

DOI 10.20544/HORIZONS.A.23.2.18.P17

UDC: 338.48-026.23:[005.51:005.21

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT – TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Economic and social conditions in which tourism is nowadays developing searching that strategic planning documents must be coordinated at all levels – from national to destination level; and even with the strategic documents of other sectors which are in connection with tourism development. Strategy of tourism development is a broad and very complex document which must be prepared using the scientific methodology. It is a framework of desired future and an essential document in which are defined tourism development goals, tasks, responsibilities and indicators for monitoring process.

Sustainable tourism development is accepted as a concept by the most tourism planners. Sustainable tourism development must coordinate economic, sociological, cultural and political aspects with the aspects of environmental protection, the social and cultural identity and the quality of life of the local community.

**KEY WORDS:** strategic planning, tourism development, sustainable tourism development, destination

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<sup>1</sup> Plenary session paper

## INTRODUCTION

The meaning of tourism is based on the understanding of a concept of the tourism destination as a complex social and economic system. A tourism destination is multifunctional and attracts different market segments with different needs and expectations. Therefore, there is a need for strategic planning in order to attract new investors, to build a smart development and distribute benefits for local stakeholders and especially local inhabitants.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Developing tourism provides destinations with the opportunity to open their doors to the world, present their culture, customs, industrial and other achievements, and to build their destination identity.

Today tourism has become of the utmost importance in the development of many regions/cities; it is a crucial marker of the region/city image, not only as a tourist destination, but also as a spatial unit of pleasant living. In planning tourism development, a number of specific issues need to be addressed such as the conflicting natures of various development options, traffic-related problems (which tourism only aggravates) especially in city centers, and the excessive pressure placed on certain attractions, which could result in their degradation. Considering the received spatial distribution of buildings and roads, where only minor interventions are possible in the majority of cases, in planning tourism development many elements of the offer (historical buildings, museums, theatres) should be considered at given variables. This makes planning the flow of tourists more difficult, especially considering that tourism is intended to contribute to increasing prosperity in destination, but in such a way as not to disrupt (to any substantial degree) the living conditions of the local inhabitants.

At the same time, the development of tourism can help to maintain and support various facilities – in particular cultural facilities faced with funding problems. Exposure to tourism can provide such facilities with the new markets and additional sources of income they need. It is this fact that could be the key driving force behind the revitalization of different destinations or their various parts, especially during the transitional processes which destinations are undergoing in their transformation process. The strategy that post-industrial regions/cities most frequently search for in spurring their economic growth involves a turn towards information and a service-oriented economy. Their aim

is to rebuild their economies on service activities, including leisure time and tourism, as well as financial, information and communication services. This type of strategy focusing on leisure time and spending that is linked to restoration calls for investments to the infrastructure and superstructure of the service sector. The facilities provided in the restored areas included movie theatres, museums, amusement parks, creative workshops, marinas and others.

The effects of tourism development in a destination will not be felt to any greater extent without a substantially significant number of tourists, as both tourists and residents alike take advantage of the many facilities offered. Promoting these facilities is beneficial to residents, and at the same time it fosters tourism development. Tourists paying for the use of these facilities contribute to their value and maintenance over an extended period of time in favor of residents.

Tourism development that strives to support the economic vitality and competitive ability of local companies and the local economy of the tourist destination is encouraging local companies to continue to collaborate in promoting tourism with long-term objectives (Achana, 2003). Today, important elements of destination tourism attractiveness are events. Reaching this optimum level of events could also be linked to destination resource capacity. While larger mega-events may exceed existing resources, if only temporarily for actual event, with some returns and activity being subsequently lost to the destination, those hosting a number of smaller events which do not maximize resource capacity may also lose out on the full potential of having larger events (Bull, 2004; McCartney, 2005).

Tourism destination development is heading towards positions of mutually beneficial partnerships and balanced tourism development. In other words, a lot of understanding, research and cooperative efforts will be needed in shaping and sustaining initiatives required for the tourism of a competitive tourism destination.

Hence, destination management must be viewed as tourism activities that mobilise local interests within the framework of purposeful collaboration with tourism-supply providers in order to create a destination product.

A key reason behind the growing interest in partnerships in tourism development is the belief that by uniting the knowledge, similar competencies, capital and other resources of several stakeholders it will be possible to gain a competitive

advantage for a tourism destination and the companies within it. (Kotler, P., 2002)

The greatest drawback in destination tourism planning will be creating an optimum process of coordination within a destination. Considering experiences in tourism planning in destinations, several of the potential impediments to planning should be taken into account:

- Residents need to possess a certain level of tourism knowledge and culture.
- Further development might be used as an excuse for personal gain.
- The lack of skilled planners makes planning difficult and results in bringing tourism experts of disputable standing into the planning process.
- The lack of development funding from local sources encourages an inward flow of capital, thus reducing local ownership and control, which may be dangerous.
- Within a tourism destination, there are many groups of supply providers with differing agendas, which might lead to secret plans and possible discrepancies between declared and actual intentions.

Tourism planning for a destination involves building consensus within a broad circle of supply providers, some of which will always perceive change as a threat.

Collaborative efforts in tourism planning are highly appropriate where long-term disagreement regarding tourism-resource management exists in a destination that possesses the right resources for alternative proposals.

When several options emerge in relation to how tourism development should be managed, tourism-supply providers begin to demand a greater role in managing a destination's development.

Complex an economic and social condition in which tourism is nowadays developing searching that planning documents must be coordinated at all levels – from national to destination level; and even with the strategic documents of other sectors which are in connection with tourism development.

Strategy of tourism development is a broad and very complex document which must be prepared using the scientific methodology. It is a framework of desired future and an essential document in which are defined tourism development goals, tasks, responsibilities and indicators for monitoring process. (Tribe, 2016)

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – BASIS FOR FUTURE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable tourism development is accepted as an appropriate concept by the most tourism planners.

The terms “sustainable development” and “sustainable” are often used in scientific and professional literature in various contexts. Appearing in professional literature during the 70’s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these expressions have been used intensively over the past two decades. Today, at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they have become an indispensable part of development considerations. It should be pointed out that although the elements forming the integral part of sustainable development can be found in earlier theoretical papers, the term “sustainable development” itself was coined at a later date.

Sustainable development is the leading theoretical concept at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has emerged as a specific reaction to the fact that human activities have an adverse effect on natural processes and social events, even though such activities are carried out for the benefit of the development of the economy and society in general.

The definition most frequently cited is that of the World Commission of Environment and Development (WCED) printed in 1987 in their report “Our Common Future” (also known as the Brundtland Report): “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.” (WCED, 1987, 43) The definition comprises two important notions: human needs and limitations of the environment.

The WCED places special attention on the fundamental needs of humanity, above all the poor. According to the WCED meeting human needs and aspirations must be founded on equity and/or impartiality in the availability of resources and the distribution of developmental costs and benefits. There are two terms, which are used intensively in literature in connection with sustainable development. These are intra-generation equity and inter-generation equity.

Another important aspect of sustainable development is environmental limitations i.e. the limited abilities of the natural surroundings to meet present and future needs. In this sense, resources can be divided into renewable and unrenovable resources. Resource management is therefore of the special interest in the context of the sustainable development, but the limited space of the paper does not allow explaining related problems in details.

Sustainable development is the long-term and global aspiration of humankind. Keeping the above in mind we can conclude that sustainable development is a process of changes aimed at enhancing the ability of meeting needs and aspirations, both today and tomorrow, through the mutual co-ordination of resource exploitation, investments, technological development and institutional changes. (WCED, 1987) In the foreground, the concept emphasizes qualitative improvements over quantitative growth.

The concept of sustainable development promotes controlled growth and development through the maximum preservation and rational exploitation of resources. This would provide for long-term economic and social development. Development that would, in the long run, cause the disruption of the economic, social and ecological basis is not development based on the principles of sustainability.

According to Aronsson the term sustainable development has the following two main dimensions: (a) A resource dimension associated with the long-term use and development of the local countryside and local culture; (b) A dimension associated with workplaces and material rewards. The rewards may be sufficient to provide a basis for establishing family-firms and for generation shifts. (Aronsson, 2000)

Due to the multidisciplinary character of tourism engaging the interests of economists, sociologists, geographers, ethnologists, philosophers, linguists, culturologists, ecologists and members of other fields of science, a multidisciplinary approach is required to an even greater extent in the sustainable development of tourism. Sustainable tourism development must coordinate economic, sociological, cultural and political aspects with the aspects of environmental protection, the social and cultural identity and the quality of life of the local community.

As an economic activity, tourism has its specific features. Tourists travel. They go towards the product and arrive at the destination. Being an activity, which is carried out through a range of different agents belonging to various economic branches, tourism is difficult to control. In judging its impact, attention should be given to the seasonal factor which concentrates activities over a short period of time and which could potentially cause considerable harm. An additional problem is the desire of tourists to try new experiences during their travels.

When speaking of sustainability, it should be pointed out that we speak from the economic viewpoint taking into consideration the necessity and imperative of development. Tourism is becoming a massive world phenomenon and this is fact

that must be accepted, because it provides the tourism industry with the possibility of making a living. It is necessary to differentiate between the term “massive” which is inherent to tourism and the term “mass tourism”, which, given its characteristics, will no longer be capable of meeting the tourist demand. The requirements of the tourist demand are increasingly turning to the values of sustainable development – personalized relations, unique experiences, cultural events, ecological values. 3S (or 4S) destinations need to add new elements and higher quality to their standard offer of sun and sea. In the harsh competition of the world market, these new elements can tip the balance in favor of a particular tourist destination.

#### PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

Development of tourism based on the principles of sustainable development has to accept the different interest and attitudes of many different groups, organizations and institutions that on direct or indirect way influence on the development of tourism. Therefore, it is necessary get to know their attitudes, otherwise it is not possible to develop a positive communication and partnership which a must in a process of implementation of sustainable tourism development.

Tourism has various types of consequences in an area, the main categories being economic, social and cultural, and physical and ecological. These consequences affect both the resources and the conditions for tourism as well as the tourism product; they may have both a positive and negative impact. We shall consider this impact. As is apparent, a large number of questions have to be answered in order to create a basis for an analysis of tourism at a destination in terms of development strategy. (Aronsson, 2000) When strategic documents are being drawn up for tourism development in a region, sustainability issues should permeate the whole analysis and not be limited to their own (isolated) section of text. All main stakeholders must accept the main principles and codex to make a sustainable strategy possible.

Ryan has defined stakeholders as simply any individual or identifiable group who is affected by, or who can affect the achievement of objectives. It presupposes a moral obligation to involve such parties in meaningful participation in decision-making process. (Ryan, 2002).

Just like any other economic activity, tourism has its positive and negative outcomes. Sustainable tourism development should maximise the benefits from

tourism, while at the same time minimising damages or expenses, and directing and limiting tourism development in accordance with the principles of sustainable development in tourism.

The main problems regarding sustainable development come out in the process of the implementation of the concept. As the tourism is (just) a part of the national economics the conflicts between tourism and the other sectors on national economy cannot always be avoided. The situation in the reality mostly asks for a finding an appropriate relationship between tourism and other sectors, more cooperatives, and minimize conflicts. These conflicts especially could appear in the attitude towards the natural environment and socio-cultural environment.

Tourism should be developed in a way that it benefits the local communities, strengthens the local economy, employs local workforce and wherever ecologically sustainable, uses local materials, local agricultural products and traditional skills. Mechanism, including policies and legislation should be introduced to ensure the flow of benefits to local communities. Tourism activities should respect the ecological characteristics and capacity of the local environment in which they take place. All efforts should be made to respect traditional lifestyles and cultures.

The tourism system, involving the interplay of tourists, business, agencies, and the environment in which tourism occurs, is so complex that no one can comprehend its totality. As a result managers, planners and analysts use selected pieces of information – indicators – to monitor the system. As a part of integral tourism planning for sustainable destinations World Tourism Organization has developed a set of indicators in order to help specialists in monitoring the process, keeping in mind principles mentioned above. Final selection of indicators that will be used in tourism planning of a particular destination depends on the present situation, most significant problems, level of tourism development and strategic decision of tourism management toward future tourism development.

Indicators are empirical quantitative measures and qualitative reports that serve as a managerial tool in the process of tourism development. The tourism industry needs not only economic indicators but also indicators of environmental and social change. Indicators do not simply measure current conditions but also serve as “early warning” devices to alert managers of imminent problems. (Smith, S.L.J, 1995)

There have been different definitions of indicators. Hart describes an indicator as something that helps you to understand where you are, which way you are going and how far you are from where you want to be. (Miller, G., 2001)

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states that “an indicator is an empirical interpretation of reality and not reality itself. Indicators are commonly used to present a quantitative account of a complex situation or process. They can also be used to point out or identify something, which is not immediately visible, audible or perceived in a precise situation. Indicators usually translate data and statistics and can be aggregated and attributed weighted values in order to produce composite measure known as indices. Finally, three major functions of indicators are simplification, quantification and communication.” (Weaver, D., 2001)

Indicators are empirical, qualitative and quantitative measurement/evaluation within the current situation can be detected, and it is precious information in preparing the tourism development plans and decision considering tourism.

Developing effective indicators for sustainable tourism has been particularly challenging. The tourism industry is multi-sectoral and the actions and activities of many other sectors affect the tourism product. The main problem is how to reduce the number of indicators, but at the same time include measures of all of the most important risks to the industry and the host region.

## CONCLUSION

Tourism is a most dynamic economic and social phenomenon in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a great competitiveness of different destinations all over the world. Different stakeholders and different interests must be considered in planning future tourism development, with a special emphasis on local community. On the competitive world tourism market only destination which are planning development and anticipate future situations and trends can survive.

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