

Tourism Impacts

This section is concerned with tourism impacts. These are conventionally subdivided under sub-headings such as economic impacts, socio-cultural impacts and environmental impacts. It is also usually the case that impacts are grouped together using terms such as 'positive' and 'negative'. Although impacts can occur at any location in the tourism system (see Figure 1.1), it is within the tourism destination that these impacts are particularly noticeable, and this is at least partly to do with the fact that many destinations are concentrated spatially, so the geographical dimensions of the impacts are easy to observe and record. In reality, tourism impacts are not neatly subdivided under convenient headings, but are often multi-faceted. It is also the case that tourism impacts are usually set within a wider context of other socio-economic effects of human activity. Nevertheless, in an attempt to understand their importance here, tourism impacts are classified under headings and discussed in separate chapters in this section.



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An Introduction to Tourism Impacts

Introduction

Tourism, as a significant form of human activity, can have major effects on people and places, and these effects are commonly referred to as tourism impacts. Tourism always takes place in a context, which we usually refer to, in a broad sense, as the environment. This environmental context is made up of both human and natural features. The human environment comprises economic, social and cultural factors and processes. The natural environment is made up of inorganic components such as rocks and water, and inorganic processes such as the erosion of rocks, combined with organic elements, which comprise plants and animals and organic processes such as those within an ecosystem.

The human and natural environments

When discussing impacts of tourism, it is possible to make a distinction between the human environment and the natural environment and this is the convention followed by most writers on tourism impacts. However, it is important to note that, in a real setting, the human and the natural environment are not separate, but interlinked, and human activity is both affected by and has effects on the natural environment.

Most writers and researchers consider the impacts of tourism under the following headings:

- socio-cultural impacts,
- economic impacts and
- environmental impacts.

This convention is followed in the chapters that follow, but it should be remembered that in a real world context, tourism impacts are generally multi-faceted, often having a combination of economic, social and environmental dimensions, although tourism researchers, and others such as planners and politicians may concentrate on one type of impact and largely ignore the others. Nevertheless, when considering each type of impact, it should be noted that the impacts are multi-dimensional,