

# Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism with Reference to the Demonstration Effect

Dr. Anshu Mala Gautam

*Asst. Professor, Kohinoor College of Hotel and Tourism Management Studies, Mumbai*  
*E-mail: anshumalagautam@gmail.com*

---

**Abstract**—Tourism is an industry with enormous economic impacts. It is also an industry that has many social and cultural or physical consequences. Tourism, like many other industries is often used as a national or regional development tool. In general, tourism development within a host community has often impacted the community in both positive and negative ways. These impacts are usually classified as economic, social and cultural impacts. The social and cultural impacts of tourism are the ways in which tourism is contributing to changes in the value system, individual behaviour, family relationship, life style, safety level, moral conduct, religion, language and interpersonal relationship between members of the host community at the destination. This paper tries to observe the impacts of tourism from one major perspective: social and cultural. Along with demonstration effect, this paper focuses on the positive and negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism and on ways to minimise the negative socio-cultural impacts.

**Keywords:** Tourism Development, Social and Cultural Impacts, National Development Tool, Demonstration Effect, Host Community, Positive and Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts.

## (1) INTRODUCTION

### (a) Overview

Tourism is one of the most important components of the global economy. It generates billions of dollars in revenues and millions of jobs worldwide. It is considered by many communities, especially in emerging countries, as the only tool for development, and the only opportunity for increasing and improving the quality of life. Thus, the tourism industry has stretched from seaside to mountain resorts and from small villages to the big metropolitans. Lately, tourism has become quite a profitable business, which also brings benefits to a country's economy (Rogers, 2008; Rogers, 2003; Dwyer & Mistilis, 1999).

Tourism has three major impacts on a destination which the tourists usually visit (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilber & Wanhill, 1993), these are mainly economic, environmental and socio-cultural in nature. But at the same time, tourism has started to show its uglier side. The actions of both the tourists and the investors are creating negative impacts on the socio-cultural values and the environmental assets of the host communities all over the world.

### (b) Socio-Cultural Perspectives

The social impact of tourism refers to the changes in the quality of life of the residents of a tourist destination. From the socio-cultural perspective, tourism brings together people from different backgrounds, cultures and traditions and promotes peace. The development of tourism not only effects social impacts but also the interaction between the residents and visitors and promotes social transformation. But at the same time, due to globalisation (Demonstration Effect), many communities have lost their cultural identity and have paved way for a 'Disneyfication' of their village or town. Tourist entrepreneurs can also be blamed for a total disrespect to the local traditions and the environment. The main problem from these negative impacts is that the local community is the only side that picks up the check for all the damages on the culture, tradition, and most importantly on the environment. The speed and concentration and the magnitude and direction of social impacts must be taken into account when attempting to attribute the cause of social impacts.

Culture and tourism have a mutually beneficial relationship which can strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of places, regions and countries. Culture is an increasingly important element of the tourism product as it creates distinctiveness in a crowded global marketplace. At the same time, tourism provides an important means of enhancing culture and creating income which can support and strengthen cultural heritage,

cultural production and creativity (OECD, 2009). Culture and tourism are linked because of their obvious synergies and their growth potential. It is because of this linkage and potential that it becomes important to examine the impacts of tourism on the culture of the host community of a tourist destination.

### (c) Objectives of the Study

- (i) To examine the positive socio-cultural impacts of tourism
- (ii) To examine the negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism
- (iii) To study the concept of Demonstration Effect

(iv) To suggest ways for minimising the negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism

#### (d) Organisation of the Study

The study consists of 5 sections. Section 1 talks about the research topic and gives an introduction to the topic. Section 2 discusses the existing literature pertaining to this topic. Section 3 discusses the research methodology used for the study. Section 4 gives the suggestions / recommendations for minimising the negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism. Finally Section 6 gives the conclusion of the study.

### (2) LITERATURE REVIEW

#### (a) Positive Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism

The positive socio-cultural impacts of tourism have been distinctively shown in Figure 1.1



Fig 1.1

#### (b) Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism

The negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism have been distinctively shown in Figure 1.2

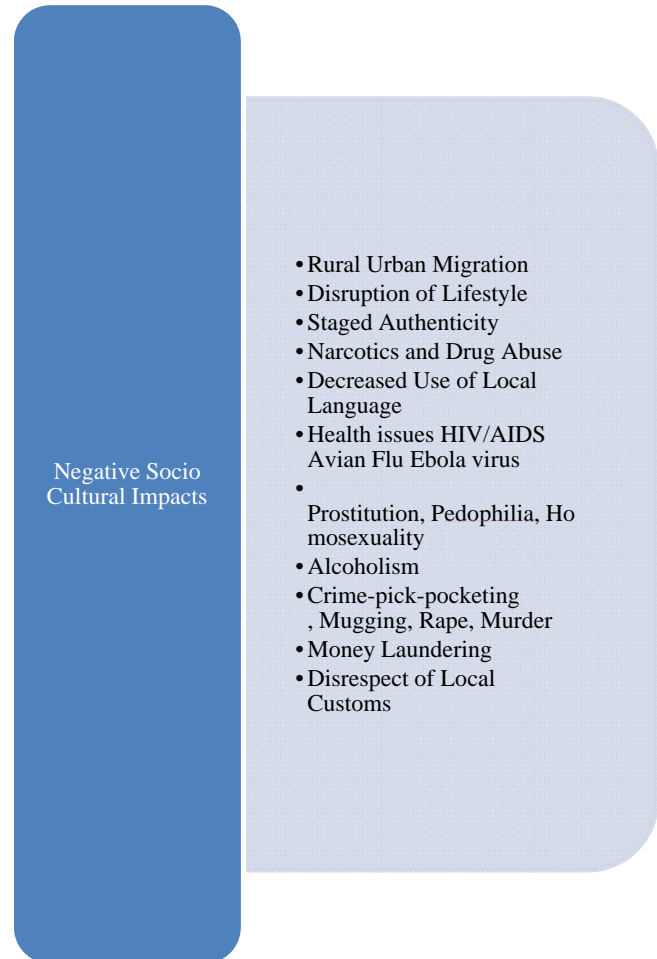


Fig 1.2

#### (c) Demonstration Effect

The demonstration effect has become a well-established concept in the literature on tourism. It has been commonly reported as a consequence of tourism, focusing on the impersonation of tourists' consumption patterns. However, there is very limited evidence to highlight how tourist behaviour is actually or potentially impersonated by locals.

The concept of the demonstration effect was originally borrowed from Economics. The original aim of demonstration effect was to describe the interest levels of the local residents who were trying to imitate the consumption levels of the tourists. By being in almost constant touch with the lifestyles of the tourists and their different consumption patterns, local residents directly compare their standards of living with those of other people. This leads the residents of a tourist destination to adopt the behaviour demonstrated by the tourists. For the demonstration effect to exist, three basic propositions are suggested: first, the behaviour of tourists and hosts is initially different; second, behavioural patterns are transferred from

one group to the other; and third, the imitators maintain the demonstrated behaviour (Fisher, 2004).

In this manner, the comparisons made by the residents of a tourist destination between their personal material possessions and the ones belonging to the tourists can either be favourable or unfavourable for the host community/the residents of a tourist destination. The comparison becomes hostile or unfavourable when the residents of a tourist destination develop the feeling that the goods they used to consuming are inferior to the goods used by the tourists. Contact and interaction between the tourists and the residents of a tourist destination threatens the perseverance and resoluteness of the daily consumption patterns of the residents of a tourist destination.

According to Burns (1999: 101), Demonstration Effect refers to “the process by which traditional societies, especially those which are particularly susceptible to outside influence such as youths, will voluntarily seek to adopt certain behaviours (and accumulate material goods) on the basis that possession of them will lead to the achievement of the leisured, hedonistic lifestyle demonstrated by the tourists.” Similarly, Moore (1995: 302) states that the Demonstration Effect “consists of host populations’ impersonation of the behaviour and especially the consumption practices of the tourists who visit them.”

Furthermore, this notion has been backed by Reisinger (2009) who affirms that as a result of the Demonstration Effect, the residents of a tourist destination develop an affinity for the superior material possessions of the tourists and wish to access and own them. She also reiterates that because of the inability to own and acquire the superior material possessions of the tourists and their lifestyle, Demonstration Effect creates a feeling of envy, antagonism, and even hatred in the minds and hearts of the residents of a tourist destination for the tourists. This holds true especially for the residents of the tourist destinations of the developing countries.

To summarise, the Demonstration Effect is an outcome of the guest-host relationship where residents of a tourist destination who perceive the tourists as superior beings, try to imitate their behaviour. The Demonstration Effect is mostly visible in the younger generations who may be dissatisfied with their own lifestyle and try to impersonate the tourists.

#### **(d) Impacts of the Demonstration Effect**

##### **1. Influence on the Host Communities**

- (a) Acculturation – The changing components of culture due to the influence of foreign culture.
- (b) Commercialisation - Reduction of undeveloped global spaces due to increase in availability of transport of people and products.
- (c) Modernisation - Improved infrastructure, enhanced economy, and change in values at the cost of the independent culture of the host community.

## **2. Acculturation**

The process of acquiring or impersonating a certain culture in order to meet the demands of the tourists.

Examples of this are:

- a. Allowing the tourists to flout the norms of visiting a heritage monument of sacred buildings.
- b. Changing the elements of a traditional dance to meet the taste of the tourists.

## **3. Globalisation**

Globalization is the exchange and flow of economic and intellectual items in terms of goods, knowledge, values and images, as well as people on a global scale. Tourism is a pathway for globalization in the sense that tourists spread around the world sharing all of these influences and products with the local culture they encounter.

“By spreading western influence and destroying unique culture around the world, tourism has created and increased globalization.”

## **4. Modernisation**

Modernization comes in the form of improved infrastructure, enhanced economy, and a change in values, at the cost of the independent culture of the host destination. Modernization allows developing countries to improve upon their social status but forces them to give up their cultural identity.

## **(3) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study is based on secondary data sources. The main data sources are the various books on Tourism and on the Impacts of Tourism. Besides this, various research papers have also been an important source of information.

## **(4) WAYS TO REGULATE THE NEGATIVE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACTS OF TOURISM**

- (a) To ensure that tourism develops gradually so that the local residents get sufficient time to adapt to the change and understand and participate in the process of tourism development in their region.
- (b) The local residents should be informed about the benefits that tourism brings to a destination and how everyone has a role to play in the promotion of tourism and hospitality towards to guests/tourists.
- (c) The tourists need to be sensitised about the social norms and customs which are in practice at the destination visited by them.
- (d) Providing appealing and informative interpretation can also help in reducing the negative impact. Interpretation is the process by which the significance of the site is explained to the tourists.

- (e) Tourism professionals should prepare a code of conduct for tourists and provide the travellers with tips to ensure that the sensitive areas are not overlooked.
- (f) The tourists need to recognise and respect the local cultures and should be briefed on how they should behave before they interact with the locals.
- (g) Sustainable Tourism should be promoted and followed that allows tourism to continue without leaving negative impacts on the culture and society of a tourist destination.

## (5) CONCLUSION

The significance of the tourism industry and its role in the economic development of a country is well-known. The environment is a powerful resource for tourism as it plays a major role in attracting tourists to a destination. Tourism results in interactions with the residents or hosts, the suppliers of tourism products and services and the NGOs, causing an impact on the society and culture. The negative impacts can be removed gradually by involving the residents in the development process. The tourism activity to be developed should be acceptable to the residents and at the same time should be a source of income to them. The positive and negative impacts on the environment should be kept in mind while undertaking any developmental activity. The extent of damage by unplanned and unregulated tourism can be so severe that it can destroy the very basis of tourism. The carrying capacity should be kept in mind to give the visitors a satisfying destination experience and the extent of development should be such that tourism is sustained for the future generations to enjoy.

Since tourism leaves its mark and never leaves a host society or culture unchanged, the negative impacts are minimised by the positive impacts and sufficient remedial measures are being taken up by various tourism organisations and the government to resolve the social evils in the society. Many tourism organisations like UNWTO, IATA, UFTAA have raised their voice and passed resolutions against the menace caused by the negative impacts of tourism.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Bhatia, A.K. 2001, *International Tourism Management*, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi.
- [2] Belisle, F.J. and Hoy, D.R. (1980), The Perceived Impacts of Tourism by Residents: A Case Study in Santa Marta, Colombia, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 7 (1), 83-101.
- [3] Brougham, J.E. and Butler, R.W. (1981), A Segmentation Analysis of Resident Attitudes to the Social Impact of Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 8 (4), 569-590.
- [4] Cooper, C. Fletcher, J. Fyall, A. Gilbert, D. and Wanhill, S. (2008), *Tourism Principles and Practice*: (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall
- [5] Dwyer, L. and Mistilis, N. (1999), Tourism Gateways and Regional Economies: The Distributional Impacts of MICE. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 1 (6), 441-457
- [6] George, R. 2007, *Managing Tourism in South Africa*, Oxford University Press Southern Africa, Cape Town
- [7] Greg Richards, Derek Hall, *Tourism and Sustainable Community Development*, Routledge 2000
- [8] Greenwood, D. J. (1989). *Culture by the Pound: An Anthropological Perspective on Tourism as Cultural Commoditisation*. In Smith, V. (Eds), *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press
- [9] Haralambopoulos, N. and Pizam A. (1996). Perceived Impacts of Tourism: The Case of Samos, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23 (3)
- [10] IGNOU 2001, *Tourism Impacts*, MTM 10, New Delhi
- [11] Keyser, H. 2002, *Tourism Development*, Oxford University Press Southern Africa, Cape Town
- [12] Kumar J. and Hussain, K (2014a) Evaluating Tourism's Economic Effects: Comparison of Different Approaches. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 144
- [13] Leiper, N. (1979). The Framework of Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6 (4)
- [14] Mathaieson, A. and Wall, G. (1982). *Tourism: Economic, Physical and Social Impacts*. Longman, Harlow, UK
- [15] McCool, S. F. and Martin, S. R. (1994). Community Attachment and Attitudes Towards Tourism Development, *Journal of Travel Research*, 32 (3)
- [16] Milman, A. and Pizam, A. (1998). Social Impacts of Tourism on Central Florida. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15 (2)
- [17] Middleton, V. 1998, *Sustainable Tourism: A Marketing Perspective*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford
- [18] Pizam, A.(1978). Tourism's Impacts: The Social Costs to the Destination Community as Perceived by its Residents, *Journals of Travel Research*, 16 (4).
- [19] Ross, G. F. (1992). Residents Perception of the Impacts of Tourism on an Australian City. *Journal of Travel Research*, 30 (Winter)
- [20] Sheldon, P. and T. Var (1984) Residents Attitude to Tourism in North Wales. *Tourism Management*. 5 (1)
- [21] Thomason, P., Crompton, J. L. and Kamp, B. D. (1979). A Study of the Attitudes of Impacted Groups within a Host Community towards Prolonged Stay Tourist Visitors. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17 (3).
- [22] Wall, G. and A. Matheison 2006, *Tourism: Change, Impacts and Opportunities*. Pearson Prentice Hall, Harlow.