**Impacts of tourism**

Over the last twenty years there has been a growing awareness of the impact tourism has on the environment and societies in which tourism takes place. As mass tourism first developed along the Spanish coast and other areas, there was little concern for the negative impacts that tourism was having on the environment of the area or on the lives of the people living in the area.

In recent years, concepts such as **eco-tourism**, **responsible tourism** and **sustainable tourism** have emerged. This is as a result of moreresearch being undertaken into the range of impacts tourism createsand the ways in which these impacts can be managed more carefully.It is believed that providing tourists with information about the area they are visiting is likely to make them behave in a more responsible manner.The impact of tourism on the environment, such as litter left on beaches, is now being recognised.

It is usual to classify the positive and negative impacts of tourism under the following headings:

• economic impacts

• environmental impacts

• social impacts

• cultural impacts

**Economic Impacts**

Positive

Tourism generates income for a variety of businesses and creates a wide range of employment opportunities. At the global scale, tourism is seen as one of the world’s largest and fastest growing industries. This trend has continued throughout the last 50 years. Within the United Kingdom, it is estimated that inbound tourism generates about £16 billion each year. Domestic tourism, including day trips and staying visits, generates over £60 billion per year. In terms of employment, it is estimated that in the United Kingdom 1.4 million jobs are directly related to tourism. People working in gift shops are working in the tourism industry. As well as generating employment and income, another positive impact of tourism is improvements in **infrastructure**. These include road and rail improvements, airport development and improvements in utilities, such as water supply and telecommunications. Through these, local people can benefit from the improved facilities which have been provided for tourists.

Negative

Very often a large number of moving visitors into an area pushes up the price of goods and services, meaning that local people have to pay more for food, drinks, transport etc. It is often the case that in popular tourist areas shops provide products for tourists more than they do for local people, meaning that more gift shops and restaurants might open rather than shops providing goods and services for people living in the area. Local shops might provide products for tourists rather than meet the needs of local people. Local people often have to pay additional taxes to help finance additional services which are provided for tourists, such as water treatment facilities and tourist information centres.

Some holiday areas have a large number of second homes which are only used for short periods of the year by their owners. This is particularly the case in National Parks and popular coastal areas. The demand for second homes often increases the prices of all housing in the area, making it more difficult for local people, especially young people, to buy their first property. Second home ownership is an example of a negative economic impact of tourism which may be a cause of conflict between local people and tourists.

Second homes and holiday homes are popular in many tourist areas.

One of the most significant negative economic impacts of tourism is the decline in traditional employment which happens when workers move from industries such as farming, mining and fishing into service jobs in the tourism industry.

In some Alpine areas, traditional skills such as cheese making are in danger of being lost as more people are attracted to jobs in tourism.

Another negative impact of tourism is **over-dependency**. It may be that, as tastes and fashions change, or due to any of a range of external pressures, the number of tourists visiting a particular destination may decrease very suddenly, leading to a loss of employment and businesses closing.

**Environmental Impacts**

Positive

It is generally the case that tourism has created more negative impacts on the environment than positive impacts. However, increasing awareness of the need for careful environmental management has helped to reduce the negative impacts of tourism in recent years. There are a number of ways in which tourism can have a positive impact on the environment of a destination and in some cases can be a force for environmental change. In the United Kingdom, for example, a number of former industrial sites and areas of derelict land have been preserved and developed as tourist attractions and stretches of disused canals have been renovated so that they can be used for tourist purposes. Tourism can also help to increase funding for renovation work on historic buildings such as castles, churches and cathedrals in order to ensure that they are preserved for future generations. Turning former industrial sites into museums can help to improve the environment of the area

Negative

It has to be accepted that many forms of travel and tourism have a damaging impact on the environment. Trains, cars, aircraft and ships all consume fuel and produce emissions that causes atmospheric pollution which, in turn, contributes to climate change. In recent years, there has been a growing acceptance of the harmful environmental impacts of travel, and more measures are now being taken to help reduce these impacts. These include making aircraft and vehicles more fuel efficient and experimenting with new types of fuel. In an increasing number of destinations, such as historic cities and National Parks, schemes are being introduced to reduce the amount of pollution and congestion caused by motor vehicles. These include park and ride schemes and a number of ideas to encourage visitors to use public transport. In Zion Canyon National Park in Utah USA, no vehicles are allowed in the park and all visitors are transported by electric buses. As well as environmental pollution caused by travel and traffic, air pollution also causes damage to buildings and noise pollution is an issue in busy resorts with lots of night life. Pollution is also caused by tourists producing litter. This creates an eyesore on the landscape as well as being a threat to the safety of people and animals. Water pollution is another common issue which has been addressed in recent years. In the past, many beaches were unsafe partly because of the fact that untreated sewage was allowed to enter the sea near the beaches. The European Union **blue flag beach** scheme has encouraged many local authorities to take measures to reduce pollution and make the beaches safer. A blue flag means that a beach has met certain standards of cleanliness.

**Congestion** and **overcrowding** are also commonly identified as negative environmental impacts of tourism. Congestion is normally applied to the problems associated with too many cars being within or travelling to a destination. Overcrowding occurs where the volume of visitors at a destination

increases to a point at which the enjoyment of the destination is spoilt. This can occur when there are too many people on a beach, walking around an historic town or trying to reach a viewpoint at a natural attraction.

Too many tourists walking along streets in an historic town can spoil the visit.

The final category of negative environmental impact is about destroying the natural landscape of an area. This includes the process of erosion caused by walkers, horse riders and other groups and the loss of habitats of plants and animals.

**Social Impacts**

Positive

One of the major motivating factors for travel is to meet new people and learn about different cultures and tourism often leads to a greater understanding between people living in different societies. Very often, tourists benefit from new and improved facilities which are provided for tourists. This may include attractions and catering facilities – there is nothing stopping people living in a tourist destination from enjoying themselves in restaurants or visiting attractions built mainly for tourist use.

Tourists will often gain a greater respect for the lifestyle of the people living in the area they are visiting. Increased tourism also leads to local communities improving their skills and improving their social status. In well-managed tourism developments local people are encouraged to undertake education and training to enable them to feel part of the development.

At the Grand Canyon West development, the Indian chief has been trained to be a tour guide and to provide off-road tours of the area.

Negative

There are a number of negative social impacts which have been identified. These are mainly related to conflict between the tourists and the host community. These may result from the behaviour of people living in the area who resent the tourists taking over their community. However, it is often more common that anti-social behaviour from groups of tourists will be the cause of the conflict.

Negative social impacts also include increased crime in the area, such as prostitution, illegal gambling and drug dealing and robbery. Very often, this is not related to local people, but occurs as a result of criminal gangs moving into the area to exploit tourists and sometimes local people as well. In some destinations, local people have been obliged to move away from where they have traditionally lived to make way for tourism development.

In some coastal areas of Spain, local people have had to make way for the development of apartments and golf complexes.

Another common issue is the matter of **seasonal employment**, or more realistically unemployment. Many tourist areas are developing strategies to maintain a flow of visitors throughout the year thus reducing the impact of seasonal unemployment. These issues are more common in areas of mass tourism, in larger cities and in certain destinations within the less developed world. There are many destinations where there is little or no conflict between local people and tourists.

**Cultural Impacts**

Positive impacts

In some cases, tourism may help to preserve traditional customs such as music, dance and theatre, as well as creating a demand for locally produced foods and drink. Tourism can also stimulate the production and sale of local arts and crafts to meet the needs of visitors and at the same time contribute to the continuation of traditional crafts and skills. Tourism also has an important role to play in reinforcing a region’s cultural identity.

Visitors can learn about traditional houses lived in by first nations tribes at Grand Canyon West

Negative

More people now recognise that tourism may bring about a loss of an area’s cultural identity, especially in an area that has seen a rapid development of mass tourism. It is easier to provide international food and drink with which tourists are familiar rather than encouraging them to eat foods associated with the area. This has not been helped by the global spread of fast food chains and multinational brands of drinks. Another negative cultural impact of tourism is the staging of events, dance or music specifically for tourists in a way that demeans or makes fun of the local culture of the area, such as some Spanish dancing. However, more and more tourists are becoming aware of their potential impact on the culture and heritage of the area they are visiting and visitors are less willing to support activities that exploit local traditions and culture.

Buying fake designer items such as handbags is seen as wrong because tourists are not supporting the local culture