

ECO-ANIMATION AIMED AT SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT OF TOURISM

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***Abstract:** The topic of sustainable development of tourism has become extremely up-to-date in current conditions. In this context the ecological or eco-tourism has made topical as a key component of modern tourism and its sustainable development. Achieving goals originating from the concept of the sustainable development of tourism, as one of most important forms of tourism, is appearing to be an urgent need and obligation of all societies and countries. Such a trend of tourism development, and in particular of the eco-tourism, is impossible to maintain and improve without high quality eco-animation which contributes to essential understanding by tourists and all tourism stakeholders of the importance of ecology on a tourist trip, especially since today it is not just the nature which is exposed to the risk of pollution, but also human communities and their culture. This paper particularly deals with types and kinds of eco-animations and their integration (integral model of eco-animation), aimed at strengthening environmental awareness and sustainable tourism development.*

***Keywords:** types of eco-animation, eco-tourism, eco-changes, sustainable development of tourism, integrated model.*

Introduction

Prospects for the eco-tourism development are based on the concept of sustainable evolution of tourism as an economic branch that allows the acquisition of profits and generating conditions for job creation. By its impact on the environment, the eco-tourism aims at improving the preservation and protection of the local eco-system. Applying the concept of eco-tourism contributes to the sustainable development of tourism, because it is based on ecological principles, which includes the protection of the environment from all possible forms of pollution. In this context, considering the role of eco-animation focused on sustainable development of tourism is especially significant.

The idea of "sustainable development" or "limits to growth" was popularized back in the last century during the 1970s. It refers to "the

concept of eco-efficiency" and "the concept of environmental modernization". Eco-efficiency refers to technologies that provide economic development, but with minimal environmental degradation. The concept of ecological modernization is reflected in the application of modern technology that needs to be promoted, especially by the developed countries, since there is little chance for poor countries to sacrifice their economic development for solving the enormous environmental problems, which are mainly caused by the developed countries. In addition, according to the "green authors", rich countries should react against "consumerism", i.e. the consumer mentality, and require the restriction of development and a return to simpler life forms (Đorđević, 2007).

Eco-animation, as the main topic of this paper, refers both to the animation of small groups (hard eco-tourists), whose motives are strongly ethically based and imbued with a desire to improve the real world in which we live, and animation of large groups (soft eco-tourists), whose contents and activities are related to eco-tourism, as an extremely important form of modern tourism.

In this paper, eco-animation is discussed on the basis of a comprehensive model of ecotourism (Weaver, 2006), by using a holistic approach which includes: deep understanding, positive transformation of results, ecological and socio-cultural sustainability, financial sustainability, satisfaction (satisfying) tourists and the promotion of sustainability, both at local and global levels. In this context, eco-animation occurs in a variety of shapes and types.

Eco-tourism – concience of sustainable development of tourism

The concept of sustainable tourism refers to all forms of tourism that are in a long term harmonized with the natural, social and cultural environment (Vukonić & Čavlek, 2001).

According to Moscardo, the sustainability of tourism is based on three key principles:

- **Quality**, meaning that the experience of tourists contributes to the development of sustainable tourism, improves the quality of life in the local community and also the quality of protecting and improving the natural and cultural environment;
- **Continuity**, meaning that sustainable tourism ensures the continuity of the natural resources on which it is based, and also the continuity of the local community, as well as the continuity of the interest of tourists and visitors for a certain tourist destination; and

- **Balance**, which means that the sustainable tourism strikes a balance between the needs of the host and tourists on one side, and the environment on the other (Moscardo, 2003).

Eco-tourism as one of the most important forms of tourism sustainable development, and as its promoter, it supports the cultural diversity and healthy environment. The outcome of this is a particular specificity of eco-tourism, which appears as the conscience of sustainable tourism development.

According to Weaver, the eco-tourism focuses on three components and these are:

- **Natural environment**, or its specific elements, such as certain species of fauna and flora;

- **Education**, as a result of the interaction between tourists and the natural environment; and

- **Necessity of sustainable development** of eco-tourism to the extent that it is reasonably possible.

The necessity of the sustainable tourism development singles out the eco-tourism as a key component, formulated as the conscience of sustainable tourism development. This is the result of the complete orientation of eco-tourism towards achieving the concept of sustainable tourism development, or goals that are important for it (Jovičić & Dragin, 2009).

These components (natural environment, education, necessity of sustainable development), pointed out by Weaver, are mostly incorporated into numerous definitions of eco-tourism. One of these is as follows: the eco-tourism is a "journey into the realm of nature aimed at understanding (perceiving) the cultural and natural history of the environment development, with constant care for preserving the integrity of eco-systems, delivering economic returns that provide the local population with means to secure their existence and are used for funding the activities related to protecting and preserving the natural environmental resources of the area" (Wood & House, 1991).

Eco-animation aimed at starting and reviving environmental activities of tourist

Every tourist trip, whether it refers to an individual tour or tourist groups, includes a variety of activities organized for tourists including those ecological, related to the regulation and protection of the human environment. The presence of environmental activities on a tourist travel, and especially during their stay in a particular tourist destination, depends

on the degree of environmental awareness and understanding of the importance of eco-tourism and its role in sustainable tourism development, and that not only by tourists but also by all factors involved in the supply of services that meet the needs and desires of tourists.

It is impossible to imagine any tourist activity related to ecology (environmental activity) without animating tourists, primarily by the eco-animation. The term *eco-animation* refers to the process where tourism animators and animation groups stimulate tourists to show a greater interest in the implementation of various eco-animation programs. These programs should be based on providing a higher level of information on the importance of eco-tourism, as well as on specific actions that should be organized in the context of meeting environmental needs, that is in the context of changes in the natural environment and socio-cultural environment in the given tourist destination and its environment.

The activities related to the ecological animation, as well as all other animation activities, consequently lead to the increased satisfaction of tourists in case they are professionally organized and executed (Glinia, et al, 2001). These activities can be very diverse, such as: planting trees (those suitable in naturally altered or degraded areas); removal of introduced (brought) exotic species that disrupt the stability of the local ecosystem; maintenance and regulation of footpaths; assisting in scientific research (e.g. identification of plant species); participation in various projects related to local communities and the like (Jovičić & Dragin, 2009). The result of such activities would be the outcome of the animation in the context of eco-change, which would also be a powerful motivator for those tourists who, before starting their trip, did not have (a primary) eco-tourist motive and environmental activities were not the main subject of their interest. In the context of a successful animation, the eco-changes stimulate interest and active participation of tourists, which is an enriching travel experience that stimulates their desire for the realization of a unique experience in eco-tourism destinations, but also reduces the level of comfort that they are more or less accustomed to.

The basis of a wider eco-animation, which includes a whole range of animation activities, refers to the rich and differentiated offer of various activities, especially environmental activities. The aim of eco-animation is not the achievement of a direct and maximal short-term profit at any cost, but the long-term achievement of higher benefit, but with optimal fulfillment of tourists' needs and desires, as well as permanently creating their unforgettable experiences. New forms of

environmental offers, contained in the high quality eco-animation programs, strongly attract potential tourists, primarily in terms of their interest and commitment to travel and choice of tourist destinations. Through the above activities and due to his/her abilities, desires and beliefs, every tourist can be confirmed and affirmed as a useful member of a tourist group. The broader eco-animation allows tourists to improve their basic human features, it provides them with completely new understanding of the nature, human relationships, as well as a new view of the environment and the world they live in (Tuntev, 2001).

Unlike the narrow eco-animation, which applies to tourists who are primarily motivated by the eco-tourism, the general animation is more complex in its nature. Its aim is, through the implementation of eco-animation programs, to create a strong stimulus in terms of creating the right atmosphere and ambient, so a real animator is more than required, unlike the narrow eco-animation where specialized tourist guides, with appropriate expertise on natural areas and ecosystems, would be quite sufficient.

Eco-animation aimed at better understanding of eco-tourism and its sustainable development

The narrow eco-animation, which refers to the narrower circle of animation activities, contributes to a deeper comprehension and understanding of eco-tourism and its role in the development of sustainable tourism. From the functional and sociological point of view, the eco-tourism is most commonly individual because, for the most part, it applies to individuals, no matter if they have some travel experience or are potential tourists without any previous experience of that kind. However, eco-tourism includes tourist groups, with the accommodation capacity of up to 100 beds. Those involved in eco-tourism, as well as in the small-scale tourism, are small and medium enterprises, as well as the agencies operating in attractive and well-preserved natural estates (e.g. national parks). Tourist facilities and activities intended for small groups have an emphasized educational and interpretative character, which implies distributing various printed materials and publications, organizing and arranging informational and educational centers, as well as the involvement of specialized tourist guides. Such tourists are firmly orientated on gaining individual experiences and perceptions of the environment, as well as to meeting needs related to the level of information (Jovičić & Dragin, 2009). In this context, as an element of

modern tourist offer, the animation, or the eco-animation, plays a very important role in marking the quality of the tourism product as a whole (Weiermair & Fuchs, 1999).

The narrow eco-animation focuses on education and the current trend of "experience market", i.e. unique experiences of tourists (Đorđević & Tomka, 2011) who represent main consumers during their staying and enjoying in the nature. In addition, some tourists need higher cognitive and experiential component in the process of eco-animation in an eco-resort, and some need less, but in any case the cognitive and experiential components are representatives of sustainable tourism development, especially the development of the sustainable eco-tourism. These representatives are based on the environmental knowledge and eco-tourism experience and, as such, exert a positive transformation in terms of further development of sustainable tourism and eco-tourism.

The narrow eco-animation includes elements of rural and cultural tourism. It should contribute to increasing the interest in eco-tourism, especially among young people, who need a higher level of education on eco-tourism. Currently, modern tourists are primarily interested in cultural tourism. They are interested to learn about plant and animal species living in an uncontaminated environment. At the same time, they are interested in the life of local communities that inhabit ecological and tourist areas. Such interests can be met by integrating the activities of eco-tourism entities and cultural heritage tourism, by forming such products that allow tourists to gain experience in local traditions, local customs, cultural and historical monuments and art, with maximum respect for the natural environment (Hadžić, 2005).

Integral model of eco-animation in eco-tourism

Similarly to integral model of eco-tourism (Weaver, 2006), an integral model of eco-animation can be applied involving different groups of tourists. Integral eco-animation model aims to animate tourist groups in the context of their broader differentiation, above all dividing them into narrower and wider groups, where the first group, including a smaller segment, is better informed and more interested, and the other one is heterogeneous and includes a wider range of tourists in the context of their needs and desires. In addition, eco-animation goes in two directions: the educational and the experiential, as a form of educational eco-animation; and the direction of the combined eco-

animation includes the skills, abilities and knowledge of environmental animators and ecological tourism, with the aim of adjusting to demand, in situations where the selection of eco-tourist groups expands and to the maximum adapts to tourism demand through detailed research and segmentation of the tourism market.

The combined eco-animation takes into account exactly the complexity of animating tourists with an aim to create a noble attitude towards nature and local culture. Such a type of animation should combine different desires and needs of tourists in favor of eco-change, which puts ecology in the focus of interest. In this sense, the overall atmosphere and creating the ambience must be focused on stimulating interest of tourists in nature and local culture. At this point, raising the interests and the quality of the experience of tourists will be significantly higher if they are skillfully animated, more casually, by improved animators' skills on the importance of the natural environment and local culture, and not by animation activities that are obligatory. In this way, tourists who are members of a combined group, hypothetically, can acquire new skills and eventually become a narrower group of true eco-tourists.

The integral model of eco-animation in tourism involves a holistic approach, whose starting point are not parts, or what is partial, but a system, the whole, with creativity as an imperative. It is reflected in the importance of rural and cultural tourism, which, as selective forms of tourism, are most closely associated with eco-tourism. In the framework of these forms, the ecological tourism stands out as a tourism based on nature and natural beauty, and eco-animation appears as a guide for greater expertise and deep understanding of the (educational and experiential) eco-animation or encouraging the interest and various environmental activities (combined eco-animations). In the first case, an educational value of eco-animation has cultural significance, which includes a number of sub-indicators: the value (aesthetic, socio-historical, scientific-research and the value of a rare natural-cultural property), then, the representativeness of the site and etc. In the second case, the eco-animation is seen as an important factor for approaching these values. This interpretation eco-animation is shown in Figure 1, which represents an integral model of eco-animation:

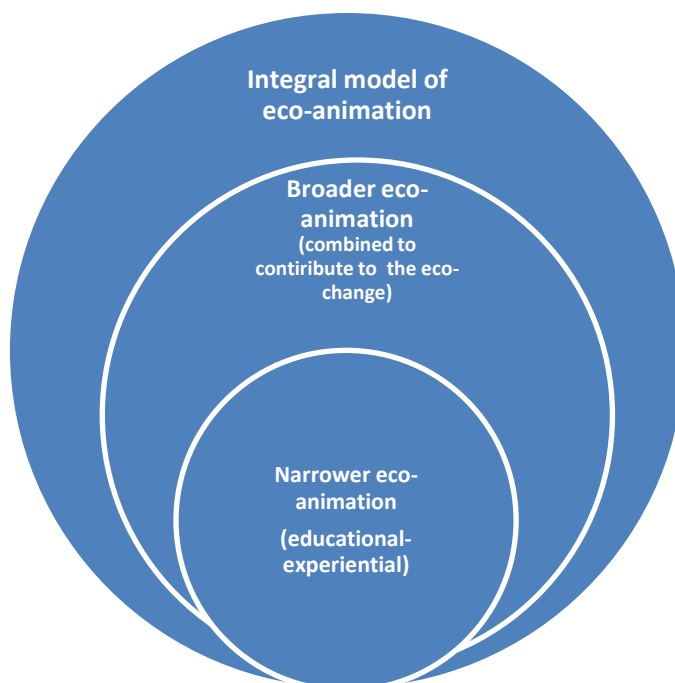


Figure 1: Integral model of eco-animation

Figure 1 represents the incorporation of wider and narrower eco-animations into their integral model. The task of an animator in the eco-tourism is to animate, by wider eco-animation, larger groups of tourists, also focusing on narrower eco-animation to achieve, by integral activities of the narrower and wider animations, the best possible effects in the eco-tourism and sustainable development of tourism as a whole.

Conclusion

The eco-animation is a specific animation which is considered in this paper in the context of eco-tourism as one form of tourism aimed at its sustainable development. The outcome of the division of the eco-animation into narrower and wider is their symbiosis into the integral model of eco-animation, similar to the given integral model of ecological tourism. In addition, the narrower eco-animation focuses on education and unique experiences of tourists in the current trend of widening "the market of experience", and for accomplishing that, some specialized tourist guides can be hired. However, the wider eco-animation is more complex in its nature because it is aimed at strengthening the environmental awareness and creating strong incentives for making adequate atmosphere and ambiance for various environmental activities,

relevant to the protection and improvement of the environment. Therefore, professional animators with expert knowledge and abilities for tourist animation, and consequently for the broader eco-animation, must be hired for dealing with the wider eco-animation.

Multiple effects of eco-animation can be achieved by successful implementation of an integrated model of eco-animations, and above all, in the affirmation of a deeper understanding of eco-tourism, whose characteristics are a direct result of a complex and comprehensive understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism development. This type of eco-tourism, which involves a broader eco-animation and implementation of a holistic approach to natural beauty and tourist attractions, is linked to the maximalist eco-tourism and eco-animation, aimed at its sustainable development. In addition, the wider eco-animation, if successfully implemented, creates conditions for the increase of economic incomes in the long run, and therefore the conditions for financing all activities related to the protection and promotion of eco-tourism destinations.

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