

The Relationship between Tourism and Environment

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Abstract

The need to preserve the world's inherent assets for future generation is becoming an essential goal not only for travel and tourism but also for all other industries that used the earth's natural resources.

However, tourism, as one of the world's fastest growing industries, has a multitude of impacts, both positive and negative, on the environment. Negative impacts will arise when the level of visitor use is superior to the environment's ability to cope with this use. Positive impact will arise when every tourist understands the real and main concept of environment and sustainable tourism by heart, not just by word.

The purpose of this paper, firstly, is to increase the knowledge about some concepts about environment and tourism, sustainable development and tourism, ecotourism, and their relationships; secondly, to create some theoretical frameworks with some overall and structural approaches that can be broadly used in practical sustainable managing of tourism; then, refer to some challenges and recommendations regarding to tourism and environment. On the whole, its main purpose is to explain tourism and environment relations.

Keywords: *Environment, tourism, Eco tourism, Sustainability, Environment conservation, Tourism management*

1 Introduction

Tourism is an environmentally dependent activity. At the broadest level, the natural environments and heritages belong to people of each country and even some of them belong to all people of world. So, they

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all have right to understand, appreciate and conserve its national and international values.

At the time of globalization, the protection, conservation, interpretation, and presentation of different natural and cultural environments of any particular region or country is a significant challenge for people in all parts of world.

The purpose of this paper, firstly, is to increase the knowledge about some general concepts about environment and tourism, sustainable development and tourism, ecotourism, etc. secondly, to create some theoretical frameworks with some overall and structural approaches that can be broadly used in practical sustainable managing of tourism; then, refer to some challenges and recommendations regarding tourism and environment. On the whole, its main purpose is to explain tourism and environment correlation.

The design of this paper is, at first, based on desk research on tourism and environment including an overview of researches, studies, books, and other relevant publications. Secondly, it comes through a conceptual and general framework for environment conservation and sustainable tourism based on the information and experiences that authors had gathered via study and visit of different parts of the world. It is clear that tourism industry and all its dependent and independent issues are young, particularly with sustainable point of view; yet, it is necessary to study and learn more about this wonderful growing industry.

2 Environment and Tourism Impacts

When we think of tourism, we think primarily of people who are visiting a particular place for sightseeing, visiting friends and relatives, taking a vacation, and having a good time. They may spend their leisure time engaging in various sports, sunbathing, talking, singing, taking rides, touring, reading, or simply enjoying the environment. If we consider the subject further, we may include in our definition of tourism people who are participating in a convention, a business, conference, or some other kind of business or professional activity, as well as those who are taking a study tour under an expert guide or doing some kind of scientific research or study (Goeldner, 2006p4).

Then, environment is often used in its widest concept to and includes different aspects such as cultural, economic, political, social, and physical or natural type. This paper has a pure consideration on the last type. Physical environment is often referred as the key element of tourism (Theobald, 1998p20).

The relationship between these two, however, might be complex; but it is very sensitive and close. Nevertheless, this relation includes some influences in every society that encourage people to become tourists, as well as the interaction that exists between tourism and environment that might be negative or positive.

3 Negative Environmental Impacts of Tourism

Negative physical environmental impacts, resulting from tourism development, have occurred when the level of visitor use is greater than the environment's ability to cope with this use within acceptable limits of change. It can be categorized into different parts. Here, it is referred to two significant one of them; Resource usage and pollution (Cooper, 2005p198).

Resource usage: It is clear that tourism development needs natural resources in order to facilitate its expansion. Therefore, water and land are two key natural resources that can be threatened by tourism. Uncontrolled conventional tourism poses potential threats to many natural areas around the world. It can put enormous pressure on an area and lead to impacts such as soil erosion, increased pollution, discharges into the sea, natural habitat loss, increased pressure on endangered species and heightened vulnerability to forest fires. It often puts a strain on water resources, and it can force local populations to compete for the use of critical resources (Holden, 2000).

Pollution: It is one of the special tourism negative impacts on environment; although it is necessary to point out that tourism is a contributing factor to local and global pollution, along with other industries. It can be classified into water, air, and aesthetic pollution.

The major sources of water pollution come from oil spills, industrial waste pumped into sea, and from chemicals used in agriculture. Then, the noticeable sources of air pollution regarding tourism is associated with transport, both air and car through the burning of fossil fuels. Noise pollution is also an understandable problem for those residents who live around busy international or domestic airports; however,

noise pollution from construction of tourism facilities can bother both residents and tourists. A considerable aesthetic pollution is prevalent in coastal and mountainous areas; since tourism development is often based on increasing profits whilst ignoring aesthetic concerns (Holden, 2000).

In all above situations, tourism is environment's enemy but they can be two close friends, if they planned correctly and also with cooperation of all other organizations or industries which are related to tourism directly and indirectly. In order to understand that whether they can be friends or no; at first it is necessary to know how they can help each other, which are enlightened in further sections.

4 Positive Impacts of Tourism on The Environment

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries, having eye-catching growth over the past three decades. During these decades, tourism has been converted into a complex phenomenon, with economic, social, cultural, and natural or environmental dimensions. Environmental dimension contains the major attractions among different tourists in the recent years (Holden, 2000).

Tourism industry can help environment through several ways. Some of them are referred to as following:

- Tourism can significantly contribute to environmental protection, conservation and restoration of biological diversity and sustainable use of natural resources. Because of their attractions, pristine sites and natural areas are identified as valuable and the need to keep the attraction alive can lead to creation of wild life or national parks.

- Tourism has the potential to increase public appreciation of the environment and to spread awareness of environmental problems when it brings people into closer contact with nature and the environment. This confrontation may heighten awareness of value of nature and lead to environmentally conscious behaviour and activities to preserve the environment.

- Direct financial contribution, can be considered as a way of tourism to help conservation of sensitive areas and habitat. Revenue from park-entrance fees and similar sources can be allocated specifically to pay for the protection and management of environmentally sensitive areas. Especial fees for park operation or conservation activities can be collected from tourists or tour operators.

-Government can collect money in different indirect ways such as income taxes, user fees, taxes on sales or rent of equipments, and license fees for activities like hunting and fishing. Such funds can be used for overall conservation programs and managing natural resources.

-Regulatory measures can also be helpful for offsetting of tourism negative impacts on the environment. For instance, controlling the numbers of tourist activities and movements of visitors within protected areas can limit harmful impacts on ecosystems and help to maintain the integrity and vitality of the natural site(Cooper,2005,pp197-198)&(WTO,1999,pp3-19).

Environment is usually referred to as a key component of tourism Basically it is involved in all aspects of tourism. However, natural environment is very delicate and needs to be taken care of; but in fact, it helps tourism through its natural features at first(Ryan, 2003).

For all practical decisions in tourism, environment means the quality of the natural resources such as landscape, air, sea water, fresh water, plants life, animal and human life; and the quality of built and cultural resources judged to have intrinsic value and worthy of conservation (Middleton,1998).

Nowadays, regarding these complex and developed societies particularly in great metropolitans, natural environment attracts many people toward it and bring many different benefits for this industry.

Generally, it can contribute to tourism development through short term and long-term programs. In the first program, financial profit is especially considerable but it doesn't last forever and also natural resources might be damaged in a way that can not be compensated and repairable. In the second one, may be the economic benefit is not very noticeable but usually continual for future generation use.

On the other hand, tourism and environment will be close friends for each other, if they planned in a sustainable process. One of the most significant examples of sustainability regarding these two phenomenons is ecotourism which will be discussed in next section.

5 Ecotourism

There seems to be universal acceptance of the fact that ecotourism was viable long before the 1980s in practice, if not in name. Properly the finest examples of the evolution of ecotourism can be found in the

African wildlife-based examples of tourism development in the early twentieth century and, to some, the nature tourism enterprises of the mid-nineteenth century (Soleimanpour, 2006, p. 2).

Nevertheless, Much has been written about ecotourism, but there is little consensus about its meaning, due to the many forms in which ecotourism activities are offered by a large and wide variety of operators, and practiced by an even larger array of tourists. It is necessary to pay attention to this point that; a clear distinction should be made between the concepts of ecotourism and sustainable tourism. The term ecotourism itself refers to a segment within the tourism sector, while the sustainability principles should apply to all types of tourism activities, operations, establishments and projects, including conventional and alternative forms. In the field, well-planned and managed ecotourism has proven to be one of the most effective tools for long-term conservation of biodiversity when the right circumstances are present. While still relatively small, ecotourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry. However, for ecotourism activities to be sustainable, they must be managed properly and with special care. Unless properly managed, the impacts of ecotourism (for example, to remote pristine areas) may be worse than those of tourism to clearly defined and confined resorts (Holden, 2000, p128).

6 General Characteristics of Ecotourism Can be summarized as Follows

-It contains all nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas.

-It contains educational and interpretation features and increases the awareness and understanding natural and cultural systems of an area and the subsequent involvement of visitors in many issues that are affecting those systems.

-It is generally, but not exclusively organized for small groups by specialized and small, locally owned businesses. Foreign operators of varying sizes also organize, operate and/or market ecotourism tours, generally for small groups.

-It minimizes negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment.

-It supports the protection of natural areas and contributes to the conservation and management of legally protected and other natural areas.

-It provides especial opportunities for local people and nature tourism employees to utilize and visit natural areas and maximize the early and long-term participation of local people in decision- making process about tourism (Fennell,2008,p37).

-Based on UNEPIYE Leaflet, as a development tool, ecotourism can advance the three basic goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

-Conserve biological (and cultural) diversity, by strengthening protected area management systems (public or private) and increasing the value of sound ecosystems.

-Promote the sustainable use of biodiversity, by generating income, jobs and business opportunities in ecotourism and related business networks.

-Share the benefits of ecotourism developments equitably with local communities and indigenous people, by obtaining their informed consent and full participation in planning and management of ecotourism businesses (Wearing, 1999, p39).

In other words, although ecotourism management remains the focus of a number of books, less attention has been paid to the application of management theory and practice to this field.

7 Sustainable Tourism Developments

To answer this question, first it is needed to understand the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism.

Sustainable development was used as a means to bring together the seemingly contrasting concepts of economic development and environmental conservation. In fact, it encapsulates a way of thinking about economic development that is inclusive of the environment. Such development cannot take place upon a weakening environmental resource base, neither can the environment be protected when development excludes the cost of its destruction (Cooper,2005,pp261-265). Brundtland commission defines it as follows:

Development that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs(WTTC,1995).

Sustainable tourism means achieving a particular combination of numbers and types of visitors, the cumulative effect of whose activities at a given destination, together with the actions of the servicing businesses, can continue into the near future without damaging the quality of the environment on which the activities are based (Cooper, 2005, p265).

Therefore sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (WTTC, 1995).

Therefore, sustainability for tourism requires that the cumulative volume of visitor usage of a destination and associated activities and impacts of servicing businesses should be managed below the threshold level at which the regenerative resources available locally become incapable of maintaining the environment. Regenerative resources are in part natural and in part managed by human intervention (Middleton, 1998 p106).

Furthermore, in order to manage sustainable tourism in the best way, the important element is to consider different features of special region such as weather and climatology, geomorphology, anthropology history, culture, and every other factor, which make a place differ from the other one. If environment and tourism are managed based on these considerations, then it will be more practical and sustainable. Moreover, there are some general guiding principles, which are necessary to pay attention.

- The environment has an intrinsic value, which outweighs its value as a tourism asset. Its enjoyment by future generations and its long-term survival must not be prejudiced by short-term considerations.

- Tourism should be recognized as a positive factor with the potential to benefit the community and the place as well as the visitors.

- The relationship between tourism and the environment must be managed so that the environment is sustainable in the long-term. Tourism must not be allowed to damage the resource, prejudice its future enjoyment or bring unacceptable impacts.

-Tourism activities and development should respect the scale, nature and character of the place in which they are sited.

-In any location, harmony must be sought between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community.

-In a dynamic world, some change is inevitable and change can often be beneficial. Adaptation to change, however, should not be at the expense of any of these principles.

-The tourism industry, local authorities and environmental agencies all have a duty to respect the above principles and to work together to achieve their practical relation (Holden, 2000, pp126 -136).

The development of tourism has inevitable and, in many cases, unavoidable environmental consequences. If they are not managed properly, they may destroy physical environment and natural attractions. Management of tourism and environment is almost a new phenomenon, like tourism itself or even much newer than tourism, particularly in a sustainable way. So, more studies are needed on its deferent dimensions to investigate its various damages along with its advantages comprehensively, and look at other countries experiences regarding these issues in order to reach the most practical managing methods to have the most sustainable tourism development (Pender, 2005).

8 Environmental Challenges of Tourism

There are many environmental challenges in relation to tourism. Here we refer to some of them which can be studied more in future.

-The need to implement practical steps to achieve a practical balance between tourism and environment.

-The need for sustainable growth in different type of tourism such as ecotourism, natural, adventure, and cultural tourism through adherence to international standards and principles.

-The need to make closer cooperation among stakeholders who are involved in tourism and environment and their common interest lies in the encouragement of natural and cultural tourism. These stakeholders include national, regional and local government, as well as tourism and environmental organizations, including landowners.

-The need to educate tourists and familiar local people with the value of natural recourses and cultural heritages deeply.

-The need to control transport related impacts of increased natural and cultural tourism on the physical and historic environment like air travel, city congestion and the associated pollution and effects on climate changing.

-The need to not only integrate tourism and environment into networks or geographic grouping, but also to establish quality standards or systems of good practice to increase their effectiveness and efficiency, as well as to safeguard natural and man-made environment and heritages.

-The need to find a right balance between encouraging the expansion of tourism and safeguarding the environment.

9 Key Solutions for Environment-Tourism Problems

There are some practical solutions as follow:

-The sustainable use of natural, social and cultural resources is crucial. Therefore, tourism should be planned and managed within environmental limits and with due regard to the long-term appropriate use of natural and human resources.

-Tourism planning, development and operation should be integrated into national and local sustainable development strategies. In particular, consideration should be given to different types of tourism development and the ways in which they link with existing land and resource uses and socio-cultural factors.

-Tourism should support a wide range of local economic activities, taking environmental costs and benefits to account, but it should not be permitted to become an activity which dominates the economic base of an area.

-Local communities should be encouraged and expected to participate in the planning, development and control of tourism with the support of government and the industry. Particular attention should be paid to involve indigenous people, women and minority groups to ensure the equitable distribution of the benefits of tourism.

-All organization and individuals should respect the environment, the culture, the economy, the way of life, and the political structures of the destination area.

-All stakeholders within tourism should be educated about the need to develop more sustainable forms of tourism. This includes staff

training and raising awareness, through education and marketing tourism responsibility, of sustainability issues among host communities and tourists themselves.

-Research should be undertaken throughout all stages of tourism development and operation to monitor impacts, to solve problems and to allow local people and others to respond to changes and to take advantage of opportunities.

-All agencies, organization, businesses, and individuals should cooperate and work together to avoid potential conflict and to optimize the benefits to all involved in the development and management of tourism(Pender,2005).

10 Conclusion

On one hand, tourism itself has become an increasingly complex phenomenon, with political, economic, social, cultural, educational, bio-physical, ecological and aesthetic dimensions. On the other hand, natural environments, cultural heritages, and their diversities are major tourism attractions. The achievement of proper and desirable correlation between tourism and environment or between the potentially conflicting expectations and aspirations of visitors and host or local communities, create many challenges and opportunities.

Although the challenges might be different, in detail, from a country, region, and place to another country, region, and place; but in general, when all challenges are gathered, it will convert to a global problem.

So excessive or poorly managed tourism and tourism related development can threaten physical nature, its integrity and significant characteristics. The ecological setting, culture and lifestyle of host communities may also be degraded, along with the visitor's experience of the place.

Tourism should bring benefits to host communities and provide an important means and motivation for them to care for and maintain their heritage and cultural practices. The involvement and co-operation of local and/or indigenous community representatives, conservationists, tourism operators, property owners, policy makers, those preparing national development plans and site managers in every place, region, and country is necessary to achieve a sustainable

tourism industry and enhance the protection of natural resources for present and future generations (Voas, 1995, p12).

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