



Social indicators for tourism

Ensuring that the impacts of tourism on a destination are monitored and managed is important for a sustainable tourism industry. Tourism development and management in a destination that is in line with the aspirations of local communities provides for a more authentic tourist experience and also attracts stronger community support for tourism. As a consequence, a growing number of destinations want to ensure that local residents have a say in how tourism evolves.

Efforts are therefore being put into monitoring local community views on tourism. If monitoring of impacts finds negative sentiment towards tourism amongst a community, for example, then it can be determined what needs to be fixed, or what communications can be implemented to ensure the right messages are getting across.

Tourism Queensland commissioned research to identify a concise set of social indicators that can be used to measure the impact of tourism on communities in Queensland. The Centre for Tourism & Research Services were commissioned to conduct an extensive evaluation of published reports in this area and a recommendation was made to use subjective rather than objective indicators of social impact. Subjective indicators endeavour to measure the impacts of tourism as perceived by local residents.

State, regional and local application

Whilst Tourism Queensland's objective was to identify a concise set of social indicators that can be applied at the state level, work done on this issue by a range of researchers has shown that the social impacts of tourism are localised and can vary considerably from one area to another, even within a single tourism region. So attempting to measure social impact at regional, let alone state level can be problematic as key issues may be *averaged out* across a region.

Consider a region that includes both a coastal fringe and a hinterland, for example. There could be very serious congestion and behaviour problems caused by tourism on the coastal area but no such problems anywhere else in the region. Whilst the problems experienced by locals on the coastal fringe would be identified if a study was conducted in that area, it is possible that these problems would be *averaged out* if the study was undertaken across the entire region. This means that the congestion and behaviour problems may not be highlighted as major issues, even though they are impacting on the coastal area. This problem would be exacerbated further at the state level.

As a consequence, the consultants recommended that social impact measurement is best undertaken at the local level so that problem issues, which tend to be localised, can be more easily identified. If the impact is to be determined at a regional level then survey sample sizes should be much larger so that differences between areas within a region can be determined.

Tourism Queensland's push to identify and introduce social indicators to measure the impact of tourism on communities is an important step in ensuring that tourism grows in a manner consistent with local needs. This fact sheet presents social indicators that can be used to measure the impact of tourism on communities.

Recommended core indicators

A core list of fourteen social impacts on a community as a result of tourism activity has been identified as part of this project, and split according to whether they are usually perceived to be positive or negative impacts:

Tourism Social Indicators

Potential Positive Impacts	
Core indicator	Full statement for core indicator
1. More interesting things to do	Because of tourism, there are more interesting things to do in the region (e.g. attractions to visit, events to attend).
2. Improved facility maintenance	Tourism promotes the development and better maintenance of public facilities such as roads, parks, sporting facilities, and / or public transport.
3. Increased profile of region	Tourism showcases our region in a positive light. This helps to promote a better opinion of our region and encourages future tourism and/or business investment.
4. New Infrastructure	There are better shopping, dining, and /or recreational opportunities in the region because of tourism.
5. Improved economic benefits	Tourism is good for the economy because the money that visitors spend when they come to the region helps stimulate the economy, stimulates employment opportunities and is good for local business.
6. Increased local pride	Tourism makes local residents feel more proud of their town and makes them feel good about themselves and their community.
7. Improved justice	The distribution of the costs and benefits of tourism are distributed more evenly across the community.

Potential Negative Impacts	
Core indicator	Full statement for core indicator
8. Negative impact on local character	The character of the region has changed because of tourism.
9. Increased opportunity costs	Too much public money is spent on developing facilities for tourists that would be better spent on other public activities.
10. Rise in delinquent behaviour	Tourism is associated with some people behaving inappropriately, perhaps in a rowdy and delinquent way, or engaging in excessive drinking or drug use or other criminal behaviour.
11. Increased prices	Tourism leads to increases in the prices of some things such as some goods and services and/or property values and/or rental costs.
12. Lack of access for locals	Tourists deny local residents access to public facilities, that is, roads, parks, sporting facilities, public transport and/ or other facilities are less available to local residents because of overcrowding.
13. More disruption	Tourism disrupts the lives of local residents and creates inconvenience. Problems like traffic congestion, parking difficulties and excessive noise are worse when there are lots of tourists around.
14. Negative impact on environment	Tourism has a negative impact on the environment through excessive litter and/or pollution and/or damage to natural areas.

In arriving at these fourteen impacts, however, some studies reviewed were based on a list of seventeen impacts. The additional three impacts were subsumed into the fourteen but could be used if a larger questionnaire was appropriate. These three additional impacts are:

15. The increase in prices and property values associated with tourism makes it difficult for some people to live in the area (subsumed under the '11. Prices' indicator)
16. Tourism brings people from different backgrounds and cultures into the community (subsumed under the '8. Character' impact)
17. Tourism unites the community and encourages people to work together and support each other (subsumed under the '6. Pride' impact)

Tourism Social Indicators

Expanded list of indicators

The above list of fourteen core indicators was refined from a list of forty impacts that appeared most regularly during a substantial search of the available literature, were identified as part of consultation with public and private sector stakeholders and by drawing upon earlier studies undertaken by the consultants.

Full list of 40 social impacts of tourism on communities

<p>The most important, core indicators of tourism's social impact on local communities were identified using a range of techniques. Through this process, 40 social impacts were reduced to fourteen core impacts.</p> <p>The 40 tourism impacts on communities are outlined in this table, with the number of the core indicator that it relates to shown in brackets. For example, the full list indicator of 'Improved maintenance of public facilities' is included in core indicator (2) – Improved facility maintenance.</p> <p>This master list of forty impacts has been previously tested and refined through a number of studies involving communities on the Gold Coast, Surf Coast Shire (Victoria), Byron Bay, Canberra, six regions in Tasmania and nine along the Great Ocean Road.</p>	<p>Potential Negative Impacts</p>
	Increased crime (10)
	Too many people in public places (e.g. parks and beaches) (13)
	Increased litter (14)
	Reduced availability of parking spaces (13)
	Rise in the overall cost of living (11)
	Excessive demand for public services (e.g. health, police, fire services) (9)
	Higher local government rates (11)
	More alcohol related behavioural problems (10)
	More illegal drug use (10)
<p>Potential Positive Impacts</p>	<p>Other Potential Impacts</p>
Improved maintenance of public facilities (2)	Rise in rowdy behaviour (10)
Increased revenue for local government (9)	Increased noise levels (13)
Positive population growth (12)	Increased traffic congestion (13)
Increase in the level of urban development (4)	Higher cost of rent (11)
Improved opportunities for local business (5)	Decrease in the available habitat for local wildlife (14)
Increased funding for public services (e.g. health, police, fire services) (9)	Increased gambling (10)
More local dining opportunities (e.g. restaurants and cafes) (4)	Increase in prostitution (10)
Increased employment opportunities (5)	Too many people in shops, restaurants, nightclubs etc (13)
Increased shopping opportunities (1)	Change in social and moral values (7)
More entertainment and recreational opportunities (1)	Change in the physical appearance of the Region (8)
Improved image of the city in the eyes of other Australians (3)	Change in natural environment (14)
More opportunities to socialise (1)	Change in relationships between local residents (7)
Increased community pride (6)	Change in the style of architecture on the Region (8)
More intercultural interaction (1)	Change in public transport (9)
Improvement in the strength of the local economy (5)	Change in the character of the Region (8)
Rise in property values (11)	

Tourism Social Indicators

Also, points to consider are that perceptions of these impacts can vary across a region, and depend:

- if individuals or family members derive benefit from the tourism industry, for example, through employment
- on whether the respondent lives fulltime in the region, is an absentee landlord, or uses a property as a holiday home
- on the timing at which data are collected. For example, after a major event, perceptions of the impact of tourism may be artificially high or low depending on how the event was run.

Recommendations for measuring social impacts of tourism on communities

A summary of the recommendations are as follows:

- * Subjective rather than objective indicators are best used to monitor the social impact of tourism on communities.
- * Social impact measurement is best undertaken at the local level so that problem issues, which tend to be localised, can be more easily identified.
- * If it is important to measure social impact at the regional level, then sample sizes should be much larger so that differences between areas within the region can be identified.
- * The survey instrument used to capture community perceptions of the impact of tourism was recommended to employ a 7-point rating scale ranging from -3 to +3 to enable residents to report both positive and negative perceived impacts. For example:

				Very Negatively		No Effect		Very Positively		
1a	Because of tourism, there are more interesting things to do in the region (e.g. attractions to visit, events to attend)	Tick one box:		Circle one number for each row:						
		Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>	(go to 2a)					
				1b. How has this affected your personal quality of life?						
				1c. how has this affected the community as a whole?						
				-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
				-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

- * The survey instrument of the fourteen core indicators can be administered to a random sample of the community about every 3-4 years. Issues that influence the impacts can also be included as questions in the survey. These are:
 - * Economic dependence on tourism - working in or owning a business in tourism or a related industry
 - * Distance of place of residence from areas of high tourist activity
 - * Level of contact with tourists
 - * Community attachment
 - * Social and political values
 - * Use of facilities also used by tourists
- * A shorter questionnaire using the following four items could be undertaken to monitor the perceived social impacts of tourism in the interim years. These *top-line* questions of local residents can provide a good estimate of the social impact of tourism on the local community, although they do not permit any understanding of the reasons for the overall ratings that are obtained. If problems are indicated based on the answers to these two questions, it may be necessary to gain a more in-depth understanding as to why there is a problem and this may mean asking the fourteen core indicators identified earlier. Questions 1a and 2a would ideally use the 7-point rating scale referred to earlier:
 - * Q1a. What has been the impact of tourism on your personal quality of life?
 - * Q1b. Why have you answered this way?
 - * Q2a. What has been the impact of tourism on the quality of life of the community?
 - * Q2b. Why have you answered this way?
- * The questions for the shorter survey could be added to an existing survey which may be a more cost effective means of data collection, for example, a local council community survey.
- * As the timing of events in a region can have a short term influence on the community's perceptions of the social impacts of tourism, the time at which a survey of resident attitudes is conducted should be taken into account.

Summary

For tourism to be sustainable, it is most effective if its development is in line with the needs of the local community. To work towards this goal, the impacts of tourism on the local community should be monitored on a regular basis. The fourteen core indicators identified will help provide an understanding of the impact that tourism is having on a community through examining the impact that each indicator has had on the personal quality of life of the respondent and on that person's perspective of the community as a whole. This information can aid decision making on what direction and actions are best taken to address community perceptions in view of tourism.