



IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Abstract:

Tourism industry, as one of the fastest growing industries in the world, has significant impact on natural resources, consumption patterns, pollution and socio-economic systems. Sustainable tourism makes a minimal impact on the environment and local culture, while contributing to overall development by helping to generate future employment for local people and bringing a positive experience for tourism companies and tourists themselves.

Key words:

Tourism,
sustainable development,
sustainable tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is the concept of global development in the 21st century, which is not imaginary and politically colored target. It is imposed by the forces of natural laws and survival of the planet, and therefore accepted by governments of all countries of the world. It reflects the harmonization of needs of economic development and the necessity of environmental protection, carried out with the aim of preserving sufficient quantity of natural resources, thus enabling future generations to live and satisfy their own needs. It is focused on the integration of environmental, social and economic interests, which means that it is not just about “green” issues. Claims that the environmental protection is in conflict with the interests of economic development stand for unsubstantiated allegations because the practice has proven the contrary. Specifically, the conventional concept of development, in which the increase of production is based on growing exploitation of natural resources, has been taken to the limit. Exploitation of natural resources that are renewed extremely slowly and insufficiently, as well as a high degree of pollution of air, water and soil are irreparable damage not only to the environment but also to the health of people who are an inseparable part of nature. Based on these facts, the logical conclusion would be that the exclusive use of traditional ways of achieving economic development and economic growth will inevitably lead to a total depletion of natural resources and raw materials, as well as a massive deterioration in health status and living conditions of the population across the globe. Business organizations and companies from developed world countries are fully aware of these facts, which is why they are increasingly opting to invest significant part of their

capital in the technology and processes that are environmentally sound and sustainable.

GLOBAL POLITICAL CONSENSUS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Global political consensus on the acceptance of the concept of sustainable development was reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, at which the representatives of all world countries signed a declaration of its adoption. This act institutionalized the concept of sustainable development and set the basis for a new kind of cooperation among countries at the global level that is based on common interests, mutual needs and shared responsibility.

“Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- ♦ the concept of **needs**, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given, and
- ♦ the idea of **limitations** imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs” [1]

There are many definitions of sustainable development, but what all have in common is that they make us see the world as a system that connects space and a system that connects time. When the world is perceived as a system in space, our understanding that a change in one part of the world inevitably reflects in another part of the world is growing [2].



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

The link between tourism and sustainable development is more than obvious due to following two facts: tourism is one of the most powerful industries in the world and the main “resources” that it uses in its development are the most beautiful natural, cultural and historical places in the world. Therefore, the share of tourism in global economic and business trends is extremely high, as well as its impact on the state and quality of life in local communities that are used as tourist areas. Mass tourism often substantially endangers or destroys the natural habitat, pollutes water or soil, produces excessive noise, inadequately responds to the needs of the local population and impairs their quality of life because it does not take into account the specifics of their tradition, culture, religion... On the other hand, sustainable tourism balances economic development against the limitations imposed by the environment and the needs of the local population.

For that reason, sustainable tourism has been promoted as a form of tourism development in the 21st century in the official program of the United Nations – Agenda 21. Chapter 4 of Agenda 21 is entitled “Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development” and its Article 43 states: “Promote sustainable tourism development, including non-consumptive and eco-tourism, ... in order to increase the benefits from tourism resources for the population in host communities while maintaining the cultural and environmental integrity of the host communities and enhancing the protection of ecologically sensitive areas and natural heritages; promote sustainable tourism development and capacity-building in order to contribute to the strengthening of rural and local communities” [3].

One fact could certainly serve as an incentive for the Republic of Serbia, now that it is in the process of European integrations, to dedicate more attention to the development of sustainable tourism: the EU believes that tourism has the highest potential for generating employment, obtaining share in the economic growth and development and efficient socio-economic integration of rural, peripheral and less developed regions [4]. In 2010, the EU defined four priority activities of tourism policy [5]:

- ◆ promoting competition in the European tourism sector
- ◆ promoting sustainable, responsible, quality tourism
- ◆ consolidating the image of Europe as a set of sustainable and high quality destinations
- ◆ strengthening EU financial policies for tourism development.

INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Development of sustainable tourism primarily involves striking a balance between resource consumption and regenerative capacity of natural systems that tourism exploits, while meeting economic, social and cultural objectives of a particular community. In addition, this concept protects from the mass tourism effects and con-

sequences, which are reflected in the fact that increased number of tourists and inability to support transport and accommodation infrastructure often result in a situation in which certain tourist destinations, as well as any other product, after a phase of maturity experience decline.

If there is willingness to organize the tourism process in a way that will leave our successors the possibility of choice and enough resources to be able to enjoy them, it is necessary to establish a development that will allow solidarity, equity and holism both among generations and among nations. This development must be approached methodically, which means that changes in tourism and tourism activities must be monitored, planned and directed in accordance with the principles of sustainability.

With the purpose of precise monitoring of the changes in the tourism industry, systems that are directly or indirectly associated with the functioning of tourism have established certain indicators. They stand for determined variables whose monitoring and measuring point to changes in the observed phenomena and trends in the behavior, on the basis of which decisions are made that can contribute to avoiding adverse or unexpected consequences [6]. According to the World Tourism Organization “indicators measure or evaluate specific information, allowing decision makers (administrative authorities) to reduce the possibilities of making bad business decisions unconsciously” [7].

Different tourist destinations will choose a different set of indicators that will monitor the situation and the impact of tourism on itself, as well as the interaction with other entities that are directly or indirectly influenced by the trends of the tourism supply and demand. In addition to tourism and systems that are directly related to tourism, it is necessary to monitor the developments in the external systems because they have an impact on changes in the tourism industry too.

In accordance with the above mentioned, it could be concluded that there are three types of indicators that monitor the cause-effect changes in the factors of tourism and systems that surround it. In applying the indicators, it is necessary to take into account that they are based on the coding systems and that limit values should be determined within which scalar indicators could move. Depending on the size of scalar indicators, it can be determined whether the monitored change is in the red (critical situation), yellow or green zone (when the situation is described as sustainable, which means that all principles of sustainable development are completely met).

The indicators are divided into 5 groups:

- ◆ economic indicators show the economic effects of tourism business in the tourist place or area;
- ◆ satisfaction of tourists implies the level of tourists’ satisfaction with the quality tourism facilities and services provided, as well as their opinion about the attractiveness of motives, state of the environment and socio-cultural characteristics of the receptive field;
- ◆ social indicators reflect social integrity of the local community, in terms of subjective well-being of the local population in a tourist destination;



- ◆ cultural indicators reflect the degree of preservation of the cultural identity of the local community, under the influence of tourists who come from areas with different cultural characteristics;
- ◆ indicators of environmental conditions should provide a picture of the state of the environment and the impacts that tourism exerts on certain media (water resources, air, biodiversity, soil) [6].

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

The lack of complete and complex tourist product of Serbia has resulted in insufficient, unplanned and inadequate utilization of abundant resources. The concept of sustainable tourism, although proclaimed, is not sufficiently affirmed or incorporated into the strategic plans for the development of tourist destinations. Unplanned infrastructural construction has led to the fact that tourism in Serbia has become the main threat and danger to sustainable tourism development, rather than its support. Inadequate accommodation facilities, transportation inaccessibility and poor and adequate tourism and communal infrastructure have become a major limitation to sustainable tourism development that should attract foreign demand.

The principles of sustainable tourism, which should be the guiding principles of each stakeholder that defines the tourist offer of Serbia, are insufficiently accepted and involved. The concept of economic growth and development, rather than the globally accepted concept of sustainable and balanced development is still dominant. Serbia still lacks an integrated, holistic approach to spatial planning and environmental quality with fair redistribution and accessibility to resources and knowledge. A lack of high quality tourist offer in terms of lack of golf courses, marina, cycling paths, etc. is evident. There is a noticeable degree of recognition of destinations such as Kopaonik, Tara, Zlatibor and some spa destinations – Vrnjačka Banja, Gornja Trepča, Prolom, as well as the European road corridors and the Danube. The main obstacle and a prerequisite for solving the problem is the adoption of adequate laws and regulations that would ensure that the adopted strategies are consistently applied.

In 1996, the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia was adopted, which was amended in 2010. Its basic assumptions have been harmonized with the European Union documents. To start using pre-accession and structural funds of the EU, Serbia must resolve the issue of regionalization and balanced development of the territory.

In addition to the rational exploitation of natural resources, tourism should in turn contribute to the promotion, preservation and further social and economic development of the given destination, which is not often the case in Serbia. There is an obvious example of the negative impact of tourism on sustainable development of Kopaonik where the soil is degraded by illegal dumps and communal waste; construction of alpine ski runs, ski lifts and inadequate cutting of forests, which have resulted in enhancement of flash floods and erosion due to the

neglect of the use of the revitalization and inappropriate use of chemicals for artificial extension of the duration of snow; unplanned construction of the superstructure at sites of cottage settlements Lisina, Suvo Rudište, Gvozdac and Ciganske Reke; construction of roads; inadequate establishment of artificial meadows; uncontrolled collection of wild fruits, medicinal and aromatic plants; soil pollution by untreated or insufficiently treated wastewater and storm water [Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2009]. On the other hand, tourism has insufficiently contributed to the protection and presentation of the National Park and the economic and social development of involved communities [9].

The main tasks set in front of the state and local self-governments, as well as all other factors involved in the overall implementation of sustainable development are:

- ◆ implementation of tourism development projects in existing and new destinations with the completion of year-round tourist offer and the intensification of its use;
- ◆ reservation, protection and activation of new tourism areas, depending on the capabilities of the state pre-financing of non-commercial bases of tourism;
- ◆ strengthening existing and introduction of new tourist products (at national, regional and local level) – city breaks, round-trips (with various itineraries with natural, cultural, historical and other motives), nautical theme parks, eco-tourism, etc.
- ◆ stimulation of the most important functions of social tourism, particularly recreation and sport for children and youth;
- ◆ spatial and functional structuring of the territory of Serbia into tourism clusters, with the selection of priority tourist destinations/regions, routes and places;
- ◆ construction of tourism infrastructure, improving road, rail and waterway transport;
- ◆ provision of low-cost and charter airlines; internal linking of tourist destinations by tourist routes;
- ◆ improvement of tourism signage, improving water management and energy management for tourism purposes;
- ◆ introduction of innovative solutions in information and communication technologies;
- ◆ harmonization of infrastructure, public services, services, recreation and sport with immediate needs of permanent residents and tourists;
- ◆ making partial development strategies regarding important tourist products; production and implementation of spatial and urban plans of tourist destinations and development programs of competitive tourist offer;
- ◆ establishment of missing tourist organizations at the regional and local level;
- ◆ IT support for tourism development, primarily by establishing a unique and up-to-date tourism statistics of accommodation, transport, etc.
- ◆ research support to the development of tourism, reflected especially in the study of current trends



and changes in the field of tourism demand and tourist products [10].

It can be concluded from the above that it is necessary to adopt a strategy with which all entities involved in the tourism process will comply (starting from those that form the tourist offer, systems directly dependent on them as well as external systems whose changes also affect the events in the observed tourism system), monitor its consistent implementation and deployment, as well as control upon which it is possible to carry out corrections in the unsatisfactory segments.

CONCLUSION

In order for the tourism development to contribute to economic development as well as to meet other needs of the society and the environment, it is necessary to accept the concept of sustainable development at all levels of government and to establish tourist offers. Balanced, rational and effective management of resources that will enable further social, economic and cultural development of the given destination may lead to long-term growth and development, improvement of quality of tourist offer which will result in a satisfied tourist who is offered a complex product.

Tourism itself must not be an obstacle to its own further growth. On the contrary, it is necessary to increase the positive impact of tourism on the environment, natural resources, cultural values and integrity of the local population. To make all capacities of natural resources fully exploited and in order to preserve natural ecosystems and maintain biodiversity, it is necessary to follow the rules and act according to the principles of sustainable tourism. Respect for socio-cultural heritage, stable employment for the local population, the growth of their income as well as satisfied tourists who are willing to revisit a tourist destination are the results of adequate and all-encompassing application of the principles of sustainable development. Integrated and holistic approach to sustainable development of all factors, starting from the state government,

local self-governments, non-governmental organizations, media and tourists, will contribute to long-term and synergistic effects of the adopted strategy.

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