

THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THEIR INFLUENCE OVER THE ROMANIAN ECOTOURISM

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Abstract

Tourism can exacerbate some environmental problems and increase degradation of the environment. Sustainable tourism, a tourism industry that applies principles of sustainable development can on the contrary assist in maintaining ecosystems and biodiversity. In this regard, ecotourism, a form of sustainable tourism based on the observation of natural areas is an interesting niche. Romania has strong major natural to position in advantage in this market.

Key words: development, ecotourism, environment, sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Tourism can exacerbate some environmental problems and increase degradation of the environment. Sustainable tourism, a tourism industry that applies principles of sustainable development can on the contrary assist in maintaining ecosystems and biodiversity. In this regard, ecotourism, a form of sustainable tourism based on the observation of natural areas is an interesting niche.

Globalization, by the development of transport and the abolition of distances between countries has fostered a spectacular growth of tourism since the end the Second World War. In this context, the tourism industry has become an important tool for Regional economic development, encouraging local investments and increasing employment. This paper presents the sustainable tourism, particularly ecotourism, and focuses on its deployment in Romania. The definition concepts of sustainable tourism and ecotourism are above of the link analysis between tourism and the environment, and the impact of climate changes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

According to the Brundtland Report, World Commission on Environment and Development, (1987) "Sustainable development is a development that meets the

needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own". The International Union for the Environment Conservation adds that economic, environmental and social aspects should be taken into consideration for making development harmonious and balanced.

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992), has settled Agenda 21, an action plan to implement the principles of sustainable development. Then, the action plan on Sustainable Development, World Summit (Johannesburg, 2002) was involved in the evolution of the concept of sustainable development. With influences from sciences and policy making, the Sustainable development includes now environment protection, social equity, quality of life, cultural diversity and dynamic economy that provides for all jobs and prosperity (Tourism Sustainability Group, 2007). Overall, it revolves around the three "Pillars" of economic, environmental and social viability.

To be effective, sustainable development must be implemented in all areas of activity. Regarding the tourism industry, the development of sustainable tourism, focuses on finding the right balance between it's environmental, economical and socio-cultural components, with the perspective of a long term viability (UNEP, 2006). It applies to all

destinations and all types of tourism, both in mass tourism and various specialized segments. Sustainable tourism must use optimal environmental resources, preserve ecological processes and contribute to the environment conservation and natural biodiversity. It must longer meet the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, in addition to preserve their cultural heritage and their values. It finally must ensure sustainable economic activities for long term, and that the benefits are distributed fairly, and contribute to the fight against poverty.

The development of sustainable tourism requires the participation of all parties, relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political will, to ensure broad participation and a wide consensus.

In order to ensure the tourism sustainability, it requires constant impact monitoring, by setting up the preventive and corrective measures. In order to do that, it is necessary to apply systematically targets and sustainability criteria for existing and future infrastructure and services, (ITF-STD, 2009). Finally, in addition to providing interesting experiences to tourists, sustainable tourism should raise awareness about sustainable development issues and make them discover best practices, according to the WTO. [1]

The tourism depends on a large scale of the quality of the environment in which it unfolds. Climate, which determines a part of the attraction community, is an important resource for the sector. The scenic beauty, the integrity of nature and plant species diversity and animal also attract visitors. In addition, the tourism industry has impact over the natural environment and frame, as well as over the well-being of host populations. If the tourism development is poorly planned and managed, it can affect the quality of the environment and, thus ruining the attraction of resources witch supports it. A too large number of visitors can cause significant pressures over the ecosystems and can cause environmental degradation. Some activities enjoyed by tourists, such as snowmobile tours, produce pollution. In fact, energy consumption of the tourism industry for

transport to destination, travel during the stay, significant contributes to air pollution and emissions of greenhouse gases. Together, transport to places of destination generates approximately 980 tonnes of CO², 52% caused by air travel, 43% by cars and 5% by other means transport (bus, train and boat). The total CO² emissions related to tourism increased steadily over the past 50 years and now represent 5% of all carbon dioxide emissions of human origin. Since tourism should further progress in the coming years, this industry will develop coherent strategies to curb growth of greenhouse gases emissions. However, if subject of a thoughtful and balanced management, tourism can become a driving force behind the conservation efforts, participating in awareness and providing source of income for activities for the protection of the environment. In fact, tourism can bring contribution to the sustainable development. On the one hand, it is a sector actively participating in dynamic of the local economy. On the other hand, since moves to the consumer producer and product, tourism creates a special relationship between visitors, professionals, the environment and local communities.

By discovering new places, tourism generates multiple interactions and raises awareness of the environmental problems factors and differences between nations and cultures. Attitudes and commitment to the sustainable development can find modified.

The ecotourism is a sustainable form of tourism, small-scaled, which is based around watching activities in natural areas. Ecotourism contributes the protection of the environment and well-being of local population (The International Ecotourism Society, 1990). Originally associated with tourist activities with very low impacts on the physical environment and culture, the term ecotourism was then expanded to include conservation and sustainable development of a community. It is therefore a useful tool in development of strategies for sustainable tourism.

Ecotourism can be seen as a collaborative effort between concerned local communities, tourism stakeholders and protecting the

resource, allowing State to preserve natural environment and to serve in supporting the Regional Development.

Ecotourism is a particular object helping to minimize the impact of the human over the environment, promoting awareness about environmental respect and cultures, generating income for the conservation and local communities, through discovery activities of nature and landscapes. It is one of the sectors with the fastest growing, and a substantial contribution to the protection of threatened natural areas and providing the opportunity for local communities to participate in their development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Romania, which has a numerous natural resources and an exceptional biodiversity, it is considered to be a pioneer in ecotourism. For several years, measures have been implemented to preserve habitats and ecosystems in the country. There are 42 natural protected areas, 3 biosphere reservations, and 3 scientific reservations scattered all over the country. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation is one of the most important natural protected areas in entire Europe, and why not in the World, due to its exceptional richness in biodiversity and culture. In the World, Costa Rica is the first ecotourism destination of North Americans and Europeans. The New Zealand is also a leader in the world of ecotourism. Several operators and specialized service providers to offer friendly environment activities and visits in the Aboriginal communities.

In 2005, the World Heritage Centre of the United Nations for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) has undertaken an assessment of impacts of climate change on World Heritage (UNESCO, 2009). It seems that the changes introduced in World Heritage sites affect several industry segments of global tourism, including tourism and ecotourism environment. The Heritage Tourism Programme World also aims to provide support for sustainable development of sites. It proposes that States parties to the 1972 Convention policies, tools and

approaches to address the problems of tourism “green” management.

To adapt to climate changes in the tourism industry based on the nature, oversight to assess the scientific ecosystem changes must be implemented (WTO and UNEP, 2008). Appropriate safeguards will be taken, focusing on species and habitats most vulnerable impacts of climate change and which are most important for tourism. Protected areas must grow and be revised regularly. Migration corridors must be created to allow endangered species to find new habitats.

Since the late 1990s, several discussions on sustainable tourism have taken place in various international forums. Thus, in 1999, the seventh session of United Nations Sustainable Development Commission invited governments to develop policies and strategies for Sustainable tourism based on Agenda 21. That same year, the United World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) was erecting Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, incorporating the principles of tourism sustainable development. This code was approved by the General Assembly of United Nations in 2001. Under International Year of Ecotourism (2002), The Quebec Declaration was adopted at the World Summit of Ecotourism. This statement outlines recommendations from participants for governments, tourism professionals and other stakeholders on measures to be taken to promote the development of ecotourism.

The ecotourism should continue to contribute to strengthening the viability of the tourism industry in general, by increasing economic and social benefits for host communities, actively participating in the protection of natural resources and the cultural integrity of communities and raising awareness of travellers to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The Quebec Declaration was adopted by more than a thousand people from 132 countries and from the public, private and non-governmental sectors, at the World Ecotourism Summit, held in Quebec City in May 2002. Tourisme Québec and the Canadian Tourism Commission were the

guests of this event organized under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The Declaration proposes a preliminary program and a series of recommendations for the development of ecotourism in the context of sustainable development.[2]

Also in 2002, the Plan of Action of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg deals with the promotion of sustainable tourism as a strategy for the protection and management of natural resources. In 2003, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which includes 193 governments, endorsed the implementation of a ten-step process for policy development, planning, development and management of tourism. In addition, the WTO organized the First International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism in Djerba, Tunisia. The Djerba Declaration (2003) calls on governments to develop policies for sustainable management of water resources and wetland conservation, promoting the use by tour operators of renewable energy sources and to encourage consumer associations, tourism businesses and the media to educate consumers about the impact of their behaviour and choices.

In 2009, in order to support the process of Marrakech, it was created the International Workgroup on Tourism Sustainable Development (ITF-STD). This Group, which aims to develop tools to support the implementation sustainable tourism and encourage the dissemination of good practice, is controlled by France. Following the presentation of the recommendations of the ITF-STD during preparatory workshops for the 18th session of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development in May 2010, the United Nations announced Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism, partnership, which will be conducted initially by the French government and will be supported by UNEP. It will be comprised of member governments, industry associations, environmental and social organizations, and UN agencies. It will also build on existing regional and global

networks, including those of the Council of sustainable tourism and finance and investment in sustainable tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

The tourism sector is a privileged field of application of the principles of sustainable development. When managed properly, this industry can result in a positive impact on the economic, environmental and social. Ecotourism, a form of sustainable tourism is a particularly promising niche. Global demand for this type of experience is growing remarkably and should continue to increase over the coming years.

Romania has the resources needed to become an important ecotourism supplier. It is a highly competitive industry, more and more investment by innovative and proactive players who rely on their network protected areas and national parks, including New Zealand, Costa Rica, United States, Canada and Australia.

In order not to miss the opportunity of ecotourism, more efforts should be made. Having established an ambitious sustainable development policy, the challenge for the Government of Romania is to make concrete commitments. This step will be accomplished through the design of a real long-term national vision, in which all land use decisions and economic development are analyzed according to the principles of sustainable development, considering the views of all stakeholders. Promote the development of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, will contribute to achieving the goals established by the principles of Sustainable Development.

REFERENCES

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