

Why did we undertake this study?

Coastal regions are exposed to multiple pressures including climate change hazards, resource degradation, urban development, and inequality. Tourism is often raised as either a solution to, or exacerbator of, such threats to ecosystems and sustainable livelihoods. This study sought to better understand the role of tourism in achieving sustainable development and resilience in coastal areas.

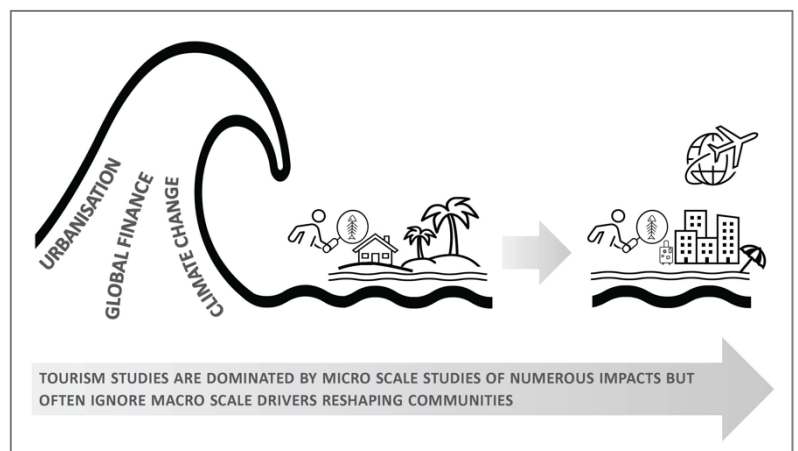
How was it done?

The impacts of tourism on society, economy and environment were explored through an analysis of highly-cited literature. Sentiment analysis was performed on 44 highly-cited papers addressing impacts of tourism on coastal regions and references to the impacts of tourism on: (i) society; (ii) economy; and (iii) environment, were recorded as either positive, negative, neutral or mixed. The analysis was compared with the findings of whole-of-sector reviews and reports, including grey literature, on the tourism sector to situate the findings within macro trends.

What did we find?

There is a divide within the tourism discipline, where highly-cited papers focused on environment and society generally show negative sentiment towards the impacts of tourism, while those that focus on the economy generally show positive sentiment.

- Negative sentiment was present in 84% of papers, compared to 52% identifying a positive impact of tourism.
- None of the 35 papers discussing environmental conditions expressed positive sentiment.
- While positive sentiment was evident in 76% of papers that discussed economic contributions, they largely failed to acknowledge broader adverse economic impacts.



The highest cited papers on the impacts of tourism on coastal areas represent a disparate set of micro impacts, which cumulatively represent significant social-ecological challenges, but with limited interrogation of underpinning macro drivers.

What are the implications?

There is a need for studies that focus on coastal tourism as a complex globalised system. Few highly-cited studies focus on the underlying business model of the tourism sector, which some sector reports suggest can be defined as property development. When viewed through this lens, the tourism sector may be seen as a far-reaching global business that exploits peoples and places for the benefit of wealthy elites. The findings have implications for both the scale at which tourism research occurs, and also for considering tourism within the context of Integrated Coastal Zone Management and sustainable development.

Want more information?

The full paper is available from: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/cambridge-prisms-coastal-futures/article/impacts-of-tourism-on-coastal-areas/A5CD8F025D137D32E9F2D037B45AD7B4>

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Coastal Governance: Embracing Vulnerability and Change

