

Mutual interaction of tourism and environment: A sociological appraisal

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Abstract

The paper explores how the two variables of tourism and environment affect each other. Development of tourism usually leads to good outcomes for the residents of the destinations. It often helps in upgrading of the environment at the visiting sites. Though tourism contributes to more construction, more roads, buildings etc., it may also degrade the environment because of using the farmlands and forests to build roads, railways, airports and the like. As the tourists always see themselves as temporary guests in the destination sides, they may use abnormal patterns of behavior. The tourist industry generally observes the positive impacts of the activity, and never cares for the negative side of the issue - endangering environment, seaside, and affecting the culture in the visited countries. Tourism also brings about a great change in the lifestyle of the people in the destination. The method of research used in the current research is of qualitative type which is very popular in sociology. The paper concludes that industrialization has highly extended the tourist industry.

Key words: Tourism. Environment. Destination site. Lifestyle. Cultural exchange.

Received: January 2020; Accepted: February 2020 Published: March 1, 2020.

Please cite this article as: Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi. Mutual interaction of tourism and environment: A sociological appraisal Middle East Journal of Business. 2020; 15(i): 11-14. DOI: 10.5742MEJB.2020.93789

Introduction

Development of tourism through preparing and construction of natural spaces which are attractive to tourists adds prosperity to industry, and in addition, it provides promotion of the environment. The tourism industry needs to put up with its necessary disruption in order to develop the industry. Infrastructure such as roads, means of communications, creation of natural resources, making ready the seaside and resorts and like are all essentials of the tourist industry. Investment in such infrastructure which has long-term perpetuation, helps in increasing occupational resources, income generation and increase in national wealth of countries. The tourist industry would also help in the promotion of the culture of environmental protection. The tourist industry is a new industry needing the least primary materials. Therefore, different countries except the Western European countries need to put its development on their agenda.

Development of tourism leads to good outcomes for the people living in those places. Development of the industry contributes to more benefits and prosperity for the residents of the destination place. For example, historical cities which are more in contact with more tourists are subject to more prosperity in terms of economic growth and cultural development. If the industry sustains, it will transfer increasing financial resources to the destination. In the meantime, the appearance of a city in terms of housing construction, protection of natural resources, safeguarding environment, elevates the tourist industry. So the tourist industry can positively be called an industry contributing to prosperity and protecting the environment. However, tourism is travel for pleasure or business; and involves the theory and practice of touring, the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining tourists, and the business of operating tours (Tourism, 2005).

Development of tourism has negative and hidden consequences too, which should be discussed. As the tourists always see themselves as guests and temporary in the destination sites, they may indulge in abnormal patterns of behavior leading to deviance and social abnormalities. When balancing/comparing, so far as productivity is concerned, the tourist industry has positive increasing dimensions; therefore the

host sites generally do not pay any attention to the negative and destructive dimensions of the issue. It is worth mentioning that tourism occasionally endangers the environment; through creation of roads, buildings and the like, causing destructing of the environment to a large extent. For example, the historical city of Agra in India, daily hosts over 4,000 tourists that has increasingly negative effects through environmental noise, commuting pollution, etc. Improved marketing of tourism contributes to the growth of awareness among the people in destination sites. It also brings a change in the lifestyle of people from agriculture (at survival level) to cash economy. Such a great change is highly welcomed and appreciated by the people of the host sites. Many people of the new lifestyle of cash economy however are involved in various businesses and highly evade taxes and continue their businesses underground, with special reference to the developing countries.

Method of Research

Methodology used in the present research is of qualitative type which is increasingly popular in social sciences. In that, interviewing highly contributes to clarifying views. However, interview method was used in this research simply to discover something new. To conduct the research, the following techniques, tools and procedures have been employed:

- 1- Books, documents and other relevant sources of information.
- 2- Observation: the researcher used this method through visiting people and centers concerned to delve into tourism and environment issues.
- 3- Interview: interviews were mainly used to find ideas, probe responses and investigate feelings which questionnaires can never do. This flexible method was used as a means to understand the variables associated with tourism and environment.

Though this qualitative method in nature, ideas, attitudes, views, and feelings, behavior of the respondents were sought in order to assess the issues. It provided the author with the opportunity to observe things from very close quarters.

Tourism vs Social Sciences

Anthropologists and other social scientists have paid little attention to tourism before. Though tourism is a product of industrial countries, yet social scientists have minimally investigated it. However, sociologists of tourism and environment could create some literature, have discussions and have analyses on it in recent years. Consequently, new theorists of social sciences could reach positive conclusions on the issue, and thereby could improve it. They could find out the results that tourism contributes to cultural development, economic prosperity and cultural exchange between nations etc. As tourism has happened at a small scale in Iran in the past, anthropologists and sociologists did not widely put it on their agenda. With the development of tourism, the economists have paid high attention to it. They then called it a modern economy, that is, a type of economy that almost continues in a self-propelling manner. Through the revenues drawn from tourism

functions, its extension and infrastructures could be maintained. Many developing countries have recently followed the developed countries to advertise and extend tourism in order to boost their economic growth and GNP.

People from industrial nations that do not have high knowledge of the developing nations, have eagerly started visiting these countries. Though the action is one sided, yet it culminates in a good income for the developing nations such as Turkey, India, China and many countries in Africa. Because of that many of the developing countries are currently planning and setting strategies to develop their tourist industry in order to generate more income and higher economic development.

Since 1995, the subject-matter of tourism has found a prime importance simply because of its economic dimension (Cohen, 1995). Lifestyles in non-Western countries are good attractions for the Western citizens from cultural, social and natural viewpoints, and that plays a determining part in boosting tourism. Though the tourism industry may have a negative impact on natural resources, yet its economic benefits and concessions under-shadow the former in recent years and a considerable portion of GDP of developing countries is dependent on the tourist industry.

In terms of international trade, tourism played an unprecedented role in the past few years through the movement of above 425 million tourists, creating above 230 billion dollars which is a large circulation of money within nations (Smith et al., 1992). Therefore, development of tourism is followed by development of employment, more income generation, cultural development, modification and improvement of tourist resources etc. Thus, countries must follow the development of tourist industry after their industrialization, merely because it increases the national income as well as the per capita income.

Since 1960, tourism has had an annual growth rate of 10%; a growth that will continue in the future too (The Economist, 1989). Growth of tourism in many cases caused the promotion of the environment. For example, many of the Mexican beaches were modified and modernized in recent years in order to attract more tourists, and thereby, to generate more income. Not only Mexico, but many other countries have gone the same way, and used the same policies. Tourism changes the interior industrial function, affects the social systems, and because of that the local economies are influenced. Such procedures are followed in order to respond to the foreign markets (Hall, 1994). Therefore, the tourist industry in addition to its economic impacts has increasing social, cultural, and environment impacts as well; it changes many traditions. Tourism also changes the largest parts of local culture and gradually the values relevant to it.

Tourism can act as a source of foreign exchange. Such an action has played well for countries like Mexico, Turkey etc. The income drawn from tourism can be used in industrial development, investment in economy, transportation sectors etc. Therefore, many countries have been dependent on tourism

Table 1: Ranking of Tourism in Selected Countries 2018

Rank	Country	UNWTO Region	International tourist arrivals (2018)
1	France	Europe	89million
2	Spain	Europe	83million
3	United States	North America	80 million
4	China	Asia	63 million
5	Italy	Europe	62 million
6	Turkey	Europe	46 million
7	Mexico	North America	41 million
8	Germany	Europe	39 million
9	Thailand	Asia	38 million
10	United Kingdom	Europe	36 million

Source: International Tourism Highlights. UNWTO, 2019.

income since the latter part of the 20th century, and based on that, they have grown their industrial and economic position. The above-mentioned development has highly improved the quality of life in those countries.

Quality of the environment and tourism

In countries like Mexico and Turkey, the tourist industry has been identified as an important source of foreign income, also known as a highly competitive industry, and many of the managers of tourism companies are constantly searching for new destinations to use (Gesheker, 1978). In regard to new exploration, many of the tourism company managers, while finding new tourism markets, have created a mutual economic promotion. It means that on the one hand, the tourist companies earned large benefits, and additionally, the destination countries have attained extensive and unprecedented income which was converted to sustained economic development in these countries. In the meantime economic development in destination countries would enable the people of these countries to travel and tour to other countries. In this way some sort of cultural exchange would happen, and thereby the natural and unnatural environments would be reformed and modernized in order to attract more tourists. In such a way, the tourist industry can create new environments..

Therefore, through such income the status of the poor is changed, new openings are established, improved discipline is created, and eventually more green spaces and safe environment are the result. Hence, income through tourism creates some of the economic revolution in the host countries concerned. Similarly, while tourist industry tries to plan a safe and secure environment, experts of various kinds try to step in to bring about improvement in the industry concerned. Tourism in general and resort tourism in particular, employs some peo-

ple from rural areas to cultivate the mineral springs or the sea resorts that is a help to employment (UN Projections, 2015). Therefore, it is the tourists who pay for the expenses of workers, the farmers, handcrafts people etc. Circulation of money drawn from tourism is quite extensive and inclusive. However, through tourism various regions, forests and the like get better management and are improved. Tourism development has different dimensions and impacts, mainly positive and seldom negative, and contributes to environmental and economic development.

Negative Aspects of Quality of Environment vs Tourism

Promotion of tourism depends on quality of environment. In fact quality of environment is generally attractive to tourists. Nowadays, tourists of any type and class are highly sensitive to environmental conditions and pollution. Environmental conditions are responsible for declines in tourism. For example, insecurity and unhealthy environment in Britain due to radioactive activities caused the closure of some many seaside resorts, and in Haiti, increasing sewage pollution has highly decreased tourism in that country. Similarly, many African countries because of malaria and health dangers of that kind, are having serious declines in the tourist industry. Therefore, creation of a safe environment, creation of a healthy space and public security, each plays an important role in the tourism market. Pollution and environmental problem contributed to the closure of 600 villas in resorts in Mexico City. Likewise, how the industrial growth goes on, how the natural resources are exploited and activities like that, all affect the environmental security which has determining impacts on the tourist industry. During the recent decades tourism to destinations within the polar sites have been identified and practiced; an adventure never done before (Muller et al. 2013).

Group tourism

Group tourism is practiced to certain destinations with the intention of spending leisure time. Overall, in the 20th century, and especially since the 1960s group tourism has found a better market. This kind of tourism mainly started from North America to Caribbean reigons and Africa. Today, it is practiced in other countries of the world too. Group tourism is criticized for the fact that it destroys the local culture (place of visit). Right after the beginning of group tourism, the UN World Environmental Organizations (WEO) was established to inform governments of the challenges due to ecosystem destruction, and somehow to protect the natural integration . During the 1950s and 1960s, the dominant paradigm emphasized on group tourism, and accepted any possible challenges versus obtaining wealth. Under such circumstances group tours from Germany to Thailand were under threat (Swanson, 1992). In the meantime, despite the threats, and the weaknesses, high priorities were given to group tours.

Despite the under- management of the environment, tourism was highly advertised through pictures, brochures etc. In this way group tourism was widely customized. In recent years many governments have actively promoted group tourism within the natural and protected areas (Johnas, 1992). However, group tourism despite its increasing income, has caused damage to the environment.

Economic value of tourism

Few studies have estimated/appraised the value of ecotourism within protected areas. That is more because sufficient information has not been collected in the relevant arena through the private sector, governments and the UN World Environment Organization (WEO) in a scientific and systematic manner. The reason for that may be it is a new area of tourism (Filion et al. 1992).

Ecotourism includes visiting far away places, rural areas, natural sites and the like. Those are the places and areas for which large investment has not occurred. Ecotourism entails:

- Travel to natural destinations.
- It has the least impact.
- It increases awareness of natural spaces.
- It brings benefits for the local people.
- It provides respect to local culture.
- Human rights support it, and it causes democratic movements.

Conclusion

Industrialization and appearance of new means of transportation have widely and highly affected the tourist industry in the past two centuries. The more we enter the 21st century, the more increase we witness the development of tourism. Though it was primarily an industry being practiced by the wealthy industrial nations, it has gradually become a habit of developing nations too. Tourism is now mutually practiced

among nations, though not in a balance and equally practiced. However, the stressful life of the current time has made travel and tourism very competitive. Tourism not only happens in cities, but villages and natural resources are on the agenda, and many tourists visit those places through group tours out of their wishes to do so and their curiosity. Nowadays, most of the world tourism though belongs to the industrial world. Natural, social and cultural parameters widely play as motivations to do so. Ecotourism is a new form of tourist activity which takes many people to virgin lands and resources not previously exposed. It is an action with good income for the host place/country.

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