

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 more research being undertaken into the range of impacts tourism creates and the ways in which these impacts can be managed more carefully.

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 £19 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.

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Negative

More people now recognise that tourism may bring about a loss of an area's cultural identity, especially in an area which 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 which 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 which exploit local traditions and culture.

Case study – Impacts of tourism on a UK Destination – Cardiff

In recent years Cardiff has emerged as one of the most important city break destinations in the UK and tourism has become more and more important to the city. This is due to a number of factors:

- The building of the Millennium Stadium for the Rugby World Cup in 1999. This gave the city the opportunity to stage major sporting events and attract major stars to hold concerts in the stadium. The stadium was built close to the city centre, providing easy access from the railway station.
- The re-development of the Cardiff Bay area and the development of major leisure facilities such as the Millennium Centre as well as a number of tourist attractions. This gave a major boost to the city by clearing away many derelict industrial buildings.



Cardiff Bay has a range of visitor attractions.

- The hosting of major sporting events such as the Ashes Cricket Test at the SWLEC Stadium and the Ryder Cup at the Celtic Manor in Newport. These events provided worldwide exposure to Cardiff and south-east Wales.
- Good transport links to other parts of the UK. Mainline trains from London to Cardiff provide a fast service and the M4 provides good road access. The Second Severn Crossing also helped access to south east Wales.
- Interesting surrounding countryside, coastal areas, industrial heritage and historic properties with varied appeal for many types of visitor.

- A good range of cultural attractions, supported by the Welsh Assembly Government to provide free entry.
- The establishment of the Welsh Assembly Government in Cardiff which promoted the city as the Capital of Wales.
- A wide range of accommodation to suit many types of tourist.



The Cophthorne Hotel at Culverhouse Cross is one of many four-star hotels in Cardiff.

Economic Impacts

Positive Economic Impacts

Tourist spending in Cardiff is calculated to be over £600 million each year. It is also calculated that there are about 14,000,000 tourist visits to Cardiff each year. About 11,000,000 of these are day visits and 3,000,000 visits involve an overnight stay. This means that on an average night, about 8,000 people are staying in Cardiff. When Wales are playing a Six Nations rugby match, or there is a major concert at the Millennium Stadium, every hotel room in the city and surrounding area is occupied. (Detailed visitor figures can be obtained from the Cardiff City Council website)

As in other cities, these tourists spend a great deal of money and create jobs for local people. It is estimated that tourists spend nearly £100 million each year on food and drink, and also spend over £80 million in shops.

This means that many people employed in restaurants, cafes, shops and in the transport industry owe their jobs to the people who visit Cardiff as much

as to the people who live in Cardiff. It is estimated that about 10% of the people employed in Cardiff are involved in some way in the tourism industry.

There is no doubt that tourism has helped develop the infrastructure of Cardiff, with new roads linking Cardiff Bay with the city centre and new shopping complexes built in the city.

Negative Economic Impacts

The success of Cardiff as a destination in recent years means that there have been more positive economic impacts than negative. As a former port and industrial city, there are some workers who do not have the skills required to be employed in tourism related jobs and remain unemployed.

One of the major negative impacts is perhaps due to the success of the Millennium Stadium. On the days when important rugby matches take place or there is a big concert at the stadium, other economic activity in the city becomes very difficult. Because the stadium is so close to the city centre, many people would not choose to go shopping on those days. It would be difficult to hold meetings anywhere in the city centre and traffic congestion becomes a problem. People wishing to visit the city for business purposes will find it very difficult to find accommodation. So although the Millennium Stadium has created many positive economic impacts for the city of Cardiff, there are negative impacts as well.

The Millennium Stadium creates some negative economic impacts on match days and when major concerts are held.

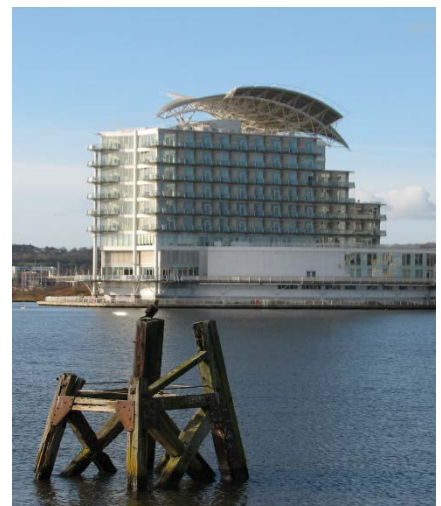
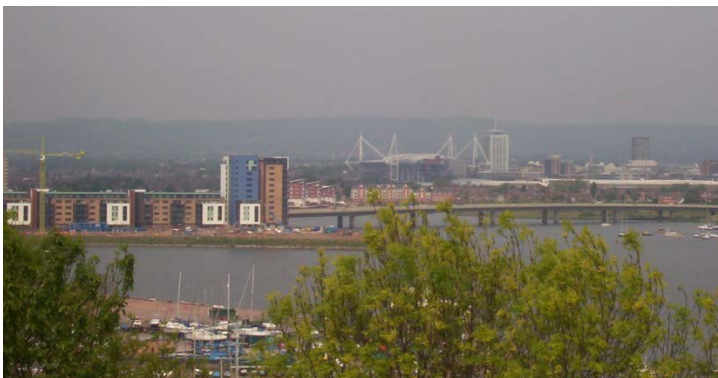


Environmental impacts

Positive environmental impacts

The re-development of Cardiff Bay over the last 20 years has had an important positive impact on the physical environment of the city. The success of the re-development has made Cardiff into a 'superlative maritime city which will stand comparison with any such city in the world' which was the aim of the project.

Although increased tourism was not the only aim of the Cardiff Bay project, the development of the city as an important destination has had positive impacts on the environment. Some of the important buildings in the old docklands area, such as the Pierhead building, have been left to become important visitor attractions. New buildings, such as the St David's Hotel add interest to the area as a tourist destination. The Cardiff Bay barrage created a new lake which has been used for a variety of tourist uses including water sports. Many other old industrial buildings have been re-developed and renovated to become tourist facilities, such as hotels.



Negative Environmental Impacts

The building of the barrage across Cardiff Bay did have some negative impacts on the environment. The numbers and types of birds feeding in the mudflats which made up the area have been reduced and for a time the new lake was covered with algae, which made many water sports difficult.

However, generally the positive environmental impacts of the re-development of Cardiff Bay are greater than the negative.

As with all tourist cities, traffic congestion and pollution is a problem in Cardiff, especially when big matches and concerts are held at the Millennium Stadium.

Social impacts

Positive Social Impacts

One of the major positive social impacts of the development of Cardiff as a tourist destination has been the opportunity for visitors to learn more about and to appreciate the culture, language and traditions of Wales. Within Cardiff there are a number of attractions which showcase the history and culture of Wales. These include Cardiff Castle, St Fagan's and the National Museum of Wales at Cathays Park in the city centre. As in many countries, the people of Wales feel proud of their heritage and are keen for visitors to learn more about Welsh culture.

The opening of the Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay has provided the opportunity to provide a range of concerts and other entertainment featuring the culture of Wales. This also provides tourists with the opportunity to appreciate the country and its people.

The Millennium Centre has become important in celebrating the culture of Wales.



Local people have also benefited from the wide range of restaurants, cafes and entertainment options the city now provides.



Mermaid Quay, within the Cardiff Bay development, offers a wide range of restaurants.

The city is also proud with its association with the author Roald Dahl and television programmes such as Dr Who and Torchwood.

Negative social impacts

Like all tourist cities which provide entertainment and restaurants, Cardiff has problems with some visitors who drink too much alcohol, which may upset local people. There are some 'stag' and 'hen' parties which visit the city and some sports fans might drink too much occasionally. Some local residents resent the congestion and disturbance which occurs when major events take place at the Millennium Stadium.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that the development of Cardiff as a tourist destination over the last 10 years has been a success story. The building of the Millennium Stadium and the re-development of Cardiff Bay have been crucial factors in this. The positive impacts of tourism far outweigh the negatives.