

THE TRAP VS. THE REMEDY TOURISM PARADOX AND TOURISM EQUINOX

Scientific paper

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the influence of tourism paradox and tourism equinox on destinations in relation to tourism. The opportunities to create a new form of tourism practice that potentially reduces our environmental and social impacts, while simultaneously enhancing our individual experiences, are the focus of a number of ideas in this paper.

Design – Having the tourism industry as the only development model for a country with its natural and cultural resources could not only destroy the social life but also the tourism industry itself. The prospects of even more income will cause an increase in the tourism revenue generation capacity of the destination, which often causes deterioration and devastation of the attractions at the destination and a decrease of the tourism earnings in the long run.

Methodology – The methodology of this paper includes secondary literature sources and examples of approaches for sustainable tourism development of the existing strategies. Sustainable tourism is the only type of tourism that can offer an authentic countryside lifestyle area, where it is possible to relax and enjoy nature and countryside atmosphere, like in Tuscany, Provence, Wachau, etc. These approaches cover a multitude of areas of study and implementation ranging from, but not limited to environmental, social, economic and urban development and design.

Approach – In common usage, the word “paradox” often refers to statements that are ironic or unexpected. “Tourism paradox” is the name given to this phenomenon where industrial tourism deteriorates or destroys natural and cultural environment, which is necessary for tourism activities. The balance, which does not change and disturbs the social and economic relations at the destination is called “tourism equinox”. The name “equinox” is derived from the Latin *aequus* (equal) and *nox* (night), because around the equinox, night and day are about equal length. New projects and approaches to solve the problem caused by the growth of urban populations and establish healthy sustainable tourism destinations are becoming more important than ever.

Findings – Projects which focus on and emphasize the economic and social benefits should be undertaken in order to protect these values in the long run. Sustainability should be substantiated through policy and legislation and should be primary objective in all decisions regarding tourism. Rural tourism must be promoted as a key driver of rural tourism development, and funds must be devoted to supporting the development of rural regions. In order to avoid tourism paradox, tourism equinox should be well placed to contribute directly to rural development as many rural areas are attractive to visitors.

The originality of this research – Although the equation “more tourists=more tourism income” is so simple, it is not a sustainable approach for the development plans. The awareness of locals and visitors should be raised in order to prevent damage to the historical and cultural environment. The carrying capacity of the region should be determined under sustainable principles, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, universities and professional organizations should cooperate against adverse environmental effects caused by tourism.

Keywords Tourism Paradox, Tourism Equinox, Tourism Development, Slow Tourism, Sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

Having the tourism industry as the only development model for a country with its natural and cultural resources could not only destroy the social life but also the tourism industry itself. Although the equation “more tourists=more tourism income” is so simple, it is not a sustainable approach for the development plans. But the infrastructure necessary for more tourists will inevitably detract from the very attractions that the destination has. New buildings, new lifestyles, new social and commercial relationships will rapidly replace old ones at the destination. The prospects of even more income will cause an increase in the tourism revenue generation capacity of the destination which often causes deterioration and devastation of the attractions at the destination and a decrease of the tourism earnings in the long run.

This is what is meant by the concept of “tourism paradox”. In common usage, the word “paradox” often refers to statements that are ironic or unexpected, such as “the paradox that standing is more tiring than walking “. Tourism paradox is the name given to this phenomenon where industrial tourism deteriorates or destroys natural and cultural environment which is necessary for tourism activities. Projects which focus on and emphasize the economic and social benefits should be undertaken in order to protect these values in the long run.

The balance, which does not change and disturbs the social and economic relations at the destination is called “tourism equinox”. The name “equinox” is derived from the Latin *aequus* (equal) and *nox* (night), because around the equinox, night and day are about equal length. New projects and approaches to solve the problem caused by the growth of urban populations and establish healthy sustainable tourism destinations are becoming more important than ever.

This paper investigates the influence of tourism paradox and tourism equinox on destinations in relation to tourism. The opportunities to create a new form of tourism practice that potentially reduces our environmental and social impacts, while simultaneously enhancing our individual experiences, are the focus of a number of ideas in this paper.

2. TOURISM PARADOX

The tourism product is developed, funded, managed and marketed by both private and public sector entities such as government ministries, tourism authorities, hotels and Destination Marketing Organisations (DMO's), all having their own ways of dealing with the product, own limitations and resource-based challenges. This sometimes makes it challenging to create the optional synergy between the stakeholders required to maximise tourism revenues, and the level of understanding between public and private sector stakeholders, all of which are ultimately striving to attain the same goal (i.e. to get the right tourism destination mix from different perspectives) is not always as good as it ought to be for product development to take place in a way that is oriented towards the maximisation of revenue from tourism. A tourism destination's characteristics and industry are highly affected by regional and local politics and

policies, and are made up of a multidimensional conflation of macro- and micro-product features that are developed and marketed to dynamic and heterogeneous markets.¹

The proposal offered by today's competitive paradigm that the more the number of tourists arriving at a destination, the more the income for the destination sounds good at first. New buildings, new lifestyles, foreign capital and new socio-economic relationships appear rapidly at the destination. The increased number of tourist arrivals gives the appearance of increasing desirability of the destination. Is it, however a feasible proposal for all cases? With the increased tourism activity, there is also an increase in problems faced by the local people and tourists at the destination. The tourism paradox begins to appear at this stage since the natural and cultural resources that are worth seeing are consumed by those who come to visit them. The destination could shrink and disappear in the long run. Hence new projects and approaches to solve the problems caused by the growth of urban populations and establish healthy sustainable tourism destinations are becoming more important than ever.

An analogy can be made of a scorpion stinging itself when surrounded with fire to local economies dependent on tourism. For such destinations tourism is sometimes embraced as a lifestyle and everything there becomes entwined with tourism, in effect tourism becomes the ring of fire causing "self-destruction" of the destination. Although this metaphor is not novel, it expresses the notion where tourism itself causes a downward spiral as put forth by previous tourism researches that have considered the phenomenon from different points of view.

The important point regarding this fact is that although it doesn't "always" take place, it takes place "sometimes" bordering "often". This happens as a result of viewing tourism purely in terms of numbers and income. This view ignores the concept of sustainability, where demand and supply have to take into consideration the exhaustion and depletion of the natural and historical attractions that form the basis of tourism for the destination.

Contemporary definitions of tourism tend to focus on "people going from one place to another", spending time there "for the purpose of one thing or another". It follows that the destination has to offer something that makes it worth going there. Be it the beach, the ruins, the food, the sites or some unique activity, a destination needs to offer something of value to the tourist that the tourist can't find at home.

Tourists travel, stay, experience and enjoy. It is an enjoyable experience to touch, smell, taste, hear and see the attractions at the destination. Urbain states "tourism does not only make attraction resources authentic but also organize them, and it impairs them through 'sanctification'. Thus it makes "the reality" artificial."²

¹ www.equinoxadvisory.com

² Urbain, J.-D., *L'idiot du voyage: Histoires de touristes*. Paris: Plon, 1991.

Regardless of the motive, the tourists will spend time at the destination, that is, they will “stay the night” for the travel to be tourism. The accommodation owners at the destination will provide these amenities to ensure that the tourists come to the destination and spend money there. The quality of these facilities will be such as to offer the level of comfort the tourists have at home, if not higher. However, the tourists do not just stay at an accommodation but also consume food and beverage, use soap and shampoo, and have a bath or two, sometimes even more than they do at home. In other words, those who are accommodated consume things like various products, nature, air, water and much more.

These facilities will be located nearest to that is worth seeing, preferably right in the middle. In Istanbul, for example, the destination will be around Sultanahmet or along the Bosphorus, whereas for Venice; a hotel located in the Piazza San Marco will be preferred. These are vital elements to create a demand for “going to” among the masses, and as a result to satisfying this demand. As the number of tourists visiting to a destination increases so will the revenue generated. Then it inevitably follows, facilities, roads, airports, and ports with the capacity to accommodate more people will be built for more income. Tourism investments have been modified in such manner that negative natural social impact is the central focus of prohibitions regarding investments. Today, tourism investments face more restrictions than incentives. Environmental and social organizations have become more vociferous and active in their opposition to investments in “endangered” areas. It can even be said that tourism and environment have become diametrically opposed concepts.

3. TOURISM EQUINOX

The ‘elephant in the room’ for any discussion of the ecological sustainability credentials of ecotourism, sustainable tourism or slow tourism, is of course, the energy source used to move the tourists from origin to destination and back again. It is an inconvenient truth that the trip commences upon departure from the origin, and that usually involves the use of non-renewable energy that emits carbon into the atmosphere.³

Among the positive effects of tourism are the creation of jobs and income, promotion of intercultural relations and the possibility of recreation for the stressed urban citizen. Its negative consequences are ever-increasing traffic, over-exploitation of natural resources and generally inappropriate use of landscapes. Due to this, tourism sometimes endangers the sole grounds for its existence. Avoiding exploitation, increasing intensity of traffic and pollution of landscapes is one of the main tasks for the future. The local population should be aware that tourism depends on landscape and that rural development in many parts of the country depends on tourism.

³ Markwell, K., Fullagar, S. and Wilson, E., *Reflecting Upon Slow Travel and Tourism Experiences* (pp. 227-233), in the Book: *Slow Tourism*, Channel View Publications, Bristol, 2012.

According to Hermann Hinterstoisser, Head of the Nature Protection Department, Salzburgerland, the great variety of beautiful landscapes in Austria offers many different aspects of multifunctionality. The same landscape may have productive, protective, recreational and ecological functions. Increasing fragmentation and traffic congestion are among the foremost threats. The protection and sustainable development of landscapes has to be a joint task for spatial planning, agriculture, forestry, nature conservation and tourism as a whole in order to maintain the multifunctionality and diversity of the landscapes.

It is expected that domestic and foreign visitors will in the future prefer greener, more serene, and more natural destinations where they can easily find the values stated in the basic principles of slow tourism, and they feel healthy, relaxed and secure. The development of slow tourism destinations also requires, apart from the measures taken in accordance with these principles, the common and intensive efforts of local population, non-governmental organizations, local governments, and tourism enterprises for the investment, promotion and marketing.

In order for the local economies of communities to protect themselves from the excesses of competition in the global market they need to rely upon their own labour and resources to built sustainable slow tourist products and destinations. Local communities need to control and self regulate their tourist industries, and we are suggesting that slow ecotourism offers the best options in terms of environmental protection and long-term, sustainable economic growth in these communities.⁴ Projects which focus on and emphasize the economic, cultural and social benefits to be derived from becoming a slow tourism destination should be undertaken to inform the local population of these opportunities.

More specifically, assessment of community-based tourism initiatives should aim to measure: 1) the increase in direct income to households; 2) improvement in community services such as education, health services, clean water, appropriate housing, roads, transport and communication; and 3) the development of sustainable and diversified lifestyles. On this final point slow tourism can act as a platform that stimulates the creation of both tourism and non-tourism related small and medium size enterprises. Slow tourism provides the opportunity to reevaluate encompass social justice strategies and outcomes for local communities as it allows time to change, adjust and evolve for the tourism operator, community member and the environment.⁵

One of the best examples worldwide is Yamaguchi, located on the periphery of Honshu, the main island of Japan. After the rural areas of Yamaguchi lost 32% of its population, the local people of this destination understand that slow tourism can be used to bring together a range of activities, products and experiences to useful

⁴ Wearing, S., Wearing, M. and McDonald M., *Slow'n Down the Town to Let Nature Grow: Ecotourism, Social Justice and Sustainability (p.36-50)*, in the Book: *Slow Tourism*, Channel View Publications, Bristol, 2012.

⁵ Wearing, S., Wearing, M. and McDonald M., *Slow'n Down the Town to Let Nature Grow: Ecotourism, Social Justice and Sustainability (p.36-50)*, in the Book: *Slow Tourism*, Channel View Publications, Bristol, 2012.

economic advantage. Indeed, the direction of the policy in Yamaguchi is supported by shifts in regional consumer preferences.

The Yamaguchi slow tourism policy aims to satisfy both residents in rural areas, as well as visitors from urban areas. Rural residents are seen as important providers of various services and products and the approach represents a form of neo-endogenous economic development. The interaction and economic benefit is supposed to generate mutual value and appreciation. This micro-economic activity is also designed to help bring extra income to rural households, and to female householders particular. Yamaguchi's slow tourism offer also encourages school trips for urban students to learn about the lives of rural people and their work in the countryside. Where possible they stay with families to gain more understanding of their lives.

Tourism communities in Malaysia face also the problem of in-migration of labor from rural to urban areas. Land use conflicts - e.g. logging of tropical forests in the Endau-Rampin region of southern Peninsular Malaysia and in the Liwagu-Labuk River Basin, Sabah, East Malaysia, still continue. Although damage on the ecosystem (coral reef ecosystem, rainforest degradation, etc.) and pollution are important problems with the increasing number of tourists in the long run, Malaysia is targeting to receive 28,8 million in foreign tourist arrivals during Visit Malaysia Year 2014.⁶

On the other hand, the growth of rural tourism have to be totally diverging with that of seaside tourism development that, without control could create huge holiday resorts and artificial villages with no identity. Many coastal regions in Portugal, Italy, Greece and particularly in Spain, have suffered this problem, and coast line has been completely destroyed by blocks of apartments and huge hotels, without green or natural areas.⁷ This could also be a threat for rural tourism: exceeding in the urbanization of rural spaces. Rural tourism can be a great chance to fill in the empty spaces (i.e. houses) "disposed" by the decline of rural areas but it should not contribute to the change in the land using (i.e. new buildings).

Hence rural tourism in Tuscany is very developed in some internal rural areas such as the Chianti, Val d'Orcia, Maremma and the surrounding countryside of Siena. In some leading municipalities such as San Gimignano, Pienza, San Quirico d'Orcia or Radda in Chianti the number of nights spent per capita is over 50 and the local governments are discussing about constraints on visitor numbers. This is the main reason why Tuscany has a sense to argue on sustainability of rural tourism.⁸

The travellers who prefer slow tourism have the desire to stay somewhere for a longer period of time, to get to know a smaller place in the country, and close to nature, and to gain a better understanding of what it means to live in a rural area. Slow food is also an

⁶ Malaysia Leo Conception, Tourism Impacts Presentation, *Comm 515T*, Global Tourism, Malaysia, 2012.

⁷ Sanagustín Fons, M.V., Moseñe Fierro, J.A., Gómez Patño, M., 2011. Rural tourism: A sustainable alternative. *Applied Energy*, 88, 551-557.

⁸ Randelli, F., Romei, P., Tortora, M. and Tinacci, M., *Rural tourism driving regional development in Tuscany, The renaissance of the countryside*, Department of Economic Sciences, University of Florence, 2012.

essential element.⁹ Food and beverage vendors which represent the authentic nature of the region, and where regional dishes are promoted and served to visitors should be established taking the philosophy of Slow Food into account in that case.

Rural lodging entrepreneurs could undertake other activities simultaneously (e.g., livestock and agricultural activities). Farm diversification, often through tourism activities, also has taken place in other places in Europe, which can provide superior net total income. The strong risk of depopulation in rural areas, combined with the importance of rural areas throughout the European Union's (EU) geography, has induced several different programs that attempt to encourage the development of these areas.¹⁰

Laura Piriz, National Board of Fisheries and Dr. Karl Bruckmeier, University of Göteborg, mention that from the times – less than 100 years ago in Sweden – that “fishing community” was nearly synonymous with “coastal society” to the present days when fishery is marginal, both in national, economic and social terms, a dramatic change has happened, usually called modernisation. Traditionally the specific coastal culture and society of the archipelago landscape, characteristic of Swedish coasts, was closely connected to the local ecosystems including the sea, the coast and the land. Today the Swedish archipelago areas are discussed mainly in terms of negative demographic growth with real estate being appropriated by people from urban areas and temporary overcrowding by tourists – indicators of cultural, social, economic and ecological impoverishment and decline. Swedish rural and environmental development policies address the questions of keeping alive the archipelago.

In this context coastal fisheries can be expected to play a significant role in rebuilding the local society of the future. A society capable of sustaining a diversity of livelihoods and producers having control over the natural assets of local areas. However, the protagonists of such local economies, as for example fishermen are mostly old and few. Today the local governments try to create islands of projects and experiments with local knowledge to take the advantage of diversity of knowledge (for example, in organic agriculture and horticulture, local handicrafts, sustainable and high quality local fisheries, new consumption styles.

In Mallorca however, in the tourism sector the damage is caused by sheer numbers and by the fact that tourist are notoriously unconscious of their environmental behaviour when away from home. Tourism is a consumer industry and it is difficult to impose better environmental standards on a transient population. For a long time Mallorcans have bemoaned the degenerative impact tourism has had on society, language and environment but have been happy to accept the considerable economic benefits. Many commentators advocate an expansion of ‘new’ tourists at the expense of ‘old mass’ tourists through a policy of diversification. Highly laudable providing total income from tourism remains constant or rises. If more ‘new’ tourists’ and fewer ‘old’ tourists results in a fall in GDP or per capita incomes, Mallorcans must accept a fall in their

⁹ Murayama, M. and Parker, G., *Fast Japan, Slow Japan’: Shifting to Slow Tourism as a Rural Regeneration Tool in Japan* (p.179), in the Book: *Slow Tourism*, Channel View Publications, Bristol, 2012.

¹⁰ Hernandez-Maestro, R. M. and Gonzales-Benito, O., “Rural Lodging Establishments as Drivers of Rural Development”, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol 53 (1), 2013, 83-95.

standard of living or at least trade it against a possible increase in their quality of life. Such moves usually benefit the higher social echelons and not the working class sector, already subject to vicious 'seasonality', who may not find this sort of solution so acceptable.¹¹

4. CONCLUSION

A sustainable tourism is the only type of tourism that can offer an authentic countryside lifestyle area, where it is possible to relax and enjoy nature and countryside atmosphere, like in Tuscany, Provence and Wachau, without compromising the other local specialisation, first of all agriculture. Sustainability should be substantiated through policy and legislation and should be primary objective in all decisions regarding tourism. This covers a multitude of areas of study and implementation ranging from, but not limited to, environmental, social, economic and urban development and design.

Sustainable tourism began to be used from late 80s and early 90s the term has become more commonly used.¹² Research on sustainable tourism has provided many ideas and tools in advancement of sustainability in addition to defining and delineating the concept. Despite the theoretical contributions provided by extent research positive, real-world examples of the concept of sustainability of tourism in general and destinations in particular are necessary. But the remarks about the negative impacts of tourism are intended to demonstrate and explain the tourism paradox.

Tourism itself is not an environmentally and socially "negative" activity that should be avoided. The tourism industry is worth developing and investing in and brings about negative impacts which sometimes outweigh its associated positive economic impacts if undertaken sustainably. But there does exist a form of tourism that is not destructive or paradoxical, and tourism has many positive economic and social benefits that are indispensable.

The very activity of tourism should not necessarily consume the very cause of the activity. Tourism can indeed not only provide the impetus for conservation, itself can be based on conserving or financing the conservation of the destination in short, it can ensure sustaining of tourism. Common sense should prevail over policy, lessons gleaned from mistakes of other destinations should direct destination development, and most importantly tourism should not be conceptualized as a finite stream of revenue where profit maximization is the logical course of action, but as a renewable resource that requires care and attention in its utilization. The essence of tourism is based on pleasure derived from the destination itself and activities undertaken when there. For travelers preferring slow tourism approach this pleasure is derived from a lower impact, slower paced destination. Based on an understanding that is distinct from mass tourism, a new tourism destination where the cultural and historical heritage is utilized needs to

¹¹ Buswell, R. J., *Mallorca and Tourism History, Economy and Environment*, Channel View Publications, 2011.

¹² Swarbrooke, J., *Sustainable Tourism Management*. Oxon: CABI Publishing, 1999.

be created through investment, promotion and marketing that is focused on sustainability. Activities necessary for strategic planning should be carried out, and the cooperation of public and private sectors should be ensured after determining the applicability of slow tourism approach.

The awareness of locals and visitors should be raised in order to prevent damage to the historical and cultural environment, the carrying capacity of the region should be determined under sustainable principles, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, universities and professional organizations should cooperate against adverse environmental effects caused by tourism.

“Recommendatory” and “orienting” approaches rather than “prevention” should be adopted in legislations; local authorities should be supported in their endeavors towards sustainability. In respect to structure of tourism, "nonindustrial" scale and types should be subjected to a different set of rules different from the areas and facilities of mass tourism. Rights and powers of local governments over implementations should be expanded. Rural tourism must be promoted as a key driver of rural tourism development, and funds must be devoted to supporting the development of rural lodging establishments.

Mechtild Rössler from UNESCO World Heritage Centre-Paris, claims that, the inclusion of cultural landscapes in the World Heritage list proved that UNESCO's World Heritage Convention is pioneering new approaches in the protection of the planet's cultural and natural diversity. The 23 sites listed in this category show that there exists a great diversity of outstanding cultural landscapes that are representative of the different regions of the world. Certain sites reflect specific techniques of land use that also guarantee and sustain biological diversity. This is in particular the case for Europe with the riverine terraces of the Wachau cultural landscape (Austria), the vine production of the Jurisdiction of Saint Emilion (France) or Cinque Terre (Italy), the cultivated lands of the Loire valley (France), the pastoral practices in the Pyrenees, Mont Perdu (France/Spain) or Hortobágy national park (Hungary) and the traditional land use systems of the isthmus of Kurzeme (Lithuania/Russia) and the agricultural landscape of southern Öland (Sweden).

The European Union (EU) recognises that agriculture and rural development are critical to poverty reduction and growth. The European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability was launched in 2012 and works to foster competitive and sustainable farming and forestry that ‘achieves more and better from less’. It contributes to ensuring a steady supply of food, feed and biomaterials, developing its work in harmony with the essential natural resources on which farming depends¹³. Destination-level planning and implementation is also encouraged. Tourism is well placed to contribute directly to rural development as many rural areas are attractive to visitors.

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eip/index_en.htm

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