

THE EMERGENCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: *Tourism has become a multi-billion industry, which spans from high concentration urban cities to remote islands in the Indian Ocean. But, in some cases, the economic benefits come hand in hand with negative environmental and social impacts. Several regions in the world had to overcome disastrous environmental damage or the loss of their traditions and local culture due to the growth of the tourism industry. This is the main cause for the emergence of new forms of tourism (alternative tourism, eco tourism, rural tourism etc.) – gathered under the generic term of sustainable tourism. In the present paper we will present a short history of the concept and discuss some aspects regarding the definitions of sustainable tourism.*

Key words: *sustainable tourism, environment, impact, mass tourism*

1. Introduction

During the second half of the twentieth century, the importance of the tourism industry to the world economy continued to grow, generating today, total revenues of almost \$ 1,000 billion and direct employment of over 70 million people (WTTC 2012), without taking into account the multiplier effect (according to the same statistics of the WTTC, considering the multiplier effect, the total values are \$ 5.99 billion in tourism receipts, and 253.5 million jobs).

In this context, voices began to appear, which presented the problems and challenges created by the tourism activity. Many regions were facing real problems caused by tourism entrepreneurs and tourists who visited these communities. We have identified three types of impacts: economic, social and environmental, impacts that can be both positive and negative (Fennel, 2007, Mason, 2003; Saarinen 2007).

On one side, the positive impacts include: revenues for the local community, employment, the development of infrastructure (economic), the contact between different civilizations, learning new languages and about new cultures, the increase of the quality of life, promoting a global community (socio-cultural) and the protection and conservation of regions/landscapes (environmental). On the other side, the negative impact include: seasonal jobs, financial leakages and inflation (economic), losing traditions, standardization of societies, the import of

bad habits, brought by the tourists (socio-cultural), pollution and expansion of the built environment in the natural one (Bac, 2013: 102).

Taking into consideration those presented above, we can argue that tourism generates both negative and positive results. Therefore a new form of tourism emerged - *sustainable tourism*, as an alternative to the classic mass tourism.

This new form of tourism - both in terms of supply and demand is, to some extent, a way to counter the negative effects that tourism can have on destinations (figure 1). Sustainable tourism has emerged in response to the negative impacts that are more visible. So, sustainable tourism has emerged as a reactive concept, which seeks to eliminate the negative impacts described above.

Feature	Mass, unsustainable tourism	Sustainable tourism
<i>Market</i>		
Segment	Psychocentric to midcentric	Allocentric to midcentric
Volume	Large, tourism packages	Small, on their own
Length of stay	Short	Long
Seasonality	Distinct seasons	Without seasons
Origin	One or two dominant markets	Without dominant markets
<i>Attractions</i>		
Characteristics	Generic, built for tourism	Pre-existent, authentic
Accent	Very commercial	Moderately commercial
Drive	Just for tourists	For locals and tourists
<i>Lodging</i>		
Size	Large scale	Small scale
Spatial model	Concentrated in areas for tourism	Dispersed
Density	High	Low
Architecture	International	Local
Property	Foreign, corporate	Local, family
<i>Economics</i>		
Earnings	High	Low
Leakages	High	Low
Multiplier	Low	High
Role of the tourist	Dominant	Supplemental
<i>Regulations</i>		
Control	Foreign, corporate	Local, community based
Quantity	Low	High
Principle	Free markets	Intervention
Accent	Economic growth and profit	Community well being
Time span	Short term	Long term

Source: after Weaver, 2006:41

Figure 1. Differences between mass and sustainable tourism

In the following chapters we will cover the history of the concept of sustainable tourism and present a series of definitions and theoretical objectives.

2. A short history of sustainable tourism

Strictly from a historical point of view, some authors (Lane 2009; Weaver 2006) consider that the first ideas regarding sustainable tourism belonged to Jost Krippendorf from the University of Bern. In his book, "The landscape eaters", after identifying several negative impacts of tourism, he argues for an alternative – soft tourism ("sanfter turismus".)

Since the early 90s, the concept of sustainable tourism has begun to be used more often in academic circles and, to a lesser extent among tourism entrepreneurs. We consider that the birth of the concept of sustainable tourism was the publication of the first issue of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism in 1993 (Weaver 2006:10; Hunter 2002:3; Dodds and Butler, 2009: 43), which included six articles, two articles and a book review.

This new form of practicing tourism involved small companies or entrepreneurs, which aimed to support the community, preserving the environment and protecting local culture. One of the most prominent spokesmen of sustainable tourism, David Weaver, considers that "the main difference between the old and the new form of tourism is moving the focus from the wellbeing of the tourist to the wellbeing of the host community" (Weaver 1998:31).

At that time, the concept has been highly debated, and it was received with hostility by the tourist industry, dissatisfied to put any limits to growth and considered it an "ivory tower" unrelated to the market. Sustainable tourism was also considered "intellectually arrogant, expensive, elitist and useless" (Lane 2009:20).

This attitude was not limited only to the tourism industry. Governments and local authorities did not take seriously the concept, as the classical model of tourism was bringing them many benefits. Conventional mass tourism was generating jobs and wealth transfers from developed countries to developing ones. The mass - media did not pay much attention to the concept of sustainable tourism, considering that it is much easier to denigrate than to explain. In academic circles, there were researchers that considered sustainable tourism "an impossible dream" (Lane 2009: 21). This was best explained by Wheeler: on one hand we have the problems of mass tourism, which is recording steady and uncontrolled growth. And what is our response? small scale, slow and controlled development. It is simply impossible! (Wheeler, quoted by Miller and Twining-Ward 2005:32).

Like sustainable development, sustainable tourism has been the central or secondary theme of conferences and international meetings during which experts in the field discussed the concept, but most importantly it caught the world's attention.

The most important institution for the development of sustainable tourism was the United Nations. Since Agenda 21, resulted from the Earth Summit in 1992, tourism began to be considered as a tool for sustainable development: “We support the development of tourism programs that respect the environment and culture, as a strategy for sustainable development of urban and rural communities by decentralizing urban development and reducing disparities between regions. (UN 1992 Chapter 7)”

Several UN departments have focused on tourism, in general, and sustainable tourism in particular. In 1999, in New York, the 7th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was held. The main topics of discussion were: consumption and production trends, seas and oceans, the development of small island states and sustainable tourism (UN 1999:1-2). For tourism, the Commission recognized the importance of this sector for the economies of countries, but draws attention to the impact that tourism activity can have. It also presented a number of challenges ahead for the tourism industry, national governments and the international community. For the tourism industry, the main challenges mentioned in the documents resulting from the meeting were: a) sustainability is central to the whole range of forms of tourism, not only for niche tourism; b) applying methods for waste management and other forms of pollution to minimize negative impacts of tourism activity on the environment; c) involvement of all partners (customers, staff, other local entrepreneurs) in the decision making process and creating partnerships with the local community or the State to ensure the sustainable development of tourism (UN 1999).

In 2002, the World Tourism Organization launched the Sustainable Tourism - Eliminating Poverty program. This initiative was launched in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, WTO experts considering that tourism can be an alternative in many regions of the world. With its partners, the ST-EP initiative materialized in many developing countries, through the implementation of projects: tourism legislation, promotion of destinations, creating themed packages, assistance in national parks and protected areas, etc.

The next moment occurred in 2006 with the establishment of the International Task Force on Sustainable Tourism Development, subordinated to the United Nations Environment Programme. The main objectives and outcomes of the task force focused on several areas:

- policy - recommendations on policies, standards and certification process, international funding mechanisms;
- best practices - collection, classification and dissemination of good practices;
- education - development and dissemination of manuals and e-learning tools, focusing on sustainable tourism;
- strategies and pilot programs - activities in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework for national and international development strategies and examples of pilot programs;
- information, communication and networks - information dissemination, collaboration between web pages, sharing best practices and awareness raising activities
(<http://www.unep.fr/scp/tourism/activities/taskforce>)

The latest moment in the history of sustainable tourism took place at the RIO+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The final document, entitled “The future we want”, has a chapter for sustainable tourism, where the importance of tourism for sustainable development is recognized and the importance of funding sustainable tourism is emphasized. (UN 2012:25)

What is apparent from the above presented history is that tourism is given a special attention from the international community and numerous projects are trying to implement sustainable tourism in different regions of the world. But some questions can be raised regarding the results of these projects and the industry's ability to replicate them elsewhere. We can also notice some redundant proposals and advice that are offered by international institutions, with largely the same concepts, but lack of the tools of coercion to compel the implementation of these proposals. A harsh critique is made by Schyvens (2007: 134) who states that "everything the UNWTO makes, except promotion, is just dust in the eyes of public opinion."

3. Defining the concept of sustainable tourism

There are numerous definitions of sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism development, and we believe that this multiplicity of definitions is just a sign of the lack of global consensus. Hunter (2002:4) believes that although the concept of sustainable tourism is derived from the sustainable development, it is sometimes considered an independent and distinct component of the economy.

Some authors (Hunter 2002:5, Swarbroke 1999:18) believe that "the development of tourism must provide economic benefits to all partners (stakeholders), provided they do not adversely affect resources available for future generations." Weaver (2006:10) defines sustainable tourism as "a wise form of exploitation in order to be able to long term preservation."

According to another definition, sustainable tourism is "all forms of tourism (conventional or alternative) that are compatible with and contribute to sustainable development" (Liu 2003:461). In the context of this definition, development does not necessarily imply growth, being essentially a process by which specific social and economic objectives are achieved. Achieving these goals may involve stabilization, growth, reduction, or even disappearance of existing products, companies or even industries.

According to the UNWTO (The World Tourism Organization), sustainable tourism can be defined as: "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (<http://sdt.unwto.org/en/content/about-us-5>). The UNWTO also identified a series of objectives for sustainable tourism, grouped in three categories: economic, social and environmental. (Figure 2)

Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring long term sustainable economic activities; • Ensuring equitable socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders; • Contribution to poverty eradication;
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the socio-cultural traditions of destinations; • Preservation of cultural heritage and traditional values; • Contribute to increasing inter-cultural tolerance;
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the best ways to use natural resources, which is the key element of tourism development; • Protecting ecological processes; • Support the preservation of natural resources and biodiversity.

Source: *Bác, 2013, p. 114*

Figure 2. The objectives of sustainable tourism

Initially, sustainable tourism was focused on protecting natural resources, the main reasons for this were: the high interest of environmental organizations, evidence of environmental degradation

due to tourism, the dependence of the main tourist destinations on the state of the environment, the relative ease to counteract the physical impact of tourism on the environment, compared to the socio-cultural one, which is more difficult to be tackled, and the publicity a destination can enjoy, due to the interest it shows towards the environment (Butler 2000:339).

After 2002, with the launch of the ST-EP(Sustainable tourism – Eliminating poverty) programme, the attention was focused on the social component, especially considering the fact that this initiative was based more on the development of the country and not just the natural tourism resources.

In the last years, the tourism industry started to pay more and more attention to the principles of sustainable tourism. But, one can wonder if this attention is driven by an actual interest in respecting the principles of sustainable tourism or it is just a public relations stunt in order to attract more tourists. Hunter has identified two approaches to sustainable tourism, presented in figure 3.

Light green	Dark green
- benefits of tourism assumed	- benefits of tourism must be demonstrated
- maintain tourism activity in existing destinations and expand into new ones	- widen economic base if high dependency on tourism and engage in full proactive assessment of new tourism development
- tourism products must be maintained and evolve according to market need (nature is a commodity)	- natural resources must be maintained and impacts reduced (preferably minimized) where possible with products tailored accordingly (nature has existence value)
- environmental action only when required and beneficial	- environmental impacts always considered as a matter of routine
- industry self-regulation as dominant management	- wide range of management approaches and instruments required
Approach	
- personnel directly involved in the tourism industry	- personnel trained in several fields along with tourism

Source: Hunter, 2002:13

Figure 3. Two approaches to sustainable tourism

4. Conclusions

There are critics who argue that sustainable tourism is a form of tourism which is in opposition to mass tourism, addressing a relatively narrow niche of people interested in the negative impact that tourism can have. This is a very dangerous perspective. It should be clearer the fact that sustainable tourism, defined as tourism based on the principles of sustainable development, has a fundamental objective: tourism as a whole must be sustainable. The term should reflect the condition of tourism and not only its form. Mass tourism, properly organized and controlled, can and must become sustainable.

Sustainable tourism's issues begin right from its definition. There are many positions on the meaning of this concept. There is even a debate whether or not to debate the definition of sustainable tourism (Hunter, 2002:4-5; McCool and Moisey 2008:3-4). Sustainable tourism, or rather its means of implementation have some problems, which are generated mainly by the reluctance to change by both supply and demand.

In the future, for sustainable tourism to really become a philosophy to practice all forms of mass tourism it requires the involvement of many actors. First, the academic community must:

- engage and work with the tourism industry;
- investigate issues related to governance and regulation;
- research the market and look for new ways of promotion;
- investigate the role of the media in forming opinions;
- use ideas developed by the social sciences to explore decision-making and social trends. (Lane, 2009:28)

Also, researchers need to find the language and the ways to explain their findings to the public, because they are the demand and they are the ones that generate the negative impacts that we mentioned in this article.

Secondly, the tourism industry has a very important role. Although there are numerous examples of measures taken by hotels (using energy saving bulbs, changing towels only on demand, the use of shampoos and soaps that contain no chemicals) full and proper implementation of the principles of sustainable tourism is only just beginning. One of the biggest problems of the tourism industry is its conviction that technological change and management can solve any problems. Lane (2009:29) believes that although technological changes and discoveries may help solve some problems, lasting solutions require lifestyle changes, using new sales techniques and developing new

products. A new system of values is needed in the management of the tourism industry.

Thirdly, demand needs to react to the findings of researchers and the steps taken by the industry. Unfortunately, this will be very difficult, considering the growing number of tourists from emerging countries (especially China) who want to enjoy leisure just like tourists from developed countries did for five decades.

Fourthly, sustainable tourism cannot be implemented without the support of those affected by it. So, the local community and its attitude should be an important factor for the development of tourism in a given area.

Finally, we should mention the importance of the state and tourism ministries or authorities. Even though we have seen some skepticism about global issues (lack of consensus at the Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen), Governments need to engage more actively in the implementation of sustainable tourism.

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