



Positive and Negative Social-Cultural, Economic and Environmental Impacts of Tourism on Residents

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Abstract. Tourism is a socio-cultural phenomenon that has intensified with technological development and with the advancement of communication and transport systems. However, the increase in the number of people moving around the world does not necessarily represent success or tourist access, but it can mostly serve more immediate marketing interests.

Since tourism is considered a phenomenon, the sociological interest to study it arises. Tourist practice is an educational process, a learning process, which is established through the relationship between visitors and residents and their cultural backgrounds. Several authors dedicate their studies to this field, and several are also those who try to understand the relations between tourists and the residents in the host region. The purpose of this work is to review the scientific literature that is focused on the sociology of tourism as a subject to study the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism on societies and residents and how residents perceived the benefits and costs of tourism developments in the local community. Review of literature suggests that interactions between visitors and the host community can lead to short and long term positive and negative social-cultural, economic and environmental impacts on destinations.

Keywords: Sociology of tourism · Socio-cultural impacts · Economic impact · Host community · Development

1 Introduction

Technological development, transport and the means of information and communication enabled a dramatic increase in the number of people making tourist trips, starting in the second half of the 20th century. The growth of tourism in recent decades has been a lever for several studies that help to explain the success of the phenomenon. Before being an economic activity, the tourism phenomenon emerges in a history of human society as a social practice [1]. Tourism should be studied as a social phenomenon and its impacts on the societies life that will be marked mainly by social and economic changes. It is from this “social phenomenon” that the study of the sociology of tourism takes itself on an important role in the understanding of this tourism phenomenon and its impact on the agents involved: residents and tourists. The development of tourism has impacts that are perceived in different ways depending on the region, population, and individuals. The impacts of tourism can be sorted into categories such as economic, socio-cultural and environmental and these impacts can be either positive or negative. Different studies highlight that, in general, residents have favourable attitudes towards tourism [2–5] and the economic dimension is the main source of positive attitudes from residents [6]. Even so, a deeper understanding from the resident’s point of view is needed, not only economically, but also socio-culturally and environmentally, which will allow the governments involved to plan more carefully for the future of tourism.

It is important to analyse how residents perceived the benefits and costs of tourism developments in the local community. This article aims to present a discussion of authors who describe the impacts of tourism development on the receiving communities and the importance of knowing the residents’ perception and attitude towards tourism. Through bibliographic research it was possible to perceive the impacts and negatives of tourism at economic, socio-cultural and environmental levels.

2 Methodology

The purpose of this work is to review some of the existing scientific literature that analyses social tourism, and, in particular, study the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism on the host community. The reviewed papers are from scientific journals, mostly indexed on Web of Science or Scopus published recently, and other influential publications. There was also the concern to incorporate papers with different viewpoints on the issue. Since these academic documents will be accepted as certified information, the papers were analysed from the data obtained.

The searches were performed using the terms “Sociology of tourism”, “Socio-cultural impacts”, “Host community” as keywords in the scientific area of tourism.

The review of the literature undertaken provides an analysis of the evolution of published research and also permits the identification of future research pathways.

3 Sociology of Tourism

Tourism can be studied as a social phenomenon even if it goes hand in hand with the sociology that provides for the study of this “new” social phenomenon. The term “sociology of tourism” thus emerges from the study of the impacts of tourism activity on the agents involved, be it residents or tourists.

The Cohen’s study [7] was a source of information for many researchers in the area and it also confirms that the sociology of tourism is a discipline on the rise that is concerned with studying the motivations and role of tourists, the relations between tourists and visitors, the impact on the resident’s society of the country visited and the structure of the tourist system, these are the four areas of study of the sociology of tourism. Dall’Agnol [8] also reiterates that Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology have paid more attention than other areas to the impact of tourism (or the changes) caused in the “receiving communities”. However, in this article, the emphasis will be on the impact of tourism on the resident society.

As Marujo [9] states, “Tourism increasingly plays a socializing role within society. It allows human beings of different cultures to meet and contributes, in many cases, to the social and cultural changes of a region or country”. However, it is these social and cultural changes that cause so much discord within the societies visited and often affect the way tourists are received, giving the wrong idea about the hospitality of a particular region or country if it extends to a larger scale. Aires et al. [10] add that services are one of the main products of the tourism industry and that it is not possible to think about tourism “without thinking about personal contact and the relationship between humans”.

The relationship between tourists and locals is mostly based on monetary factors. This is because many times they interact in a restaurant, in a hotel, or even in a shop where there is a payment from the visitor for the service provided [7]. This relationship interferes with the concept of hospitality which “assumes a form of human relationship based on reciprocal action between visitors and visited and whenever people relate, even for the realization of practical activities linked to receiving or visiting someone or place, the relationship will depend on the values of those who are interacting” [10]. About this relationship, Cardona [11] also considers important to study the attitudes towards tourism on the residents’ side, but also on the tourists’ side, since they are the two that interact in the tourist destinations, and their perceptions and attitudes are interrelated. In this field, Cohen [7] believes that, according to the evolution of tourism, locals have become unable to evaluate tourists individually, making an ethnic value judgment about behaviour. These, whether good or bad, will influence how residents welcome foreigners. In order to be well received by the community, this “must first be perceived as hospitable by those who belong to it” [10].

With societies so different in terms of culture, language, social condition and way of thinking, the shock at the socio-cultural level is inevitable [10]. These impacts can be reduced or minimized if planning can be done according to the perspectives of both sides [7]. Dall’Agnol [8] has the same opinion and, according to the author, it is fundamental to know the perceptions and attitudes of residents in tourist locations about the impacts generated by tourism in their places of residence, with the view that

this opinion is indispensable to plan and develop localities, taking into account the extreme importance of the local population for the development of the tourism activity.

Cohen and Cohen [12] believe that the study of the sociology of tourism has been marked in recent years by three specific trends: 1. the application of new theories to the fields of tourism phenomena; 2. the analysis of these same new theories of tourism phenomena; 3. these new studies of the sociology of tourism have been impacted by the fact that tourism is seen as an intellectual project or culture, with special attention to Ethics and Philosophy.

The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) created in 1999 a guide to good tourism practices to respect both tourists and residents and to maximise the socio-economic contribution of tourism by minimising all possible negative impacts. This guide consists of 10 articles that are divided into the following topics: 1. the contribution of tourism to mutual respect and understanding between people and societies; 2. tourism as a vehicle for personal and collective satisfaction; 3. tourism as a factor of sustainable development; 4. the contribution of tourism with the use of spaces of cultural importance; 5. tourism as an activity of benefit to communities; 6. the right to do tourism; 7. the freedom of tourist flows; 8. the rights of workers in the tourism industry; and, 9. the implementation of the principles present in the Global Code of Ethics in Tourism. This document was born from the will to promote equity, responsibility and sustainability of tourism at a global level and the benefits it will bring, will contribute to the growth of various sectors of society and in the context of a liberalized and open international economy [13].

4 Tourism and the Residents

Sharma [14] states that from an early age sociologists interested in the theme of tourism study the personal, sociological and cultural impacts of it on the visited community, as well as on the economic and environmental levels.

These changes can be at the level of lifestyle, the way they are dressed, or even in the food habits. Pham et al. [4] and Baker et al. [15] believe that residents' perception of tourism can be altered according to the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the positive and negative impacts of tourism activity.

4.1 Impacts of Tourism in the Residents

The interaction between tourists and residents is one of the central aspects of tourism, taking into account the encounter between people from different realities. "When a community becomes a destination known for tourism, the quality of life of the residents is affected as a consequence of their development in the sector (...), including an increase in the number of people, increased use of roads and varying effects on the economy and employment" [16]. In the context of tourism, the two parts that meet, change behaviour. The visitor is seen as a business, since the visited, regardless of the salary they earn, try to serve them in the best way to come back more often, which may bring more benefits to both groups. However, this interaction can lead to conflict situations when they are confronted with the differences that separate them [17].

Tourism involves people and destinations and has both positive and negative impacts on the environment where it occurs. The perception of these impacts is not easy to evaluate, as tourism interacts with various sectors of economic activity and also involves changes in physical and social aspects [18, 19]. Three main impacts are resulting from the coexistence between people from different backgrounds: economic, socio-cultural and environmental [2–4]. In an ideal balance, these three impacts would result in the development of tourism with economic prosperity, a strong and stable society, but also an environmental conscience. In essence, they would result in an improvement in the quality of life of each region or country [14]. However, the result of these three factors does not only generate positive points, obtaining many times more negative points, depending on the society in which we are analysing them. Sociocultural impacts, for example, should be evaluated or have a different interpretation by people belonging to the same society [10]. Residents who reside in historic city centres are more used to meeting tourists, and even to living together, than those who are a little further away and do not live this experience closely.

Gursoy et al. [16] propose a model in which support for tourism development is influenced by perceptions of costs and benefits in the local economy, noting also the concern of residents in their community: community concern (concerns such as the environment, schools, crime and recreational opportunities, may affect how the community sees the benefits and negative side of tourism); community connection (concerns, and the type of connection they have with society, influencing the viewpoint on tourism); ecological attitude (residents may have a positive or negative perception of impacts on the environment, explained by values and preferences for the preservation and use of resources); the use of tourism resources by the population (reactions to tourism can be based on the perception of how residents can use the resources made available to tourists, having a negative impact if they are unable to do so and a positive impact if they are allowed to do so); the state of the local economy (a poorer economy needs to be more driven to grow, which can happen with the benefit of increased tourism in that region); the benefits (the main thing is economic growth in the region); the losses (tourism has its pros, but also its cons). Residents want to minimize as much as possible the negative impacts to maximize the good they get from tourism. Seen as negative is the increase in crime and traffic, and finally the support, or not, of tourism.

Barretto [20] also adds that a better relationship between tourists and hosts is necessary and for that this relationship should be better studied. For locals, tourists are seen a beneficial, thanks to economic power and not for their presence. For tourists, the locals are just a “tool for their purposes”.

4.2 Economic Impacts

One of the biggest impacts of tourism is the impact on the economy of the region or even of a country. Tourism is an important industry all over the world and some countries are reliant on tourism such as the Maldives, British Virgin Islands, Aruba, and Macau, among others. Worldwide, in 10 countries the direct contribution to GDP was more than 15%, and in 12 countries the total contribution was more than 40%, in 2019. In the same year, more than 10% of the jobs were generated directly by the T&T

industry in 20 countries, and in 46 countries the total contribution of the sector for employment surpassed 15%, according to data from WTTC.

According to Cohen [7], tourism has an impact on foreign exchange improving, income, employment, distribution of benefits, prices, ownership and control, the development of the region, and government revenues, and these positive effects are widely recognized in the literature (e.g. [21, 22]). Tourism also attracts foreign investment, improves infrastructures, and leads to economies of scale and thus reduces production costs [23–26]. At the level of the local economy, Milheiro [27] highlights the following positive impacts of tourism: attracting investment, additional regional income, employment growth and the multiplier effect on tourism in job creation; improving the standard of living of residents; aid for agricultural development; increasing services and facilities for the local community; increasing demand for local products; increasing household income; improving the economic structure of destinations, encouraging entrepreneurship, and improving infrastructure. Despite the benefits that tourism presents, some negative impacts are also recognized, such as the dependence on foreign investment, national and international interests above local and resident interests, as well as the weakening of other sectors [2, 7]. Milheiro [27] also adds that the strong dependence on tourism, inflation, increased propensity to import, seasonality, low rate of return on investment, non-significant direct employment due to the small size of companies, and increased taxes on real estate, among others.

In the literature one of the main strengths identified by residents in society is job creation, providing more income, although the business opportunity at a more personal level and the development of infrastructures and public services are also relevant [6, 22]. Among the negative impacts, residents highlight the seasonality of tourism, which results in the seasonality of employment and sales resulting from the activity, low-paid employment, and the increase in the cost of living, particularly in the increase of house's prices [2, 6, 22, 24, 28, 29].

The perception of the economic impacts of residents depends on a set of conditions. When there are economic crisis or a slowdown in economic activity residents underestimate the costs linked to tourism development and assess more favourably the benefits [3, 16, 30], although Garau-Vadell [2] found that during economic crises while the perception of the costs of tourism declines, the perception of the benefits do not increase. Furthermore, the attitude toward tourism tends to be more favourable when residents are economically more dependent on tourism or if they benefit more from this activity [31].

4.3 Sociocultural Impacts

The socio-cultural impacts of tourism are manifested in the populations as a result of direct or indirect coexistence with tourists, and their studies began long after those on the economic impacts on tourism. The research shows that socio-cultural influences are the result of the relationship created during a certain period between residents and tourists [32], and are affected by the habits, customs, social life, beliefs and values of non-nationals of a given society [6].

Sometimes, during the holidays, most tourists are not very interested in a massive intercultural communication with the locals. However, a very direct coexistence is not

necessary to change behaviours. The relationships between tourists and visitors are determined by the personal characteristics of each of the participants and the conditions in which contacts are developed [32]. At this social level, Cohen [7] identifies the following aspects: community involvement, interpersonal relations, the bases of social organization, the rhythm of society's life, migration, division of labour, stratification, distribution of power, social deviation, customs and the arts. Milheiro [27] highlights as positive socio-cultural impacts the contact with the tourist, the improvement of population's skills, the sense of pride and cohesion, the modernization of the lifestyle of the populations and the conservation of local culture.

Relations between tourists and locals can be characterized by the nature of the relations, space-time constraints, spontaneity, and imbalance and unevenness between the participants [32]. The nature of relationships is usually maintained for a short period and has different meanings for tourists and visitors. For tourists, residents are members of a different community with a culture they want to discover. For the residents, the tourists are seen as more superficial contacts, since the resident population is visited by several tourists, not taking the coexistence as the only one. The relations can also be characterized by spatio-temporal restrictions, influenced by the length of stay and the intensity of the tourist-resident relationship. In short stays, the tourist tries to do as many activities as possible and, as a result of the hospitality, usually ends up spending more money than he would spend in his day-to-day life. One can also consider the lack of some spontaneity in the contact between tourists and locals, since this often happens in a commercial context and not spontaneously in the street. These spontaneous relationships are more in the hands of tour operators and, in some cases, reduced to what is necessary. The imbalance and gap between the players, i.e. the differences in the standard of living between who visits and who is visited sometimes makes locals feel inferior due to tourists. Holidays are an experience for visitors and a common day-to-day life at the tourist site visited, becoming a psychological pressure that tourists do not even notice.

Almeida García et al. [6] add that interactions between tourists and residents can result in new social and cultural opportunities or, on the other hand, in anxiety and stress for the changes that occur. The positive influence on the services offered by the community helps to preserve the historical heritage, increases the spirit of cultural identity, preserves cultural values and increases the improvement of the residents' quality of life. Violence, delinquency, crime, increased drug and alcohol use, as well as increased prostitution, are seen as negative impacts.

For Jovicic [32], the factors that determine the nature of relations between tourists and those being visited, and which may encourage or discourage interaction between them, depending on the volume and type of tourism, the isolation of tourists, the purpose for temporary stay, the language and forms of communication, the economic importance of hospitality, the involvement of local people in the economy and the development of the nationalist spirit.

If the tourism industry generates multiple socio-cultural benefits for the countries visited, it is particularly important for developing countries because of the expected economic and socio-cultural growth [33]. However, for the author, tourism can also have harmful socio-cultural effects, such as the degradation and commercialization of culture, increased tensions between the adopted lifestyle and the traditional one, the

erosion of the local language, the risks of promoting dangerous activities (illegal gambling, drugs, violence), the loss of identity and local values, cultural shocks, social stress, the generation of crime and prostitution and sex tourism [3, 22, 24, 28, 31].

4.4 Environmental Impacts

Since the 1980s, the environmental impact of tourism has gained considerable attention by relevant organizations, such as the WTO and the OECD, and by many individual researchers [34, 35]. In recent years, sustainability has become one of the most important concepts in tourism planning and development. Studies show that tourism costs and benefits are being seen from the perspective of sustainability. The management of tourist activities in urban environments has encouraged pro-environmental behaviours that result in the application of principles of ecotourism and urban planning [36]. However, it is still necessary to address the issues of tourism sustainability. Kuščer [37], draws attention to the need for a balance between the economic and environmental interests of tourism. Decision-making is needed to develop and sustain urban tourism. Problems associated with urban tourism, such as air pollution, excessive noise and vibrations, as well as the negative visual impact of tourism need to be controlled. It is necessary to ensure that tourists and residents are responsible for the environment, to conserve environmental resources for future generations [38]. Sustainable tourism is very important as the results of several studies results have revealed. Residents realize that a positive impact on tourism is more likely to support the future development of tourism.

With the increase of tourism, several negative environmental impacts must be considered, namely the deterioration of ecosystems and the erosion of natural resources [3, 39]. Almeida Garcia et al. [6] state that tourism can be a reason to protect and preserve natural resources, having these positive impacts, or, on the contrary, to destroy them.

As for the negative impacts, some residents admit that tourism can cause pollution, garbage and traffic, refrigerators and air conditioners which leads to the emission of greenhouse gases and increases health risks [3, 24, 40]. There are also physical impacts such as construction activity and infrastructure development, and when excessive and unplanned, also results in aesthetic pollution [40], but tourism can also improve environmental management and planning if there is awareness of the importance of the environment [40]. Nevertheless, compared to the economic benefits they obtain through tourism activity, the negative impacts on the environment move to second place, showing a lack of concern in this field.

5 Conclusions

From the analysis of the articles, we observed that there is no common consensus on the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism in the literature.

The study of the sociology of tourism has become important to understand the changes in residents' perceptions about tourists. For determining the tourism impacts,

the socio-economic characteristics should be explored taking into account the destination characteristics and visitors' profile.

The economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism can be positive or negative for residents.

The economic impacts are almost always synonymous with positivity while the negative environmental impacts are more highlighted by residents regardless of their geographic locations. Awareness of the social-cultural impacts of tourism is crucial to guarantee the sustainable management of tourism, but these impacts are more difficult to evaluate and differentiate from other impacts. Moreover, research has also focused more on economic aspects and, in the past, socio-cultural impacts were considered less significant than economic impacts. The key to the socio-cultural impact of tourism seems to be the relationship between guests and hosts to create a better cultural understanding. Some authors point out that the perception of residents about tourism varies according to how these same residents are impacted economically, socially and environmentally but it varies depending on how close they live to the tourist attraction centers. As presented, those who live in one of the city's tourist attractions have a different perception of tourism than those who live further away and do not socialize so much with visitors. Harmony between residents and tourists can be found through both parties by minimizing the negative impacts and maximizing the positive aspects that tourism can offer, through the participation of tourism activity.

This study confined itself to analyzing a certain number of journals which is a limitation of this study. From the review literature it is possible to derive some conclusions and directions for future research.

Among the different approaches to assessing the role of tourism as to its positive or negative effects, the best approach would be to have an integrated cost-benefit approach that could bring great social, economic and environmental benefits more specifically to the host community. As tourism is an industry with enormous economic impacts, social and environmental consequences, it is essential that those involved in planning, management and policies have a good understanding of these impacts for decision-making.

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