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**IMPORTANCE OF  
TOURISM PARADOX,  
TOURISM EQUINOX AND  
TOURISM DETOX FOR  
URBAN ENVIRONMENTS**

**ABSTRACT:** When looking at the increase of tourism in a destination, it can be said that tourism is a valuable part of the economy. The proposal offered by today's competitive paradigm: that higher the number of tourists visiting a city, the higher the income, sounds good at first. The increased number of tourist arrivals gives the appearance of increasing desirability of the city. Parallel with the increased tourism activities, new buildings, new lifestyles, foreign capital and new socio-economic relationships appear rapidly and replace the traditional ones. However, there will be a huge amount of social, cultural, economic and environmental problems faced by the local people as well as the tourists the city. Tourism paradox is the name given to the phenomenon where tourism industry destroys natural and cultural environment in a destination that is necessary for tourism activities. On the other hand the balance, which does not change and disturbs the social and economic relations at the destination is called "tourism equinox". Therefore, spatial reorganization and urban regeneration play a crucial role for the marketing of cities and this

transformation action affects all infrastructure facilities, restorations of old buildings, reorganization of historical zones, and revitalizing the architectural style of the cities. New projects and approaches to solve the problems caused by the growth of urban populations and to establish healthy sustainable tourism destinations are becoming more important than ever. Tourism detox is a treatment that is intended to remove harmful substances from these destinations. This paper investigates the influence of tourism paradox and tourism equinox on urban environments in relation to tourism activities and the protection of natural and cultural resources with the help of tourism detox. It primarily relies on qualitative research to understand the main futures of tourism paradox, equinox and detox taking the physical and environmental aspects of urban environments into consideration. As research methodology a literature review and the sources of secondary data were used.

**KEY WORDS:** tourism paradox, tourism equinox, tourism detox, urban environments, sustainability

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## TOURISM PARADOX

Having the tourism industry as the only development model for a destination with its natural and cultural resources could not only destroy the environment and 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 of the destinations. It is obvious that tourism generates beneficial outcomes as much as it produces negative impacts in the conservation of traditional settlements and historical cities with their natural and cultural resources. Therefore, the relationship between culture and tourism has been defined with terms such as: “paradox, contradiction and conflict, dynamic and complex” (Kılıç and Aydoğan, 2015). The growth of tourism cannot always be considered as having a positive impact for the cities. Because of the increase of the tourism industry, many historic cities started to lose their historical identity and suffer from overcrowding (Diekmann and Gillot, 2010).

When looking at the increase of tourism in a destination, it can be said that tourism is a valuable part of the economy. The proposal offered by today’s competitive paradigm that higher the number of tourists visiting a city, the higher will the income be for the destination sounds good at first. The increased number of tourist arrivals gives the appearance of increasing desirability of the city. Parallel with the increased tourism activities, new buildings, new lifestyles, foreign capital and new socio-economic relationships appear rapidly and replace the traditional ones. However, there will be a huge amount of social, cultural, economic and environmental problems faced by the local people as well as tourists at the city ([www.exofoundation.org/the-paradox-of-tourism](http://www.exofoundation.org/the-paradox-of-tourism)).

“The tourism paradox” begins to appear at this stage since the natural and cultural resources that are worth seeing are consumed by the travelers. Tourism paradox is the name given to this

phenomenon where tourism industry destroys natural and cultural environment that is necessary for tourism activities. Tourism paradox is also the name of unsustainable tourism. Projects that focus on and emphasize the economic and social benefits should be undertaken in order to protect these values in the end. Besides the economic aspect of conserving cultural and natural heritage it is also very important to protect the destination from the negative effects of tourism. Heritage is not only something that people wish to pass on generation by generation, it is also something that has become increasingly scientific, so that preservation and survival is something that is created through a number of principles, processes and practices (Timothy and Boyd, 2003). This is why the shaping of cities today is important to tourists, especially the tourists of tomorrow.

Tourism is like a fire, it can cook the meal or, burn the house. This famous Asian saying underlines the fact tourism is indeed a double-edged sword, and that tourism impacts highly depending on how it is being developed, managed and consumed. Increased construction of tourism and recreational facilities has increased the pressure on natural resources and on scenic landscapes. Direct impact on natural resources, both renewable and nonrenewable, in the provision of tourist facilities can be caused by the use of land for accommodation and other infrastructure provision, and the use of building materials. Tourism often fails to integrate its structures with the natural features and indigenous architecture of the destination. (<http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/envi/one.html>).

## TOURISM EQUINOX

Destinations have suffered from uncontrolled tourist development and tourism paradox during the last decades, having as a consequence the destruction of natural eco-systems, air and water pollution, the shortage of water, problems of waste disposal, or the transformation of small

villages into centers of urbanization. Fortunately, tourists' mentalities are changing and the slogan of "non-destructive or sustainable tourism" is becoming important for travelers and for authorities. New positive kinds of holidays are being developed; they deal with the problems of mass tourism, caring for cultural, social, and natural features of the destination (<http://www.karl.aegee.org/oem/articles/oe8/t-freedom.htm>).

Presenting a balance between the sustainability of cultural and natural heritage and marketing for tourism purposes forms an important aspect of planning and managing cultural and natural heritage sites (Teo and Huang, 1995). Can we protect the destinations from tourism paradox? New projects and approaches to solve this problem and to establish healthy sustainable tourism destinations are becoming more important than ever. 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 is about equal length.

Tourism has become a significant feature of the economy and structure of the destinations around the world and also has played a major role in the transformation and re-development of industrial districts within destinations that have traditionally accommodated commercial activities. Sustainable tourism has been promoted as a way of moderating the disadvantages of tourism, at the same time making the best use of the benefits in a way that is suitable for the greatest number of people (<http://www.karl.aegee.org/oem/articles/oe8/t-freedom.htm>). The standardization, globalization, destruction or prettification can be very difficult to reverse. Once high buildings or open spaces have been created, it proves very hard to revert to what was there before. To be healthy, a town must be welcoming for tourists but also for its inhabitants. If heritage is advertised and emphasized, one needs to be aware that it is the contents that animate it. It is urban life taken

as a whole with its complexity, which makes the container live and evolve. Without this, heritage loses its meanings, residents leave, towns start losing their specific "feel" and tourists leave as well. On the other hand, when successful, there will be a more balanced and controlled tourism development that is in harmony with natural and social environment. Tourism equinox encourages the development of cultural and rural tourism to sustain local cultures, traditional lifestyles and industries, it seeks to utilize resources and the environment in a sustainable way, and it aims to generate the local economy by providing opportunities for employment and economic development. Also, it demands an awareness of the needs of local people, respect and appreciation for culture and the environment and achieves a balance between development and conservation.

One of the best examples of tourism equinox 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 understood that tourism equinox can be used to bring together a range of activities, products and experiences to useful economic advantage. The Yamaguchi tourism policy aims to satisfy both residents in rural areas, as well as visitors from urban areas (Murayama and Parker, 2012). Local communities need to control and self-regulate their tourist industries, and tourism offers the best options in terms of environmental protection and long-term, sustainable economic growth in these communities (Wearing, Wearing and McDonald, 2012). 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 sustainable tourism, where they feel healthy, relaxed and secure with tourism equinox.

For a tourist destination, the promotion and the image are fundamental and must be carefully constructed in order to get benefits. Tourism is a form of conspicuous consumption and tourists

exhibit their identity and social standing by the destination they choose to visit and the image it presents. The social and economic impact of tourism, and consequently its effect on culture, is enormous in areas of mass tourism (<http://www.karl.aegee.org/oem/articles/oe8/t-freedom.htm/>). For that reason, tourism equinox tries to solve this problem by advocating that the image presented should meet the needs of the local community and express their cultural heritage. The quality of the destination has to be improved, because more and more tourists are becoming demanding and look for quality and for new experiences, new activities, new ways of enjoying their holidays (Segui, 1995).

In terms of environmental protection this means the creation of a balance between tourism and natural structures and resources, in other words tourism equinox. Consequently, this is only practicable with a limited number of visitors. The most important measure to ensure a balance between tourism and environment could be a strict regulation of the flow of visitors at the destinations.

## **TOURISM DETOX**

Tourism is dynamic, but if it is developed too quickly, it can be destructive to the host community. If over-developed it destroys the resources and values that attract the visitors to the destination (ICOMOS, 1999). In tourism urbanization, cities or urban areas are commoditized for the consumers of the tourism industry; and tourists go to tourism cities to consume not only the facilities of the city but also to consume the whole city (Kaya, 2014). The tourism paradox affects the tourism destinations, where relations of tourism industry have dominant roles over its unplanned and uncontrolled economic and social structure with unbalanced funds. Consequently, some destinations that have become favorite resorts with their unique tourist attractions have lost their characteristics, some of them have become extinct and most of them have lost the identity. The people involved

in tourism in these regions where the economy of the society is based on tourism, were in search for “more tourists” in order to satisfy their economic profit in a very addictive manner like drug addicts.

Tourism paradox is the intoxication of destinations with the negative effects of the tourism industry. The period of tourism paradox can be seen as an opportunity to protect the natural and cultural resources of the destination which is called tourism detox. Detox is a radical decision and it is not an easy process. Tourism detox is not the same as detox tourism, digital detox or unplugging from technology during holidays. Tourism detox is a treatment that is intended to remove harmful elements of tourism development from the destination. Therefore, spatial reorganization and urban regeneration play a crucial role for the marketing of the cities and this transformation action affects all infrastructure facilities, restorations of old buildings, reorganization of historical zones, and revitalizing the architectural style of the cities. However, the implications and tourism interventions will be different from one city to another in order to reflect local context and identity such as architecture style, cultural heritage and local lifestyle (Kaya, 2014).

Similarly, it is also possible for the regions with tourism paradox to disengage from this paradox, yet it is not quite easy as it is expected. Tourism destinations can be disengaged from this paradox to reach to the natural, historical, economic and ancient social positions through consistency in the society and with the help of scientific methods.

## **URBAN ENVIRONMENTS**

### **The Impacts of the tourism sector on the urban environment**

The tourism sector is a major contributor to the economic growth worldwide, however tourism development causes several adverse impacts on the urban environments. The intensity of these

effects depends on the extent of tourist activities. Above all, the majority of tourism activities can lead to changes in the urban environment (Popescu, 2016). These impacts can be grouped into four classes of effects: economic, physical environmental, socio-cultural and political (Dumitru et al., 2012).

This section describes some of the most important negative impacts caused by the tourism sector according to the four groups of the urban environment. Tourism sector plays an important role for the economic development of the destination; it generates foreign currency, creates job, increases investment in addition to the effects of the industry on the balance of payments, and the multiplier effect, which lead to an important economic growth. Nevertheless, the increasing number of tourists will compete with households on consuming local goods (foods, transport, clothing, land use etc.), which will raise the cost of living. Therefore, local population is likely to be negatively affected by the prices (Ardahaey, 2011). Furthermore, the negative economic impacts of the tourism sector include the costs of tourism infrastructure and other direct and indirect costs spent by the government and private investors to serve the tourists. Sometimes the costs of tourism investments can outweigh the profit from the tourism activities. Moreover, the resources invested in the tourism sector can be invested in industries, and be more beneficial than the tourism sector (Mathieson, 1982; Ardahaey, 2011). Besides, tourism is an extremely sensitive activity; it can be affected by any external and/or internal factors (political instability, financial crises, social problems, etc.). Subsequently, the over dependency of the tourism industry potentially causes economic problems. Last but not least, it is commonly recognized that the tourism industry is a highly seasonal activity, which has negative repercussions not only on the income generated from the industry but also on the tourism employment.

The hospitality industry has serious repercussions on the physical environment. Among the most

challenging environmental issues related to the development of tourism activities is the overexploitation of natural resources, mainly water resources. Thus, the majority of tourist activities require a high level of water consumption (swimming pool, golf courses, etc.). In addition, pollution is a main problem related to the industry (soil pollution, visual pollution, noise pollution, water pollution, etc.). This is in addition to land and coastal erosion, changes in flora and fauna, and land exploitation for constructing tourist infrastructure.

Unlike the environmental impacts, the socio-cultural impacts of the tourism industry are not sufficiently investigated in the literature. Tourism has both positive and negative socio-cultural impacts on tourists as well as households. Among the most important positive impacts of the tourism industry is the enhancement of education and the intercultural exchange (music, handicrafts, foods, habits, etc.). This research sets the focus on the most dominant negative socio-cultural impacts of the industry. The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) discusses the most significant socio-cultural impacts related to this industry. The main impact related to the sector is standardization; tourist destinations tend to standardize accommodation, drinks, and food; in order to satisfy certain tourists, which will lead to the loss of authenticity. Another important issue discussed by the UNEP is the “irritation due to tourist behavior”; hence, sometimes tourists behave or appear in a way that irritates local people (for instance; wearing skirts or bikinis in some strictly Muslim countries, where Muslim women should be entirely covered).

Like other industries, tourism has both positive and negative impacts on the urban environment. Being aware of the adverse impacts of this economic activity makes planning for a sustainable tourism with an emphasis on spatial reorganization and urban regeneration an obligation.

The following paragraph discusses tourism planning process that helps achieve the tourism equinox.



### **Planning for sustainable tourism: preserving the urban environment**

Fulfilling the tourism equinox concept requires planning for sustainable tourism at an early stage. Tourism policy makers should plan for tourism growth according to the sustainability of the industry with respect to the carrying capacity of the area.

The impacts of tourism on urban environment must be assessed at an early stage through a planning process based on environmental impacts assessment. Analyzing the situation of the tourist destination through investigation of the resources available for the area, the number of tourists and other economic indicators related to the tourism industry are necessary for an efficient planning process (Angelevska-Najdeska and Rakicevik, 2012). It is important to notice that successful tourism plans, programs and projects require the involvement of host communities while being developed (Brunt and Courtney, 1999).

The tourism strategy should be focused on the environmental issues; indeed, the mismanagement of the environmental resources can lead to the degradation of the urban environment; which will not only affect the local population, but will decrease the number of visitors. Furthermore, empowering the poor segment of the society through creating employment (reducing poverty) and/or involving the decision-making process through organizing workshops is highly recommended, in order to reduce social issues, and increase their wellbeing. In the same context, Magaš (2003) added that balancing between the economic development and the sustainability of the tourism industry, can be discussed from two different aspects. “In terms of local community”; local community should be involved while planning for the tourism industry especially for the activities related to the social development that represents one of the urban environment pillars. The second aspect is “the concept of the quality of tourism”, which is related to the marketing aspect of the destination, in a way

that prioritizes the environmental sustainability and local population wellbeing.

Figure 1 represents the planning process steps that guaranties the tourism equinox, the suggested process is adapted from the Angelevska-Najdeska and Rakicevik (2012).

### **CONCLUSION**

Sustainable tourism should help define cultures, not reinvent them. Tourism frequently means the occupation of free space, the destruction of natural eco-systems, and the re-establishment of everyday life at the chosen destination. This activity is connected with the damage to the environment and to the local population. Many of the problems associated with tourism development arise from the fact that tourism providers are not sensitive to tourism equinox, local pressures and needs. To be successful, sustainable tourism has to rely on the local population and on its participation in development of tourism activity (Lopez and Palomino, 2003).

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 you do not care for tourism equinox. But the remarks about the negative impacts of tourism are intended to demonstrate and explain the tourism paradox. Tourism equinox should be substantiated through policy and legislation and should be the 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.

☞ In the first place, the best way to start to reconstruction of tourism for urban environments is to prepare a participative Tourism Development Plan.

☞ Tourism legislations should be “directive” rather than “compulsory”.

**FIGURE 1. TOURISM PLANNING PROCESS FOR A SOUND URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

Step 1:	Preparing the guidelines for the whole planning process
Step 2:	Selecting the research group, and the controlling committee
Step 3:	Setting goals according to each specific area
Step 4:	Categorizing tourist activities and attractions according to their type
Step 5:	Rating activities depending on their potential to attract tourists
Step 6:	Qualitative and quantitative analyses that integrate various sustainability aspects for efficient choices that enhance sustainability and lead to the tourism equinox
Step 7:	Developing policies and plans using scenario analyses
Step 8:	Monitoring, conclusion and recommendations

☞ Common sense should prevail over policy; lessons learned from mistakes of other destinations should direct destination development in the urban areas.

☞ 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 design of new buildings, sites and transport systems should minimize the potential harmful visual effects of tourism. Pollution controls should be built into all forms of infrastructure (ICOMOS, 1999). Based on an understanding that is distinct from mass tourism, a new tourism destination, where the cultural and historical heritage is utilized, needs to be created through investment, promotion and marketing that is focused on sustainability of the urban environment.

☞ 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 tourism equinox approach.

☞ The awareness of locals and visitors should be raised in order to prevent damage to the historical and cultural urban environment.

☞ Local population should be encouraged to participate in the new tourism strategy.

☞ The carrying capacity of the region should be determined under sustainable principles.

☞ Local authorities should be informed very clearly that it is not possible to achieve sustainable tourism development without respecting natural urban environment.

☞ Local governments, non-governmental organizations, universities and professional organizations should cooperate against adverse environmental effects caused by the tourism industry.

☞ The success of this tourism approach for urban environments depends on effective destination management and marketing involving the principles of tourism.

Holiday is no longer a luxury but has become a way of life. The freedom to travel is regarded as an unquestionable right nowadays. According to the approaches discussed in this paper, the impact of tourism can be tragic for some tourist areas and even if more and more sustainable policies are being implemented, only the future

will show if the damage caused by tourism can be erased by a new sustainable tourism (Lopez and Palomino,2003) or with the help of tourism detox. The best thing to do is to achieve “tourism equinox”; then we don’t have to worry about “tourism detox”. When succeeded, there will be a more balanced and controlled tourism development which is in harmony with natural and social environment in urban areas.



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