Critical Issues in Tourism

Mir Tafveez

Research Scholar, Department of Tourism Studies, Central University of Kashmir, India

ABSTRACT

Tourism industry is of great importance in many ways as it can be for leisure, business, education, medication, recreation, religious and spiritual purposes and for fun. To many countries today it represents one of the main keys to the country's economy. This industry is a highly competitive business which requires the participation of the governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to ensure its sustainability. In this paper we are going to discuss some critical issues that are facing tourism lately, these issues include: the impact of unorganized carrying capacity on the host destination, green washing tourism, environmental degradation due to mass tourism which include depletion of natural resources as water resources and pollution as air pollution. And finally climate changes as global warming, that have its negative impacts as well on tourism, and its consequents as melting of the snow caps and rising of the sea level, and their effects on tourism. Furthermore we are going to discuss some steps that are necessary to be taken by local governments and tourism operators in order to come up with solutions and to construct facilities, provide energy, water and waste management, afford safety and security and protect cultural heritages of local communities.

INTRODUCTION

Since tourism became one of the fastest growing industries in the world recently, it is important to study some critical issues that affect tourism industry nowadays, as well as some negative impacts caused by tourism on natural environment or historical landmarks. Although tourism is a very important economic sector nowadays, it is undeniable that the world is experiencing many environmental and climate disturbances because of it, where the movement of people and their activities increase the level of carbon emissions to a great extent. Meanwhile different effects of climate changes include snowcaps melting, coral bleaching, flooding, and rising sea levels, affect the tourism industry to a great extent.

The more evident effects include the decreasing in the number of tourists in popular destinations where the natural resources, like coral reefs, beaches and forests have been destroyed due to climate changes. It is also predicted that there is going to be a shift in the movement of people away from overly warm climates to temperate ones, which creates new jobs in new places while making the old destinations suffer economically due to job losses.

CRITICAL ISSUES IN TOURISM MANAGEMENT

1-Unorganized carrying capacity

"Tourism Carrying Capacity" is defined by the World Tourism Organization as "The maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic, socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction". Whereas Middleton and Hawkins Chamberlain (1998) define it as "the level of human activity an area can accommodate without the area deteriorating, the resident community being adversely affected or the quality of visitors experience declining"

This overcapacity has resulted in many cases in many consequences within the areas developed for tourism, including destruction or near-destruction of historical landmarks and even of the natural environment.

Uncontrolled conventional tourism can lead to great threats to many natural areas around the world. It can put enormous pressure on an area and lead to destructive effects such as soil erosion, increased pollution, discharges into the sea, natural habitat loss, increased pressure on endangered species and heightened vulnerability to forest fires.

2- Climate Change

Usually travelers who come from cold countries would seek warmer locations in the same or different continent. The Northern Europeans, for instance, would go to the nations in the south, like Spain and Italy, to take advantage of the warmer climate. Others would even go so far as Southeast Asia or the Caribbean for their beaches or coral reefs (Bigano et al. 2006).

In the last several years, there has been a growing concern over the effect of global warming on the climate. All around the world, climate changes are becoming more obvious, causing flooding and extreme temperatures in different nations. Weather patterns have become unpredictable, which means that summer periods could be extended or winter may be longer than usual. These disturbances in the weather and their impact on the environment are significant to the tourism industry.
Each tourist travels worldwide for a different purpose. Some may come seeking the different activities this place can provide to visitors, like skiing or golf, others may come for its natural beauty or what nature has to offer. It is very important that each destination should keep its charms in order to retain the tourist industry booming. With climate change, the beauty of the local destinations is threatened while accessibility too can become a problem especially when roads, airports, ports and bridges are destroyed during extreme weather disturbances as floods or storms. The different impact of climate changes on the tourism industry will be discussed in the succeeding sections:

(i) Coral Bleaching

Many tourists visit coastal destinations for scuba diving. Scuba diving is one of the most popular activities that encourage the growth of tourism in these countries. Areas with extensive and diverse coral reefs would attract visitors from all over the world to explore the wonders of the underwater world. However, climate changes in recent years have caused damage to the oceans and the reefs. In some countries that are blessed with various diving sites, as the Philippines, the warming of the sea especially from the El Nino phenomenon resulted to what is known as coral bleaching. Coral bleaching results to the death of about 49% of live coral. Moreover, corals, mollusks and shells are also destroyed because of the higher amount of dissolved CO_2 in the ocean water. Without these organisms and creatures underwater, the diving industry in this nation will suffer greatly. The same issue is facing the coral reefs in Maldives, which means that Maldives will also suffer the lessening of the number of visitors who come specifically for its coral.(Viner and Agnew 1999).

(ii) Rising of sea level

Another problem because of climate changes is the rising of the sea level. Maldives' elevation is low, which means that the higher the sea level rises, the more likely will the island be diminished with storm surges. It is estimated that Maldives could be removed from the map in the next 30 years if the sea level continues to rise unabated (Viner and Agnew 1999). The Bahamas is another example of popular destinations that is also vulnerable to storm surges, which can get worse with the rising of the sea level. Its freshwater bodies are also turning brackish because of the encroachment of the seawater.

(iii) Reduction of Snow Cover

While tropical islands and coastal countries are affected greatly by rising sea levels and coral bleaching, those that are located in colder regions are faced with a different kind of threat results from these climate changes. The tourism industry in colder regions depends mainly on winter sports, like skiing, heli-skiing and snowboarding. The general trend in the weather conditions recently is that of warming, which means that the summer months could be extended and the snow cover would be lower. Without enough snow, traditional ski resorts will not be able to offer their usual winter activities, and therefore tourism will become slow since their visitors would not want to be stuck in ski resorts with nothing to do for the duration of their vacation.

In some countries it is expected that the grassland ecozone will be shifting North, and the wildlife will also move with the ecozone. Some wildlife will not be able to adapt to these rapid changes, which can result to their extinction. As a result tourists who travel seeking wildlife would not visit the usual places where tourism normally is.

(iv) Spread of diseases

There are many diseases that spread on warmer climates. Many of them become spread or carried from one country to another through the movement of people and goods. The dengue-carrying mosquito and the malaria-carrying mosquito do not thrive in cold climates, they are found in tropical countries. But with the warming of the earth, suitable environments can be established for them in other countries.

In Spain, for example, the nation is seen as a no-risk destination. Meaning, tourists do not need to get immunized for malaria or the yellow fever before travelling to it. However, malaria has resurfaced in Spain because climate changes in this region become ideal for the breeding of the type of mosquitoes that carry this disease (Viner and Agnew 1999).

(v) Loss of income for tourist destinations

Regarding continuous climate changes causing temperatures to rise, the result of that would be the melting of snowcaps and the immersion of coastal areas. The melting of snowcaps is going to affect the ski operators in cold countries greatly. When snow melts, that would cause the water level to rise, which in turn will flood coastal areas that are very attractive to those who like to experience the sea. All of these would suffer a huge blow on industries that directly or indirectly depend on tourism. Of the $735 billion revenues made from international tourism, about one third of that income went to developing countries that possess many beautiful beaches and extensive coral reefs. A worsening of climate change means that developing countries are going to lose a rich source of income.

3-Tourism Greenwashing

In recent years, more travel companies have adopted green marketing strategies in an effort to enhance their brand image and attract new customers, as 'eco,' 'green,' 'environmentally-friendly' and 'sustainable' are that many of tourists are looking for when they travel because they fit with their values and are indicative that they are making responsible decisions. As a result, it has become difficult to tell the difference between companies that are genuinely devoted to protecting the environment and those that are using their green campaigns to gain more profits.

In the travel industry, green washing also refers to tour operators which make eco-trips seem more sustainable and ethical than they actually are, where some tour companies convince tourists to think that by participating in a particular activity they are giving back to the local community or environment, while actually they are not.

Ecotourism is in high demand today where international visitors seeking this kind of tourism could reach 1.8 billion by 2030, and this number is predicted to increase more rapidly in next coming years than traditional mass tourism. More than a third of travelers now do prefer environmentally-friendly tourism and they are even ready to pay up to 40% more for it.

4-Environmental Degradation:

Tourism industry can put massive pressure on natural resources when it increases consumption in areas where resources are already scarce. Negative impacts from tourism occur as a result of increasing the level of visitor use above the level of environment's ability to cope with this change. Many natural resources are affected negatively by this misuse of them, the most affected resources of which are:

(i)Water resources

Water, and especially fresh water, is one of the most critical natural resources that are negatively affected by tourism industry, especially in dryer regions like the Mediterranean, where the issue of water scarcity is of particular concern. The tourism industry generally overuses water resources for hotels, swimming pools, golf courses and personal use of water by tourists, which can result in water shortages and degradation of water supplies, as well as generating a greater volume of waste water.

In marine areas (around coastal waters, reefs, beach and shoreline, offshore waters, uplands and lagoons) many tourist activities occur in or around fragile ecosystems. Anchoring, snorkeling, sport fishing and scuba diving, yachting, and cruising are some of the activities that can cause direct degradation of marine ecosystems.

(ii) Land resources:

Increased construction of tourism and recreational facilities has increased the pressure on many important land resources that include minerals, fossil fuels, fertile soil, forests, wetland and wildlife. Forests as well often suffer negative impacts of tourism in the form of deforestation caused by fuel wood collection and land clearing.

(iii) Air pollution:

Transport by air, road, and rail is continuously increasing in response to the rising number of travelers every year. One consequence of increase in means of transport, especially air transport, is that tourism now accounts for more than 60% of air travel and is therefore responsible for an important share of air emissions. One study estimated that a single transatlantic return flight emits almost half the CO_2 emissions produced by all other sources (lighting, heating, car use, etc.) consumed by an average person yearly. Transport emissions and emissions from energy production and use are linked to acid rain, global warming and photochemical pollution.

5-Cultural heritage damage

Heritage is a thorough concept that consists of many diverse values like cultural, natural, historical, architectural, archaeological, and geological values. Heritage demonstrates different ways of lives and habits, in other words, different cultures and eras of the mankind along so many years.

Cultural heritage tourism has the potential to produce both positive and negative impacts. The positive impacts include economic benefits such as employment opportunities, and direct and indirect visitor expenditure. Those desirable impacts are often corresponding to benefits such as community building and enhancement of community identity. That means that when cultural heritage is managed effectively it can produce a positive change.

On the other hand, if the cultural heritage is not well managed, it can have a detrimental impact on communities. Cultural commoditization and improper dealing with it can lead to physical damage to heritage sites caused by inappropriate treatment and uncontrolled visitation (Bourdeau, Gravari-Barbas and Robinson, 2017)

6-Security and safety

One of the major challenges to the tourism recently is security. Safety and security are vital to providing quality in tourism, where sustainability of a tourism destination depends to ma great extent on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors. Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001 security has become of a great importance for tourism industry. Unfortunately many industry leaders don't pay enough attention to security issues and instead of that they refuse to confront the problem. Too many tourism offices and visitors bureaus have no contact with their local police departments. As well as the fact that the majority of police departments have no officers trained in TOPs (tourism oriented policing/protection services). Only few city councils or local governments have provided their security agencies with the economic and manpower resources to protect their visitors. Unless the tourist's security becomes a chief focus of concern, various tourism locations may be eliminated traveler "wish lists" and therefore may face great economic losses in the future.

Another issue of concern regarding security and safety recently is the unstable political conditions all over the world. On the international front, tourism will continue to have to deal with even more complicated political situations. For example, although local governments claim that they support tourism, visa restrictions have become more complicated. Moreover, no nation seems to be safe from street demonstrations, politically motivated riots, and acts of terrorism or wars. These surroundings make travel to these host destinations more difficult and less appealing to travelers.

7-Loss of identity

If one among of the reasons for travel is to learn about or have the opportunity to explore the uniqueness and difference, then the similarity factor is a major tourism challenge. For example, shopping malls around the world often seem to offer the same products and many travelers find hotels to be so identical that they almost forget in what country the hotel is located.

Identity supports social unity if it strengthens mutual links that support how a community lives together; if it favors friendly relationships between nations; if it is based on understanding and exchange of ideas, on recognizing differences. It also benefits economic activity by adding value to products according to their place of origin, differentiating them and making them competitive in the global market.

On the other hand, mass industrial tourism is based on the distribution and consumption of packaged products and, therefore, one product is substitutable for another. The commodification of what should be valued as unique is further

worsened by the application of industrial cost cutting strategies of standardization and automation that further strip out any remaining leftovers of difference, let alone charm. As a result tourists rarely get the chance to stand in admiration and wonder.

CONCLUSION

Regarding unorganized carrying capacities

Bearing in mind the massive damage caused by uncontrolled carrying capacity of mass tourism, it became very necessary for the concept of tourism carrying capacity to be considered in the planning for tourism as introduced by governments and other developers. That should include setting capacity limits for protecting tourism activities in an area.

Regarding climate changes

The negative impact of climate changes on tourism requires improvements in the existing policies and change of operating patterns that relate to the environment. This means that host destinations must adapt to these changes through diversification of products and services so that the dependency on climate shifts decreases.

Moreover, the local and international organizations must cooperate to find proper solutions to overcome these problems, and this could be achieved by putting plans to reduce carbon emissions or improve carbon friendly technologies, so that the impacts of global warming may be decreased.

Regarding green wash tourism

As the green travel market is rapidly becoming inundated with misleading advertising and false environmental claims, there must be some guidelines to help tourists to know when booking an eco-tour whether it is really eco-friendly or not. The traveler should ask for more information on the company's sustainability efforts and achievements. For example:

- What percentage of annual profit is invested in environmental conservation?
- How has the company helped protect native wildlife and flora in recent years?
- Is there a limited number of tourists per tour to minimize environmental impact in the region?

In the same way, if a tour operator promotes a commitment to empowering the local community, it is preferable ask a few questions about the company's economic and socio-cultural benefits for locals. For example:

- Do they employ local people and buy locally-sourced products?
- Do their tours generate enough income to help local people and enhance the wellbeing of host communities, improving working conditions and access to the industry?
- Is the company involved in any community-based initiatives/projects?
- Do they involve local people in decisions that affect their lives?
- Do they consider the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, in order to maintain the world's diversity?
- Do they afford enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues?
- Do they maintain cultural sensitivity, engendering respect between tourists and hosts, and building local pride and confidence?

Regarding Environmental Degradation Due To Tourism:

In order to make tourism sustainable to the ecological importance of the area, the local governments has to implement measures so that natural resources are protected, there should not be any resorts or hotels constructing on the shores of this area, as it affects the species around. These hotels and resorts dump a lot of wastes into the sea which spoils the water too.
The local governments should implement policy changes so that tourism does not become a problem. Toward this end, several tourist destinations worldwide are already taking measures to avoid worsening the environmental degradation, as well as, preserve natural attractions. The government of New zealand has made it obligatory for a government official to accompany the tourist's ships to check whether they follow proper rules and regulations.

Likewise, the local government of Boracay Island in the Philippines, along with various environmental groups like Green Peace Solar Generation Youth, has carried out climate-friendly solutions that tourists and resort operators should follow.

These solutions include responsible tourism, energy efficiency, and zero waste. Energy efficiency measures include the use of solar energy for operating laptops and the use of batteries to run cars and motorbikes.

Regarding cultural heritage

In contrast to other tourist attractions, historical heritage attractions are non-renewable resources, which means that once destroyed can't be restored. From this point it becomes clear that protection of cultural heritage is of great importance. Considering that many measurements must be introduced in order to protect these heritages. Mass tourism is one of the threats to heritage sites, that's why this overcapacity should be controlled.

Regarding security and safety

Since tourism security became of great concern lately, several countries in the region have taken measures to fight crime and combat harassment acts, particularly as they relates to the tourism sector.

For example, many countries have established what is called "Tourist Police" to maintain security and to aid tourists visiting the state. The Tourist Police Unit is a specialized unit that provides tourists and visitors information on law, customs, culture and attractions in the local community and builds up confidence for the tourists regarding their safety. They aim to provide the tourist friendly, professional and respected police service. In many vital events, common police proceedings consume more time on getting contacts with embassies, consulates, travel agents etc.

Regarding tourism and identity

In order to protect the unique identity that distinguishes each attraction destination, it requires first hosts to wake up and see their locale - not as a resource to be exploited, but as a sacred place to be preserved and celebrated for its individuality. Second, it is important that the hosts start to view their customers not as units of consumption, as guests are seeking the uniqueness and charm of different places.

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