

PHD CANDIDATE'S CORNER

The Impact of Tourism on Mountain Community Development

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ABSTRACT

The mountain area represent a pole of attraction for tourist because of the diversity of activities can take place here, but also for climatic factors. The tourism in this area have increased spectacular in the last two decades and this involve many benefits for local community but also some negative impacts on residents.

This paper is a exploratory research, based on a secondary sources of how mountain tourism influence the economic, social and ecological environments, and to identify which of this effects are present in the Sinaia mountain resort through a direct observation.

KEYWORDS

mountain tourism, local community, mountain resort, sense of place

JEL Classification

Q 23, Q 26, J 48

Introduction

The tourism industry has evolved very much in the last period of time because of the increased leisure and income of the people. They spend more money for holidays and mountain areas offer possibility for four season activities.

This phenomenon was study by the researchers and practitioners and they conclude for a community development is necessary that residents to involve in tourism activity for satisfaction of their needs, because tourism industry has a multiplier effect on the local economy.

The central challenge is maintaining a balance of sustainability, ecological, economic and socio-cultural elements must carefully integrated into community-based mountain tourism, but they must also be balanced in order to keep tourism sustainable.

The positive impacts of tourism are classified after their aspects, thus the main environment are: economic, ecological and socio-cultural. To develop sustainable a resort is important to have also sufficient funds, and the projects to be feasible, for this is very important to attract a big mass of tourist and to offer them a wide range of services. From this point of view tourism industry create employment opportunities, directly and indirect, for residents, and offer a support for others sector to develop. From this point local authorities should have a tax regulation to help the local economy.

With those funds can improve environment through changes in subsistence leading to less degradation of natural resources, or to enhanced management and stewardship of natural resources.

Tourism also have a big impact of socio-cultural, the most important is the improvement of local infrastructure, public services: healthcare, education, public transport, and fosters the civic pride through citizens.

All those factors lead to a new level of social welfare, and offer the possibility for a sustainable development of resort.

The negative effects of tourism on community from mountain destinations are set in the same way like positive impacts.

The problems could appear on the economy of a mountain resort based on tourism are: structural and seasonal unemployment because of massive exploitation of this sector and giving up of agriculture and forestry activities. Tourism also affects the price, by inflation, lands and food are more expensive in mountain areas, so local residents pay more money to satisfy their needs.

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Positive and negative effects of tourism on sustainable development

The ecological environment is the most fragile at the tourism activity because a intensive exploitation of tourist objectives such as natural parks, can damage and destroy the ecosystem. The pollution is also an important result of tourism industry, most important are: air pollution and high noise, land degradation, solid waste and littering.

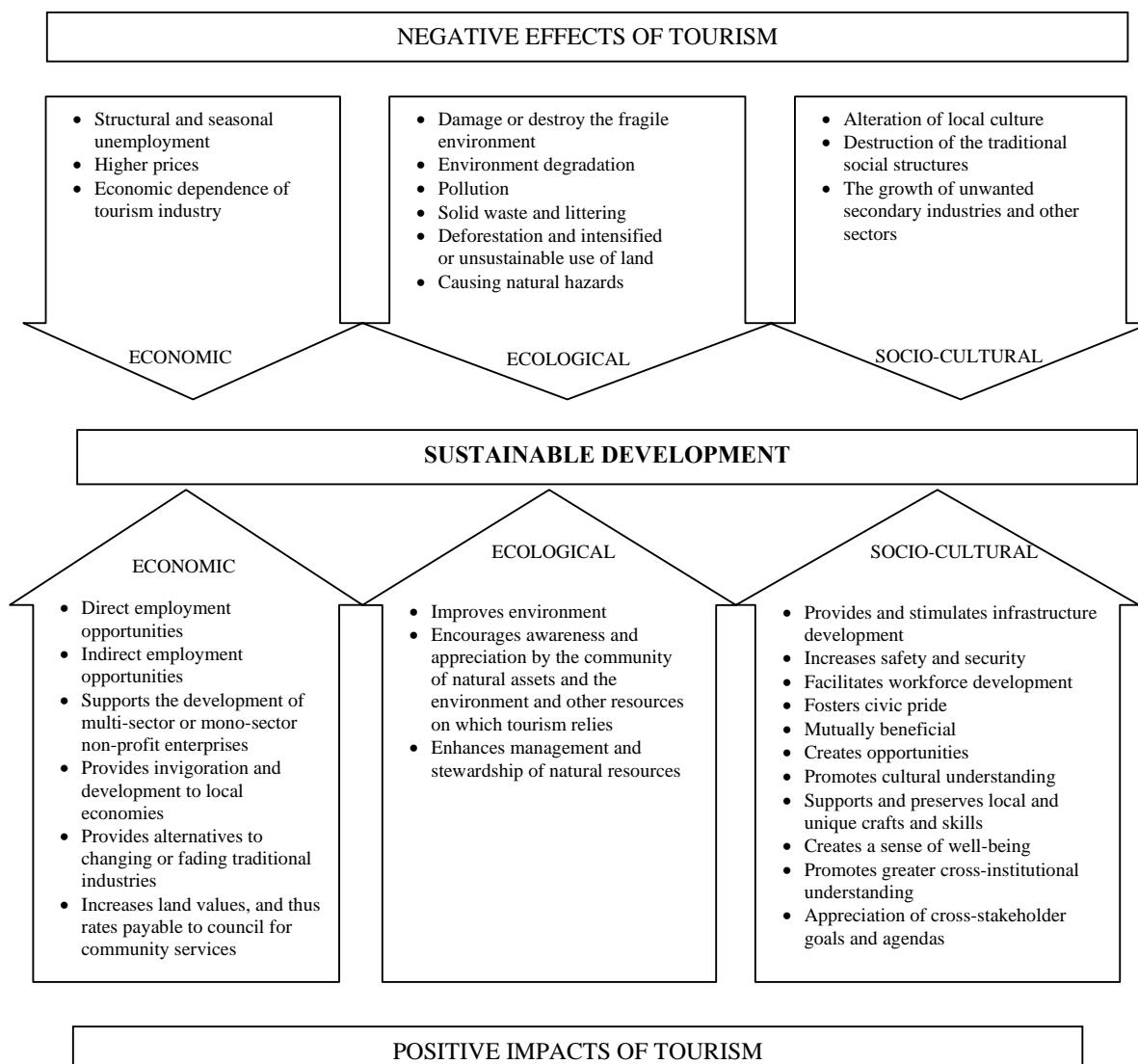
Another aspect of ecological environment is the aesthetic of the building because often tourism fails to integrate its structures with the natural features and indigenous architectural of the destination. Large, dominating resorts of disparate design can look out of place in any natural environment and may clash with the indigenous structural design.

The growth of unwanted secondary industrie and others sectors change the local culture can destroy the traditional social structures.

An important observation is that tourism has a multiplier effect of the local economy, but if isn't well managed by the local authority and tourism operators can cause massive cost, by producing natural hazards, which often are irreversible.

Locals sense of place is primarily shaped by aspects in everyday life: occupation, property, and, most important, social relationships, which together form their affiliation. Furthermore, their sense of place is strongly associated with memories of childhood and youth.

Figure no 1. The balance of positive and negative effects of tourism on sustainable development
(Adaptation after: Simpson, 2008)



In the case of the tourists, sense of place is above all shaped by the aesthetics and characteristics of the place, which they experience in the context of leisure activities. Hence, the activities through which places are experienced have the biggest impact on people's sense of place. Thus, while the sense of place of locals is mostly associated with society and existence, individual aspects matter above all to the tourists (Kianicka, S., et al. 2006).

Planning is an essential component of tourism development. It is a way for a community to work towards receiving the most from tourism in a sustainable manner, maximizing the benefits while minimizing the negative impacts.

In a study of S. Beeton warns about planning and development important at the community level allows for a wider range of perspectives to be considered. A community based on tourism plan prepared with widespread local involvement and support will increase community buy-in and encourage community members to take ownership of the process and outcomes (Beeton, S., 2006).

The private sector maybe best placed to identify opportunities, realize the potential of a destination, drive forward the development of product and adopt a range of highly effective responsibilities to communities. The facilitation of the transfer of benefits, though, also lies with government. Governments have a responsibility to foster and establish an enabling environment for the delivery of benefits to communities in order to minimize risk to communities and encourage investment. In addition, where appropriate, a milieu maybe created by government agencies that will allow the development of fair and equitable partnerships between local communities and private operators (Simpson, M., 2008)..

Tourism managed in culturally appropriate ways can help to sustain mountain cultures economically. Programs that support arts and crafts can also benefit local communities. Another source of revenue is the knowledge of medicinal plants. In the development of these and other mountain resources, local communities need to receive an equitable share of the benefits (Messerli, B., Bernbaum, E).

The impact of tourism on community of Sinaia mountain resort

Sinaia is one of the most famous and oldest mountain tourist resorts in Romania, known as "The Carpathian Pearl". It is known for being the summer residence of the Romanian Royal family.

Sinaia takes its name from the 17th-century monastery built by a Romanian nobleman after undertaking a pilgrimage to Mount Sinai, Egypt.

This resort offers guests many possibilities to spend free time, from visiting cultural places like: Peles Castle, Sinaia Monastery and George Enescu's memorial house to outdoor activities: trekking, climbing, skiing, snow-boarding.

The resort was designed as a tourist resort from beginning but with the time industry has developed in the town, the most important factory was MEFIN Sinaia, built during the communism. This has a major impact on local community, because of workforce need was very high, about 3000 employee.

In the last two decades tourism was the most important activity was tourism because of high income generated by this "industry". Other reason was partial closure of the factory because of decreasing demand, thus more and more residents were attracted into tourism activity.

Analyzing touristic offer of Sinaia resort we can see a big increase in the last five years, because of massive investments in hospitality services, a situation of room offer is present below in table 1.

Table no. 1. Evolution of hotel rooms number, 1990-2010

Year	1990	2000	2008	2009	2010
Number of rooms	1.293	2.579	4.769	5.153	5.361

Source: statistical data obtained from Sinaia Hall

If we refer to demographic environment main conclusion is resident population aging, this phenomenon began in the early '90, and stressed after 2000. In 2010 about 33,5% of Sinaia residents have over 60 years, and 31,3% are middle age. These percentages show the social malfunction, and suggest that in next period the local authority should implement a long term plan about number of employers through measures that encourages the local economic agents to develop their business.

Other problem of local community is the high level of unemployment, the most common form being seasonal and the structural unemployment. Because tourism activity has two peaks of season most of hoteliers hire for short terms, usually three months, between July – September and December – February. Outside of these intervals hoteliers reduce their activity because of low demand.

Other cause of problem mentioned above is that the investors do not reinvest the profit, to drive the local economic circuit to a high level, and they prefer to extract the money and to use them in different ways don't help local economy.

A very good example is number of economic agents registered in Sinaia which was in 2010, 2006 companies but only 1.204 were operating while the rest were undertaking in liquidation or dissolution.

Because of high income from tax, local authority invest in infrastructure, thus they developed and improve the road network in town, well sewerage network because their status was poor, and could not cope with current requirements.

One of major negative effect of tourism is increase consumer prices and especially square meter of land. This affect directly the wellbeing of local community because longer afford to buy apartments or houses in Sinaia.

Table no. 2 Evolution of land prices, 1990-2010

Year	1990	2000	2008	2009	2010	- €-
Average price per square meter	15	67	287	282	246	

Source: statistical data obtained from Sinaia Hall

In the table 2 is exposed the evolution of the average price per square meter between 1990 and 2010. These prices are for land inside the city, and are the average price for transacted land in specified years. The year 2008 was the peak for land price because of economic growth that Romania had it between years 2004-2008. After that moment followed a fall due to global economic crisis.

Another negative effect of tourism activity is that most new buildings do not fit into aesthetic of the city, as you can see to some sights like: Peles Castle and Memorial House "G. Enescu" and the old buildings of Sinaia. This style is neoclassical style, with the specific elements of heavy carved wood and decorative elements.

The proliferation of building without authorization and chaotic layout, especially for secondary residences, which led to overloading of areas, at particular pressures on the natural environment and shaping a effect of disorganized aspect.

In response to the owners trend to construct with a modern style that does not fit in environment, local authority has introduced some measures on urban area plan, so most shops are such Swiss chalets style. These rules would be applied also in civil engineering but the aesthetics of the city was damaged already.

One of the ecological environment suffered the worst damages is the ecosystem that bears are involved because some local economic agents attract tourist by feeding the wild bears. This behavior has increased greatly five the past five years, so the bears got down into town to look for food, being familiar with human presence. Most affected by this phenomenon are the locals because bears come in their households and search in the trash, causing extensive damage.

A solution to combat this behavior is to amending those agents that practice these unethical activities, but is difficult to prove this. Another solution is to create a new form of entertainment, by organize tours with cars through the woods that surrounding the resort, for photo shooting and filming wild animals. From the revenues can be allocated a share enough to feed wild animals in special places by employees of Forestry department.

Conclusion

Tourism can offer possibility to develop the economy of a region, because of high income, high labor demand and multiplier effect of tourism of economy.

For "sustainable performance" local authorities must be actively in the city development through:

- development of master plans, which to trace the development guidelines of town for next period;
- different measures when direction does not fit into overall development;
- encouraging business development in various sectors of the economy;
- promoting the local habits by creating a strong local culture;
- creating a special department for tourism development;
- attracting the private sector in local development program through public-private partnerships.

Community-based plans can reduce the negative impacts that could result from tourism, while optimizing the benefits. Effective tourism planning can be used to balance the economic opportunities with the cultural and natural sensitivities of the area. Community-based plans can also identify the educational requirements and support needed by residents to start their own tourism enterprises or to obtain employment in the region.

In my opinion in Sinaia is an intense need for developing a range of entertainment services because in this moment are some, but aren't integrated in tourism products. A first step was made two years ago when five ski slope were approved by the ministry of Tourism.

Another solution for local development may be events of national importance, because these produce a immediate gain for local companies. Such an event will be held in 2013 in Brasov and Prahova Valley – European Youth Olympic Winter Festival.

This paper may be the starting point for more extensive research about the effects of tourism on local community, by conducting a survey on problems faced by residents and which are the key elements for their community. On other hand can be studied also the opinion of tourist about Sinaia mountain resort and what they expect to improve at tourism activity.

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