**NOTE TAKING**

Hi everyone, today I’d like to talk about ‘overtourism’ and its possible solutions because over the past few months, it has become a hot topic in the news, with reports of ‘tourism-phobia’.

Overall, the tourism industry has been a force for good. However, lately one negative part of tourism has been overcrowding. Let me give you an example. **The population of Barcelona is 1.6 million and** **it was visited by 32 million people only last year. Can you believe it? 32 million! You may remember we have recently witnessed anti-tourist protests from cities like Barcelona and considering the number of tourists in those places,** it is understandable why the locals have grown concerned about protecting their cities.

Okay, let’s start with the definition of this new term. What is overtourism? It describes destinations where locals or tourists feel that there are too many visitors and that the quality of life has become worse. As you can see, ‘too many people’ and ‘decreasing quality of life’ are the two key words for the definition.

As you can imagine, overtourism leads to many serious issues but I’d like to talk about some of the environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts.

Let’s first have a look at the environmental impact. Professor Costa Iverson from Michigan State University focuses on three dangerous environmental impacts of overtourism in his last article. First of all, **overtourism poses a serious threat to the ecosystem in a particular tourist destination.** Iverson gives the example of three popular islands in Phuket on this issue. **The government in Thailand does not allow any tourists on these three islands anymore because of the serious damage to the coral reefs.** You know, people walk on corals and feed marina animals while playing in the water and this negatively affects the eco-system. I can mention coral bleaching and a decrease in the number of marine animals, just to name a few for these negative effects.

Secondly, Professor Iverson mentions **tourism as a major generator of waste** in his article. In most tourist regions, sewage and waste disposal are not properly managed or planned. And this results in serious infrastructure-related problems in tourist destinations, as you can imagine. Unfortunately, it is not the tourists but the locals who have to deal with those problems in the long run. I mean, tourists may choose other destinations to go, yet locals, on the other hand, have to stay in their hometowns and face the negative consequences.

And as for the final negative environmental impact of overtourism, **Iverson mentions pollutant emissions.** The tourism industry is also responsible for an increase in global transport such as cars and airplanes. Hence, this increased volume in global transport is associated with environmentally damaging pollutant emissions.

All right. What about the economic effects? Many would argue that tourism influences the economy positively, but they miss an important point. Overtourism runs the risk of revenue leakage. **In this context, revenue leakage is the amount of money that the locals of the host country cannot get back. I mean tourists spend a lot of money in a host country but this money goes to big companies rather than locals.**  Because the tourism industry is controlled by powerful monopolies. Especially in developing countries this is very common. 70% of all money spent by tourists in developing countries eventually goes into the pockets of international companies not to local businesses.

And lastly, let me talk about the socio-cultural impacts of overtourism. As you might agree, tourism is a powerful factor for change. **Accordingly, tourism often brings new behavior trends and norms. Very often, these are contrary to traditional norms existing in the host community, and thus threaten the traditional value systems there**. As a result of the influx of new values, local people may gradually lose their own traditional values. I mean, the locals can copy the lifestyles of tourists through the demonstration effect and the result could be loss of native customs and traditions. Also, a high number of tourists increases the risk of culture clashing, which may result in a negative attitude towards tourists. I’d like to make one point clear: having a negative attitude does not mean that it results in physical violence.

Okay, until now, we have talked about the problem of overtourism. But what about solutions? Any ideas you would like to share with us? No, okay then. Let me continue. When it comes to the solutions, many academics and practitioners promote some ideal forms of tourism. One of the most popular forms of these is eco-tourism, I am sure you all have heard about it**. The question we have to ask ourselves here is if these alternative forms of tourism such as eco-tourism really help us prevent the negative sides of overtourism. The answer is unfortunately “no”.**

Eco-tourism is generally defined as an “environmentally-responsible way of tourism”; yet, it is wrong to suppose that eco-tourism is better or more responsible. You may wonder why? The answer is simple. Eco-tourism is organized in natural areas that are undisturbed or protected. And it is precisely these remote areas that are most vulnerable to human impact. When these natural undisturbed areas are marketed by tour companies, a large number of tourists unfortunately visit and threaten these indigenous areas.

Another reason why eco-tourism cannot be a solution **is that eco-tourism is essentially small scale. I mean eco-tourism cannot offer a realistic general model for tourism because you cannot find locations for millions of eco-tourism projects. There are only a limited number of undisturbed areas and cultures left in the world.** For instance, even in popular ecotourism destinations like Costa Rica and Kenya, it is not possible to find locations for millions of eco-tourism projects. Therefore, this means that eco-tourism can only be a micro solution.

Okay, are we good so far? Let’s continue then. So if eco-tourism is not the answer to our problems, what is? If we want to find a permanent solution, we should be talking about sustainable tourism. Let me first define the term for you. According to the World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism is a form of tourism that meets the needs of tourists and locals while protecting the environment.

Now, first I would like to start with the reasons why the idea of sustainable tourism has come up in the first place. Robert Prosser, one of the key professors on the subject, points out one key reason for this search for sustainability in tourism. And **it is the growing environmental and cultural awareness among people. Today, people are relatively more responsible in terms of protecting the environment and cultures, thereby their future, because they know that future generations also have a right to share what we have today.**  Because of this increase in the awareness, sustainable tourism is now seen as a promising vehicle for addressing the problems in tourism. It is believed that if it is done correctly, sustainable tourism can actually reduce the tension created by the interactions among stakeholders such as the tourism industry and locals.

However, it is not as easy as it sounds. In order to reduce the negative impacts of tourism, sustainable tourism has to meet its two main objectives. First, sustainable tourism should satisfy the demands of a growing number of tourists. Unfortunately, this is not an easy task, because today, tourists are becoming more experienced and more critical. For instance, Venice International University did a survey in 2015 with almost 1000 visitors to measure the level of tourist satisfaction in the city. The findings revealed that tourists were less satisfied with the quality of goods and services in Venice compared to the previous years. Statistically speaking, tourists’ satisfaction dropped by 14 percent and overcrowding was reported as the main reason for this decrease. **That’s why, the Municipality of Venice introduced a tourist management system. With this management system, they achieved to channel tourists to less crowded places. And when they repeated the survey in 2016, they found that the tourist management system has actually been successful. I mean there was an increase in tourists’ satisfaction level in Venice. The survey also showed an increase in visitors’ length of stay, which was approximately 3.5 days. 3.5 days may not sound like a lot but it is not bad when compared to many European cities.**

Alright, let me talk about the second objective of sustainable tourism now. Sustainable tourism aims to safeguard the natural environment. **In Cyprus, for example, there are many golf resorts which are costly considering the amount of water consumption. How can we promote sustainability in these golf resorts? We can at least start with collecting and utilizing rainwater. This way, we can minimize the consumption of local water, which is necessary for the well-being of the locals in Cyprus.** Do you think we can do it? Of course, we can. I think the whole tourism industry should engage in promoting sustainability.

Okay everyone, let’s stop here for now. In our next lecture, we will continue with the challenges in sustainable tourism. See you all next week.