

New perspectives on socio-economic impacts of tourism:

A study on the distributive effects of tourism and events on regional employment and income

In the broad field of the economic impact of tourism and events, most studies seek to understand regional tourism development by only focusing on a growth-oriented perspective and highly aggregated indicators, such as increases in GDP. Such a narrow view, however, systematically overlooks and disregards the negative socio-economic consequences that accompany economic growth, such as income inequality and precarious working conditions. Thus, understanding tourism development should include broader perspectives related to the social aspects of regional economic activities, and particularly their implications for the tourism workforce.

This thesis demonstrates how current approaches for estimating the economic impacts of tourism and events can be extended towards a more distributive perspective that encompasses issues that are most relevant for the tourism workforce. The aim is to better understand the role of tourism and sport events in the socio-economic development of the tourist and event region of Jämtland Härjedalen, Sweden from 2008 to 2017. In this thesis, tourism encompasses general events, particularly large-scale sporting events, as events are considered key elements for regional tourism development. A mixed-methods approach was employed to estimate the socio-economic impact of tourism and events. Growth-oriented indicators were supplemented with leakage effects, and disaggregated as well as distributive perspectives in tourism employment and income. These macro-level findings were enriched with institutional meso-level perspectives of the regional tourism and events industry.

The results indicate that tourism demand continuously grew in the region and thus played a significant social and economic role for the regional population. However, the tourism industry's ability to generate employment and income continually weakened over time. The negative outcomes of growth related to an increase in income inequality and a growing share of low income occupations with precarious working conditions. Thus, continuous institutional efforts that foster conditions for tourism development and regional events are crucial for guiding tourism development in a more socio-economically sustainable direction.