# 1. Introduction.

Tourism is the world’s largest and fastest growing industry. In recent years there have been increases in international tourism for the purpose of experiencing another culture. There is a wide-spread opinion that the economic impact of tourism is always positive while the social and environmental impact is always negative. Indeed, increasing incomes to regions due to tourists are easy to see as well as numerous host-tourist conflicts and destruction of the environment and local cultures. However, tourism can have both positive and negative outcomes for residents in communities when sharing and preserving their culture and nature could be seen as conflicting goals. (Besculides, Lee, McCormick, 2002:303) In this paper I will consider impacts of tourism with reference to the Lofoten Islands. This is a popular tourist destination in Northern Norway. The area is unique because of its nature and variety of sea activities, e.g. fishing, boat trips, sailing etc. It is also known in Norway as a traditional fishing community, where the fishing industry dominates the economy and the social life of the local people. Today those resources which used to be source of living for the local community have become very attractive for tourists. It is a challenge to get most profits of the situation and avoid possible conflicts.

# 2. Economic impacts of tourism

According to recent statistics, tourism provides 10 percent of the world’s income and employs almost one tenth of the world’s workforce (www.investigate.html). By the year 2010 these numbers will double. All considered, tourism’s actual and potential economic impact is astounding. Many people emphasise positive aspects of tourism as a source of foreign exchange, a way to balance foreign trade, an “industry without chimney” – in short, manna from heaven.(L.van den Berghe, source unknown) But there are also negative sides of tourism’s economic boom for local communities:

Economic impacts to the local community depend on how much of the incomes generated by tourists go to the host communities. In most all-inclusive package tours more than 80 percent of travellers’ fees go to the airlines, hotels and other international companies, not to local businessmen and workers (www.ecotourism.org).

Large hotel chain restaurants often import food to satisfy foreign visitors and rarely employ local staff for senior management positions, preventing local farmers and workers from reaping the benefit of their presence.

Resorts and hotels often over-consume natural resources like water and power, forcing utility prices up and causing blackouts and water shortages for locals.

Many tourists never leave the hotel grounds or cruise ship, reducing the possibility of tourist income for local businesses. “Rug sack tourists” have little effect on host communities as they consume very little during the trip.

Faced with limited economic prospects, locals lose the incentive to preserve and conserve their natural and cultural resources.

Sometimes the costs connected with tourism overcome the incomes that tourists generate. For example, in all-inclusive packages, as I have said, most of the expenditures go to the airlines, hotel chains and touroperators, while the local communities have to work with pollution and destruction in their region caused by tourists. As a result, it costs a lot for the local communities to preserve the nature and the cultural monuments in the region while a good deal of incomes flow out of the host-region.

With reference to the Lofoten Islands the question is how the fishing society can get the most of the tourism industry, and whether the local people can get positive economic effects out of the developing tourism in their region.

Here is a figure showing relationship between tourism and local community based on economic impacts.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | How much income does tourism give to the local community? | |
| How much resource does tourism use in the area? | **A lot of** | **Little** |
| **A lot of** | Acceptable tourism | Undesirable tourism |
| **Little** | Desirable tourism | “Invisible” tourism |

Fig.1 “ A general model of the local communities’ opinion about tourism” Rønningen 1996

Kilde: Kulturturisme. Lofoten som reiselivsattraksjon. Hovedfag.PDF, www.nhh.no/geo/prosjekt/kbl/r200rapport.pdf

The figure shows 4 types of economic impacts of tourism, based on the coming incomes and the use of resources. No community would want tourism that uses a lot of resources in the area but leaves little money to the local population. Such tourism can be called undesirable. Communities can put up with tourism that gives tem a lot of incomes but also uses a lot of resources. It is the so-called acceptable tourism. In case when the use of resources is little and the incomes to the region are also little, the effect of tourism is almost not seen. This is the so-called “invisible” tourism. So the economic impact will be considered as positive even if the resources are used to great extent, in case if tourism gives large incomes to the local people as a result. Hovland (source unknown) divided economic impacts of tourism into direct and indirect. Direct effects are most visible and easy to measure. These are contacts between a visitor and local actors, such as the tourist industry, other industries, municipality and other local actors. Indirect effects of tourism appear when local businesses, population, municipalities and other actors are influenced by tourism through other actors. I shall now discuss these relations between tourism and fishery industry on the Lofoten Islands. As I have emphasised Lofoten is an international destination with coast life culture as a primary tourism resource. From1960 there have been problems in fishing industry and the number of employees has decreased. So increasing development of tourism compensates decreasing development of fishery industry. If we take direct impacts of tourism, they are following here: people have a possibility to get jobs in tourism industry and tourists spend lots of money in local-owned restaurants, hotels, museums. Tourism industry uses some resources that are not used by fishermen today. Old fishing houses-*rorbuer[[1]](#footnote-1)*- may have disappeared from the local landscapes if they were not used today as hotels. Here are some numbers to show the development of tourism in the region. In 1964 there were just 200 beds in local hotels and guesthouses and 150 beds in rorbuer in the whole Lofoten. In 1997 there were about 1360 beds just in Vågan district. The total amount of overnight stays in Lofoten has increased from 25000 in 1965 to 230000 in 1997. (Puijk 1996, SSB 1997) As we can see there is a flow of incomes to the region and this is a direct economic impact of tourism.

Still there are negative economic impacts of tourism as well caused by common resources for tourism and fishery industries on the Lofoten islands. That’s why in spite of co-existing side by side these two industries compete with each other. Many fishermen in Lofoten think that tourists prevent successful development of the fishing industry as before. First of all, the problem is common area. The number of quays in the fishing villages is limited. And what was used by fishing boats is now to be shared with tourists. Fishermen are afraid that tourism organisations will take over a lot of fishing bays, buildings, even boats. Here is an opinion of a local fisherman written in a local newspaper “Lofotposten” (9/2-98) “Svolvær bay is reserved for guestboats. There is almost no harbour left for local people to place their boats or build a warehouse.” This effect can be considered as indirect. Tourism organisations in Lofoten trying to get more benefits from tourists, interfere into the fishing industry and force them some changes.

The same concerns the fish itself. Many tourists come to Lofoten to fish. And at this moment there are no fishing quotes for tourists. So what happens is that “people come, fish freely and actively, make fish filets, freeze them, take them with them to Europe without any permission that are required from the local fishermen. Tourists can in fact take with them up to 200 kg fish in the fridge, sell it later, come back and fish again.” (www.nhh.no/geo/prosjekt) Thus, tourists decrease the fishermen’s incomes in a direct way. So we see how the tourism can ehave direct negative effects on the fishing industry, decreasing their resources. Although tourists leave money in the region as well, this effect becomes less visible because the local people see first of all decrease of their main incomes.

Here is another example of indirect economic impact. Tourism organisations often want to change the traditional way of fishing by the local fishermen so that coming tourists would consider their work to be more esthetical. For example, fishing wastes have always been thrown back into the sea. Now suddenly there are tourists to think about, and they find the fishing wastes smell bad. That’s why some tourist organisations ask the fishermen to install dump systems in order to clean the harbours. This brings extra costs for the community.

The tourism industry on the Lofoten Islands makes use of the resources to a great extent. The incomes the local community gets are big enough but they come partly at the cost of fishing incomes. There is a certain lack of regulations about the use of common resources. Obviously, to escape conflicts the tourism industry should not take over the most important for the fishermen areas. There are surely lots of areas not suitable for the fishing industry (due to low amount of fish or small capacity of the harbour) but which would suit tourists. Still, the problem lies deeper because of social conflicts in the area.

# 3. Social and environmental impacts of tourism.

Socially tourism has a great influence on the host societies. Tourism can be both a source of international amity, peace and understanding and a destroyer and corrupter of indigenous cultures, a source of ecological destruction, an assault of people’s privacy, dignity and authenticity. (L.van den Berghe, source unknown)

Here are possible positive effects of tourism, according to Reisinger (source unknown)

* Developing positive attitudes towards each other
* Learning about each other’s culture and customs
* Reducing negative perceptions and stereotypes
* Developing friendships
* Developing pride, appreciation, understanding, respect and tolerance for each other’s culture
* Increasing self-esteem of hosts and tourists
* Psychological satisfaction with interaction

So, social contacts between tourists and local people may result in mutual appreciation, understanding, tolerance, awareness, learning, family bonding respect, and liking. Residents are educated about the outside world without leaving their homes, while their visitors significantly learn about a distinctive culture. Besides, if local culture is the base for attracting tourists to the region, it helps to preserve the local tradition, handicrafts which maybe were on the link of the extinction. Benefits include also reciprocity, community pride, and a stronger sense of ethnic identity.

On the other side tourism can increase tension, hostility, suspicion. Claims of tourism as a vital force for peace are exaggerated. Indeed there is little evidence that tourism is drawing the world together (Robinson,1999:22). While the tourist is engaged in leisure, the host is engaged in work. While the tourists arrive with loads of expectations, many of the local stakeholders have no idea of what to expect.

Negative effects can be the following, according to Reisinger (source unknown)

* Developing negative attitudes towards each other
* Tension, hostility, suspicion and misunderstanding
* Clashes of values
* Difficulties in forming friendships
* Feeling of inferiority and superiority
* Communication problems
* Ethnocentrism
* Culture shock
* Dissatisfaction with mutual interaction.

Tourism has the power to affect cultural change. Successful development of a resource can lead to numerous negative impacts. Among these are over-development, assimilation, conflict and artificial reconstruction. While presenting a culture to tourists may help preserve the culture, it can also dilute or even destroy it. Tourism often leads to non-authentic forms of cultural traditions, an example being festivals or dances staged entirely for tourists, or production of handicraft clearly distinctive from traditional ones. We can take example of saami culture. Saami duodji is sold both with and without a quality mark. A lot of things known and promoted as saami things is just a “trash”, produced far from saami regions. Some tourist organisations present saami people as drunkards, out of their mind, dirty and uneducated. The point is to promote a region so that it would both give incomes and create respect for the local culture (Gustavsen, 1998).

When it comes to ecology, it is again easier to see negative impact than positive. Tourism often grows into masstourism. It leads to the over-consumption, pollution and lack of resources. But in some regions alternative industries are even more harmful to the environment than tourism industry. Nature will manage fine without tourists, but in many places tourism is the only source of income or the friendliest to the environment. It is at least better than chopping down the forests or destroying the corral reefs. (Munch-Petersen,1998 (from lecturenotes))

On the Lofoten Islands the conflict between the host community and the tourists is more of cultural origin, e.g. in Svolvær or Vågan. The fishermen can see that one harbour after another is being reconstructed for a café, a rorbucamp, a quay hotel. For the fishermen it is an expression that their traditional industry is getting less and less important. Even if it does not happen at the cost of the fishery industry it is mostly a psychological problem. The local people want to behold their identity, their traditional way of work. Here are some opinions (www.nhh.no/geo/prosjekt):

“I am a fisherman and I don’t wish to become any guide or anything like that”, “I am a fisherman, and I appreciate the freedom this way of life means.” Tourists seek some exotic experiences when they come to Lofoten; the fishermen get perplexed and confused thinking about it. “There is so much blood and fishing wastes here that tourists can’t bear. Ladies in fine clothes come here and watch how we cut the head of the fish. They think we are some barbarians!” These are cultural conflicts that can be observed on Lofoten. Though some people insist there are no conflicts. They mean the tourism industry uses resources that the fishermen don’t get use of. Tourism employs mostly women when fishery involves men.

Non-authentic forms of the local cultural monuments can be found here as well. On the one side tourism helps to preserve old rorbuer. On the other side they become modernised inside, furnished with modern furniture, supplied with electricity, water, TV etc. Thus they lose their authenticity.

In spite of all the negative changes in the local communities tourism has positive social and cultural impact as well. Changes are inevitable; it is a very complicated matter to preserve things as they used to be. In Lofoten tourists help to preserve the harbours, rorbuer, old boats. If not tourism the coastal landscape could include only modern buildings and boats. Many museums have been opened showing the local traditions of fishing. Growing interest in this culture makes the local people proud of their way of life.

If we take ecological impacts of tourism in the Lofoten region, we should bare in mind that the fishing industry is no 100 percent environmentally friendly either. So it is a question which industry brings more negative effects to the environment. Tourists coming to Lofoten are not satisfied with just enjoying the nature; there are many visitors who want to fish as well. The difference is maybe that tourists stay in the region for short periods and their welfare does not depend on the amount of fish they catch. They fish for pleasure and often let the fish go. Still, as I have mentioned above there are no regulations or fishing quotes for tourists and if masstourism will develop on the Lofoten Islands it will become a threaten to the fish.

From ecological point of view tourism is often more acceptable and preferable than traditional production, as it is environmentally friendlier. The problem is that it is not easy to change traditional way of life of the local communities. It often creates pseudo conflicts.

# 4. Conclusion.

We have shown that the impact of tourism on local communities can be both positive and negative, whether it comes to economic, social or environmental effects. All depends on to which extent tourism is developed in a particular region. Every region has its bearing capacity, that is to say the limit of the outcoming influence that does not harm the host community. If we overcome that limit negative impacts of tourism will follow.

Here is a figure which shows the dynamics between people, resources and tourism in successful tourism: each makes positive contribution to the others.

Fig.2 The ecotourism paradigm. Source: Page and Dowling (2002:27)

Integrated sustainable resource use

Environmental advocacy

Economic Education;

Benefits;

Inter-cultural

Values;

appreciation revenues for

protection

All the three elements in this model are in co-interaction. Local communities use the natural resources but they also protect them. Tourists come to enjoy the nature and get knowledge about it, but they also can pollute and destroy it, or on the other side help to protect it by drawing attention to unique natural resources in the area. Local communities affect tourists by giving them knowledge of their culture and way of life. Tourists’ impact on the local populations can be economic (giving incomes, using resources etc) and sociocultural (e.g.changing traditions) When developing a new tourist destination we should always bare in mind this co-interaction.

In any case local communities should be empowered to say”no” to undesirable tourism. In order to decrease negative effects on local societies we can check the following moments when arranging tourism activity in a region or taking part in it: (Fennell,1999(from lecture notes))

* Are local people involved in tourism industry as employees?
* Does the organisation cooperate with the local businesses?
* Is it respectful attitude to the local culture?
* Is there respect to the nature and how is it protected?
* How much economic benefit the local population get from tourism?
* Are tour operators concerned about ecological hotels, transport, restaurants?

We can see it is a great challenge to make profitable business running tourism in an area without affecting negatively the local communities. It is possible for tourism industry to co-operate with other industries and bring benefits to both the tourism organisations and local businesses. The first step to achieve it is to understand needs and desires of both the host community and the tourists.

1. Rorbu (Norwegian) – fisherman’s shack [↑](#footnote-ref-1)