

## **Sustainable tourism**

Tourism, as we know it nowadays, started approximately in 1950. The end of the WWII as well as the amelioration and better access to public transport enabled people to move easily from one point to another. Back in these days, about 25 million people have been travelling in order to discover our planet. Since then, over the last decades, international tourist arrivals have increased dramatically. In 2013, approximately 1.1 billion tourists have been counted all over the world, while in 2018 already 1.3 billion tourists have been counted. The expectation for 2030 is even 1.8 billion which is more than one quarter of the world population. These rising statistics clearly show the growing importance of tourism.

Not only the increasing number of tourists is stunning, but also the economic performance of tourism shows its growing significance all over the world. In 2012, approximately 6630 billion USD of turnover, which represented 9.3% of the global economic performance, resulted from tourism. This sum can be divided in three main parts. First, the direct expenses for tourists like for example the costs for accommodation and flights. Second, the necessary input to enable tourism like for instance a local dealer supplying a hotel with food and finally, the money spent resulting from tourism like when a hotel owner buys a new car.

The positive aspects and effects of tourism are both, the reason why it's continuously growing and the result of its rising global significance. One of the most important pros of tourism is the creation of millions of new jobs every year. Local people as well as big and small companies take advantage of the high demand of touristic and infrastructural services due to tourism. A lot of touristic services need human handgrrips but in the same time low investments which especially allows low qualified people and small companies to take profit of tourism. This is the reason why tourism is also very important for developing and emerging countries. In Malaysia and Thailand for instance, tourism represents 15 – 20% of the economic performance.

Another positive effect of tourism is the creation of new as well as the extension and/or amelioration of existing infrastructure in the respective countries or cities. Not only tourists but also local people take big advantage of better infrastructure. Especially in developing and emerging countries, easy access to natural resources like water, gas or electricity is not necessarily given yet. The construction of hotels for example implies the connection to these resources, of which also local people take profit. Also, the construction or amelioration of new and better roads or public transport is not only simplifying tourists' journeys but is also clearly increasing the local people's life quality. In this case tourism leads to a modernisation and globalisation of the respective tourist destinations.

One of the most important reasons why people decide to travel is to discover new countries, cities, places and cultures. Travelling makes it possible to broaden your horizon in many ways. Learning new languages in the respective native countries is good and efficient, but not only for tourists but also for the local people which also have the possibility to get in touch with foreigners and their languages. Meeting people from other cultures and with different habits in their home country is increasing tolerance and intelligence of those who experience it. It

also helps to understand the behaviour of foreigners in other countries and leads to more acceptance around the whole world.

Finally, tourism is one of the most important reasons to preserve natural areas as well as historical buildings and places. The money paid by tourists in order to visit the respective touristic attractions enables the local government, city or private owner to maintain and/or preserve them.

Although tourism has lots of positive aspects, the absurdly fast grow of that phenomena and the lack of regulation, carried out some problems which the society has not been able to solve yet.

From a socio-economic point of view, massive tourism has a negative and direct impact in people lives. First of all, the huge amount of tourist provoked the rise of the housing rents given that flat owners prefer to set a tourist apartment since it generates more benefits. In order to expel the tenants who lived there since then, the speculators, when the contract must be renewed, increase the rent to a level where the rent can't be paid and people has to move to other areas.

Another problem is the destruction of the local trade diversity. In this case, the neighbourhood's local stores are gradually changed from a model of business centred in providing the essential services to the local costumers (bakery, fruit shops, book stores, cinema...) to a model centred in providing services focused in the tourists. The reason for this to happen are two. The first reason is, again, the rising of the rents where the local is placed and the second one is the fact that the number of potential customers is reduced, since local people is forced to move. Those two reasons make those business economically unsustainable. The only sustainable businesses are those focused in tourist (restaurants, souvenir shops, international companies...) since the number of potential customers is huge and still growing.

As said before, one of the positive aspects are the creation of lots of new jobs. However, this has at the same time some negative points which must be taken into consideration. The most important point is that those jobs are precarious for different reasons. First of all, most of those jobs are temporal because is during the summer where more employees are required. The rest of the year, the demand is reduced so those employees are no longer needed. Secondly, the salaries are low compared with the costs of live and lots of the overtime hours are not paid according to most of the worker unions. Finally, those jobs require a good physical condition since in general, the employee must stand during most of the time and also are jobs which require to be in front of the public, so the profile required is young people. This makes those jobs not accessible for the all employees.

Finally, the massive tourism also has a direct impact in local people every day live, from overcrowded streets to the saturation of the public transport, incivility, noise and other inconvenience which the massification of tourism provoke.

Socio-economic problems are not the only problems society must deal with when considering the model of tourism wanted. From an environmental point of view, tourism is not sustainable for many reasons. The main reason is the pollution it creates the fact of moving so many people all around the world. Air planes are responsible of the 3% of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions all over the world, cruisers such as the "Harmony of the seas" (biggest cruiser of the world) consumes 2.500.000 litres of fuel per day and the engines never stop, even when the ship is in the harbour. Another reason is the over exploitation of the natural resources, for instance, sometimes the local resources are not enough to provide the quantity to supply the required resources for the local and the foreign tourist, making it necessary to take those supplies from other places.

Considering the damages tourism can create, but also keeping in mind its importance on the lives of several people as well as in the economy as a whole, it becomes important to seek a balance. A sustainable type of tourism is crucial to avoid harming the nature, the culture and the social equilibrium of the destinations. This type of travelling connects smoothly the needs of the visitor with the local industry, shops, culture and the environment.

The transportation mean is very relevant when searching for a sustainable tourism. Airplanes are known for being the biggest pollutants per travelled kilometre per person. Consequently, one should replace them with trains and bus whenever possible, since their pollution levels are much lower. On site, one should also prefer public transportation or walking, avoiding not only larger pollution levels, but also local traffic worsening.

Regarding housing, one should give priority to local establishments over international hotel chains. Important part of sustainable tourism is providing economical means for the development of the local community. Hotel chains typically send their earnings abroad, preventing the injection of capital in the country of destination. On the other hand, local accommodations are more propense to providing local products and services. Instead of purchasing furniture from IKEA and providing imported consumables, locals tend to use a much larger share of local products. Therefore, prioritizing local accommodations not only injects money directly on the local economy, but also feeds a whole network of local services and goods.

Following the same logic, when looking for activities and consumable goods, tourists should prefer the ones of locals. Instead of encouraging tourist activities that otherwise wouldn't exist (such as skiing in Dubai), one should try to get in the local culture, praising traditions and the peculiarities of the nature.

Measures concerning sustainable tourism can also be taken by governments. The easiest way to avoid excessive pollution, harming the nature and affecting the local day basis is limiting the number of beds in accommodations. This avoids an expansion of trash generation and nature harming as well as the need for expanding infrastructure (airports, bigger hotels, etc.) that would otherwise would not be needed. The creation of protected areas, that allows none of a limited number of people, is also crucial on maintaining the environment. Officials can also help protecting the tradition of locals, prohibiting tourists from entering the local church around mass hours. Ideally, the local citizens should have a mean of participating on the

decision-making regarding tourists. Choosing, alongside the government, what should be encouraged or avoided.