

The Future of Mature Coastal Tourism Destinations

Paper presented to XII International Forum on Tourism,
Benidorm, Spain, 23rd-24th October 2008

By:

Dr Sheela Agarwal
Plymouth Business School,
University of Plymouth
Drake Circus
Plymouth PL4 8AA
Email: sagarwal@plymouth.ac.uk



1. Introduction:

- Some myths about mature coastal destinations:
 - (i) All coastal resorts are victims of globalization
 - Often represented as an all encompassing hegemonic force
 - Severe consequences for coastal tourism resorts
 - Intensified competition
 - Contributed to changes in consumer demand
 - Undermined appeal
 - Not passive victims - local state plays a pivotal role
 - Positive force encouraging local innovation and pro-activity



(ii) All coastal resorts are in decline

- Some are performing exceptional well, while others less so

E.g.] Bournemouth (England): well performing



- Typifies economic vibrancy, has a diverse economy and attracts consistently 5.5 million visitors per year



E.g.] Weymouth (England): Less well performing



E.g.] Scarborough (England): Less well performing



E.g.] Knokke-Heist (Belgium)



- Tourism turnover continues to decline



E.g.] Ostende (Belgium)



- Fuelled by myth of switch to Post-Fordist forms of consumption
- Market trends in beach holidays:
 - An above average growth in tourist travel to long-haul destinations, with the top 20 of such destinations offering beach holidays
 - An increase in speciality market segments such as luxury all-inclusive resorts, with some specialising in weddings and honeymoons
 - The development of combination holidays in which the beach component is linked with some element of special interest tourism



(iii) All coastal resorts are suffering from the same kinds of problems

- Problems experienced differ greatly in terms of:
 - Morphology
 - Size
 - Historical evolution
 - Rate of development
 - Stage of life-cycle reached



2. Current global context of mature coastal destinations: an overview

(i) Britain and Northern Europe

- Experiencing social, economic and environmental problems:
 - Declining visitor numbers and market base
 - Environmental degradation
 - Uncompetitive product
 - Lack of investment
 - Unemployment



E.g.] Ilfracombe

- “High class cuisine (burger and chips) on offer “



“Boarded up, vacant shops in Ilfracombe”



“Quality accommodation and facilities provided in Ilfracombe!”



Typology of the socio-economic characteristics of English seaside resorts

Type	Characteristics
'All resorts'	High proportions in terms of average age, retired, white, with long term illness or permanently sick or disabled, providing unpaid care, unemployment, no qualifications, one person households, lone parents with dependent children, without central heating, without car
'Young'	As above but higher proportions of lone parents and unemployed
'Old'	As above but particularly elderly population, lower unemployment but higher health related problems
'Wealthy'	As above but pockets of deprivation masked by wealthier wards, often with high average house prices



- Difficulties experienced vary in nature and scope
- No two 'cold-water' resorts are the same
- Resort's ability to tackle its problems influenced by:
 - Effectiveness of restructuring
 - Institutional capacity
 - Past patterns of development
 - Rates of development
 - Geography (scale and location)



(ii) The Mediterranean

- Declining visitor numbers
- A series of real difficulties:
 - Over-commercialization and tacky image
 - Deteriorating environment
 - Lack of investment due to an over-reliance on UK inclusive tour operator market characterized by high volume and low yield



E.g.] Sprawling mature coastal resort of Quarteira,
Algarve, Portugal



- Emphasis on environment improvement and re-design (beautification)
- Issues relating to levels, types and locations of future tourism growth
- Diversification into alternative forms of tourism
- Obstacles to managing growth:
 - Inability to implement tourism policies
 - Lack of an integrated approach and stakeholder collaboration
 - Mis-match between the development of quality tourism products, potential markets and the destination's potential in terms of its physical, cultural and social resources



(iii) The pleasure-periphery

- Difficulties relate to environmental degradation and social tension
- E.g.] Australia's Gold Coast



E.g.] Australia's Sunshine Coast

The Hyatt Regency Coolum, Queensland



E.g.] The Caribbean



Dominated by the
mega-resort



E.g.] Mexico

- Construction of mega-resorts
 - Cancún
 - Ixtapa
 - Los Cabos
 - Loreta
 - Bahais de Huatulco
- Resulted in huge negative environmental and social impacts



- Development of ecotourism

E.g.] Kailuum, Costa Maya



E.g.] South Africa

- Influenced by five key drivers:

(i) Metropolitan renewal (e.g. Cape Town)



(ii) Second wave tourist renewal

E.g.] Southbroom developed in the 1930s



(iii) Life-style tourism



The Pezula Resort Hotel,
KwaZulu-Natal, South
Africa

(iv) Conservation with development

E.g.] Coastal regions of Maputaland and the Wild
Coast



(v) Quest for authenticity



E.g.] Paternoster,
Western Cape of
Southern Africa



E.g.] Malaysia



E.g.] Penang and Langkawi
Island

Environmental problems

Growing tension between
Islam and tourism



3. The future for mature coastal destinations?

- Present concerns:
 - Energy
 - Climate change
 - Terrorism
 - Globalisation
 - Economic recession



Implications?

- Future uncertain and challenging
- Continual evaluation of the coastal resort product and its markets
- Diversification



E.g.] St. Ives - cultural tourism

Gastronomy



“Just one of many art galleries in St. Ives”



Surf tourism in St. Ives



LYMOUTH

“Fossil tourism in Lyme Regis”



Key questions:

- What is the role of coastal resorts in the global urban hierarchy?
- How sustainable are mature coastal destinations?
- What are the determinants of the economic performance of coastal resorts
- How can globalisation best be contested?
- What is the effectiveness of local action and what are the key factors which influence its success



- Draw on research undertaken in other tourism spaces

For example:

- The Determinants of Economic Performance (Defra 2004)
- MARKETOWNS (University of Plymouth / University of Reading)

THANK YOU

