourism development in a certain area/region/country.

Many regions/countries have seen tourism as an activity that can bring economic benefits. In this regard, they have considered appropriate to support tourism development which was seen as an alternative or as a complementary activity to the traditional economic activities (agriculture, fishing, mining industry, etc.). Nevertheless, there are also risks associated to such approach which cannot lead always to the positive expected results. In this sense it is necessary to have a more advanced assessment of the tourism effects/impacts in a certain area. This is also needed for a “good planning and management in order to minimize and even eliminate possible negative effects” (Djurasevic and Nedelea, 2007, p.13).

There are several perspectives by which the

effects/impacts of tourism in a destination can be evaluated. In the literature, usually the following categorization is used:

- Economic impact;
- Social impact (socio-cultural impact);
- Environmental impact (ecological impact).

However, this classification shouldn't be seen as being very strict since in reality there is a combination of economic and social impacts, cultural and environmental impacts (Mason, 2003). In the following sections, the overview of the negative impacts of tourism will be made following this classification.

### II. NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT

There are of course inevitably a number of negative aspects of tourism development in a specific region / country as long as tourism requires the existence and usage of resources (land, labour, capital).

In this regard, the land is a good example of resource to be used by tourism activities and considering there is a strong demand for it, the prices tend to increase. Therefore, tourism produces directly an increase of prices and in this case one can consider an inflation effect produced by tourism.

The **prices increase** can be seen also to other products including food products. Naturally, this inflationary pressure comes at the expense of the economic welfare of residents in a community which is a tourist destination (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006). Moreover, some authors such as Donald Lundberg (cited by Goeldner and Ritchie (2006)) considers that there is a direct relationship between the level of tourism development and the price of land in a

tourism destination; more precisely, it was estimated that in under-developed regions, the land investment represents 1% from total investment in a hotel development while in the regions where tourism is well developed this percentage could increase up to 20%.

In different perspective, tourism development requires the use of resources which (in the absence of tourism) would have been used for other purposes of economic development. This refers to the concept of **opportunity cost** and for having a complete picture of the economic impact this concept has to be mentioned also. Associated to the opportunity cost concept one can mention also the concept of „displacement effect” which is also used in the literature; displacement effect appears when tourism development is made at the expense of other economic activities.

The **high costs of infrastructure** for tourism development which has to be supported by governmental authorities can also be added as negative economic effects. The public resources allocated for this purpose can reduce the governmental investments in other fields such as education and health (UNEP, 2016b).

Other negative aspects refer to **high risks of tourism investments**. Unfortunately, tourism is seen by private investors as an activity which involves high investment risks (Halloway, 1998). Often banks may be reluctant to fund projects in tourism and private investors do not want to take too much risk. In this regard, first it is necessary to have the public sector support through the development of infrastructure projects or providing specific funding schemes (in the form of grants or low interest loans). Furthermore, it is important to know “what the effects of the investments and inputs are in relation to the income gained from tourism” (Saarinen, 2003, p.95).

Tourism **seasonality**, although it is a basic characteristic of tourism can also produce some difficulties from the economic point of view. Not using labour in the off-season period can cause some social problems (e.g. unemployment). Also, there is an unbalanced distribution of incomes in a year (for instance, very low incomes or no incomes in the off-season period in the particular case of ski resorts). Due to seasonality, a significant part of tourism workers are temporary employed, in average 35-40% (this percentage could reach up to 60% in hotels) (Minciu, 2000). Therefore, some problems can arise which the seasonal labour has to deal with (for instance job insecurity), not being any guarantee of continuity from one season to another of the medical benefits and conditions of accommodation and work.

Another important aspect that deserves to be mentioned is the fact that a **dependence on tourism is not desired**. Actually, generally the dependence from on single economic sector is not recommended. Nevertheless, it has been stated that a dependence on

agriculture is desirable rather than a dependence on tourism since the demand for agricultural products is protected from a considerable decline as long as people have to eat (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006). Instead, the tourism demand depends largely on tourists’ incomes and preferences, aspects that cannot be “controlled” by a tourist destination. This creates an important vulnerability for tourism, especially in case of changes that might occur in the international tourism demand.

**Enclavisation** (creating enclaves) or **enclave tourism** can also be included as a negative effect. This is located in all-inclusive destinations which offer all services to tourists (the case of cruises or all-inclusive resorts) and thus, few opportunities being left to locals to benefit from tourism. A study carried out in Jamaica can be exemplified where it has been concluded that the all-inclusive hotels although generate the highest revenues, their impact on economy is lower than other types of accommodations since all-inclusive accommodation generates more imports and employ fewer workers compared with other types of accommodation units (UNEP, 2016a). On the other hand, it has been shown for Bangladesh that enclave tourism limits interactions between tourists and locals and, as a consequence, these reduce negative impacts caused from such encounter (Zahra, 2013).

Not the least, another negative aspect of the economic impact of tourism is given by **leakages**. It has to be mentioned that only a part of the total amount of tourist’s expenses in a certain area/region remains in the location where this expense takes place, the other part being used for the payment of taxes, profits and employees’ salaries living outside the reference territory and for the purchase of imported goods and services. In other words, the leakages occur when money leave the local economy (of a region) due to the fact that a local consumer (household, business or a governmental authority) has purchased a product or a service from a supplier located outside the region (Steynes, 1997, p.11).

UNEP (2016a) distinguishes between two types of leakages, export leakages and import leakages; Import leakages refer to goods and services that a country cannot provide and these are imported while export leakages consider repatriation of profits of foreign investors in tourism. The main reasons for producing leakages according to Goeldner and Ritchie (2006) are (p.97):

- The cost of imported goods, especially food and beverages;
- Foreign exchange costs of imports for developing the tourism facilities;
- Repatriation of profits abroad;
- Repatriation of expatriats’ incomes;
- Management fees and royalties for franchises;

- Payments made to carriers and travel companies abroad;
- Costs for tourism promotion abroad;
- Additional costs of imports resulting from the income of those who benefit from tourism.

UNEP (2016a) estimated that from 100 dollars spent by a tourist from a developed country for a holiday in developing country only 5 dollars remains in a tourism destination located in a developing economy. Krippendorff cited by Ardahaey (2011) noted that although the main reason for developing tourism in the least developed countries was to increase foreign exchange earnings, these countries benefit less from tourism as long as they don't have a developed economy and have to rely on imports.

So, one might consider that a high level of leakages can compromise seriously the positive economic impact of tourism. In this regard, countries have to take some measures to strengthen the sectorial linkages of tourism with the rest of industries and to stimulate the local economy (UNCTAD, 2010).

### III. NEGATIVE SOCIAL (SOCIO-CULTURAL) IMPACT

Social and cultural differences that can arise between tourists and resident population can often lead to some conflicts both between these two groups and inside the host communities or can lead to the creation of social problems. More drastically, it was stated that tourism can threaten the family structure in some cases (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006).

In the literature the predominance of quantitative methods has been observed and also the lack of qualitative surveys in studying the social impact which led to the creation of a "list" of social impact (Deery, Jago et al, 2012). The same authors propose a classification of types of social impact found in various papers (see table 1 where only a selection of the negative impacts was presented).

**Table 1: Types of negative social impact of tourism on communities found in the literature**

Types of impact	What is referring to and why is important?
Number of people in public places (e.g. parks and beaches)	It is very likely that local residents displease to share public space with tourists. Also crowding can be caused also by increases in the local population and these should also be considered.
The availability of public spaces	When tourists are coming in a region, residents and visitors can "compete" for available parking spaces and this can cause a sort of frustration.

Types of impact	What is referring to and why is important?
Noise levels	Tourists often socialize late in the evening and consume more alcohol and this can lead to increased level of noise for locals. Some tourism activities such as boating can also be very noisy.
Traffic congestion	The increased tourist traffic can lead to traffic congestion particularly in the city centres and in the seasonal destinations. This can affect the way of life for local residents.
Crime	The increase in crime rates is often associated with the increase in the number of tourists in a region. Crimes are often associated with an inadequate behaviour and drug and alcohol abuse.
Problems related to people behaviour in case of alcohol consumption	Tourists can often be associated with an inadequate behaviour given by the excessive alcohol abuse which can lead to the growth of crimes and disturbances.
Illegal drug use	The same as above.
Inadequate behaviour	Often, as a result of alcohol consumption and holiday spirit, tourists can have an improper behaviour and this can have a negative impact on locals. This situation can be seen mostly in case of events (festivals, concerts, etc.)
Prostitution	With an increased tourism comes increased number of entertainment facilities and a higher alcohol consumption considering that many tourists visit a destination to have fun. All these can lead to increased prostitution.
Property values	In the regions where there are many tourists, there is often a strong demand for real estates to serve the tourism industry including workers in tourism. This can lead to increased price of properties, which is good for the property owners but can be problematic for locals wanting to purchase a property.

Types of impact	What is referring to and why is important?
Cost of rents	In regions where tourism industry grows, the cost of rents can be high due to tourism workers which can have an impact on the standard of living for locals.
The number of permanent residents in the region	The ratio between the local residents on the one hand and the number of holiday home owners and tourists on the other hand is important for the way local community accepts tourists. If there is a significant imbalance, conflict may occur.
Social and moral values	The system of social and moral values of tourists can be significantly different from the one of local residents which might cause some conflicts.
Relationships between local residents	Since different groups of locals can have different engagements and attitudes towards tourists, this can create frictions between different groups inside the local community.
Level of urban development	The increase in the urban development is often attributed to tourists coming in a region and this can be perceived as being responsible for reducing the quality of life for residents and changing the character of the region.

Source: selection based on Deery, Jago et al (2012), pp.68-69

In the above table an important remark has to be made: some types of impact (property values, costs of rents, level of urban development) do not have a pure social feature but rather an economic one; however, as a result of their consequences on residents in a tourism destination, some social problems can occur. In extreme cases, in remote regions, the arrival of many visitors can determine locals to leave their homes and move to different regions or can lead to the complete destruction of local way of life among locals (Archer, Cooper et al, 2005).

UNEP (2016b) admits the existence of some “cultural clashes” due to cultural, ethnic, religious differences but also differences in lifestyles, language and prosperity levels. Also there are other factors such as economic inequality, some irritation due to behaviour of tourists (for instance failure in respecting

the dress code and behaviour in the Muslim countries), frictions that may occur in the occupational status of labour force in tourism (often top management positions are occupied by foreigners or professionals from urban areas while local/rural people have lower level jobs, low-paid (e.g. chambermaids, waiters, gardeners, etc.).

Also, it has to be mentioned that tourism can cause a change or a loss of local identity while there is a risk of standardization and commodification in order to satisfy by all means the tourist demand. Also, a loss in authenticity, found initially in a tourist destination, can occur. Therefore, the appearance of kitsch in a tourist destination is quite common. In this case the Dracula tourism at the Bran castle in Romania can be exemplified where the opinion of foreign tourists is relevant: “there was vampire-themed tourist kitsch for sale everywhere and people were buying it” (see Banyai, 2009, p.69).

#### IV. NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

It is recognized the fact that a poorly planned tourism development can affect the physical environment of a destination (Archer, Cooper et al, 2005). Therefore, the irremediable destruction of natural environmental can be a direct consequence of developing tourism activities. In this regard, works of deforestation to create ski slopes or drainage of wetlands to create golf courses can be exemplified. Of course, some adverse effects can occur such as soil erosion, floods or water resources usage conflicts between hotels and other tourist facilities on the one hand and local communities on the other hand.

Conventionally, from the environment point of view, the following negative effects have been mentioned (Mason, 2003, p.55):

- Tourists are those who are likely to drop garbage;
- Tourism contributes to congestion in terms of both human crowding and traffic congestion;
- Tourism can contribute to the pollution of water courses and beaches;
- Tourism may result in the erosion of footpaths;
- Tourism can lead to creation of unsightly human structures such as buildings (e.g. hotels) that do not fit with the local architecture style;
- Tourism may lead to damage and/or disturbance of wildlife habitats.

Also in some regions it has been noted the fact that tourists, either deliberately or ignorance, by their behaviour can threaten the crop cultures or can scare the animals at the agritourism farms and are capable of producing large amounts of waste in the rural areas. (Archer, Cooper et al, 2005). At the same time, it was said that automobile tourism has contributed to the increased pollution of nature in places that were not accessible to this form of tourism (Snak, Baron et al,

2001). Thus, an improved accessibility of tourists in scenic sites had inevitably led to the destruction of grassland and flora in general. In Romania, in the proximity of tourist resorts, mountain chalets or on the river banks where there is no clear distinction of resting places, this situation is unfortunately quite common.

Air pollution is another negative effect that can be mentioned. This is seen as being a consequence of automobile traffic (more precisely due to four wheel drive cars that are adapted to off-road conditions and can be driven in quite inaccessible places) (Denszi, Ciangă et al, 2001). Also in this context, the same authors identify noise pollution produced by noise due to some special transport vehicles (snowmobiles, ATVs, motorboats) or certain types of events that attract tourists (such as cars or motorcycles racing).

A centralization of the “types of negative impact produced by tourism activities” is made by Bran, Marin et al (1998) (see table 2). From a certain perspective these can be assimilated with the negative effects of tourism.

**Table 2: Types of negative environmental impact produced by tourism**

.	Changes in the composition of flora and fauna species	Destruction of habitats
		Killing animals for hunting
		Killing animals for gastronomic curiosity and souvenir market
		Influencing internal and external migration of animals
		Destruction of valuable species for plant collection and wood exploitation
		Natural vegetation clearing for developing tourist facilities
		Reducing natural reserves and wildlife sanctuaries
.	Pollution	Water pollution through polluted waters sewerage and spreading oil and oil substances
		Air pollution by exhaust gases from vehicles
		Noise pollution caused by transport and tourism activities
.	Erosion	Soil compaction, compaction that leads to increasing storm water drain and superficial erosion
		Increased soil exposure to landslides
		Amplifying the processes for triggering avalanches
		Damages upon special

		geological features (caves, potholes)
		Damages to river banks and rivers
.	Natural resources	Decreasing of water resources through overexploitation
		Reducing the classical fuel resources for the energy requirements to support tourism activities
		Increased risks for natural fires
.	Visual impact	Tourist facilities (leisure constructions, connected services)
		Garbage and waste resulted from tourism establishments and tourist traffic

Source: Bran, Marin et al, p.164

At the same time, awareness can be created that the development of tourism facilities can lower the value of natural environment. In these circumstances, “tourist products that include degraded resources lower their values having as a direct consequence the reducing of tourism demand” (Glăvan, 2000, p.136). Therefore, actions are needed to mitigate any negative effects of tourism on the environment.

## V. CONCLUSION

A much more balanced approach is needed when assessing the effects of tourism in a certain region, not only economic effects but also social, cultural and environmental ones. Particularly the author of this paper fully agrees with Archer et al (2005) that considers that more emphasis should be placed on quantifying the costs of tourism development in monetary terms. At the same time, it has to be considered that the socio-cultural impact of tourism can be ambiguous: the same impacts can be seen as positive by some stakeholders while other stakeholders can consider these impacts as being negative.

A special issue is represented by tourism effects on the environment, a relationship having relevance within the concept of sustainable development in tourism. However, one can say that by minimizing negative effects and maximizing positive impacts tourism can be an efficient tool for developing an area/region. This is particularly true since tourism development is an integral part of the economic development which has to be done in a sustainable manner.

It has to be admitted that tourism is not a panacea for all the alternatives of economic development. There are some constrains to be

considered discussed here in this paper. In any cases, these constraints have to be dealt in an optimization approach managing both negative and positive impact of tourism.

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