ECO-SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ROMANIAN TOURISM

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Abstract
In a changing world, the development of eco-sustainable tourism is manifested in the form of interaction of elements compatible with each other in various dimensions: economic, environmental, human, technological, environmental, ethical, etc. Through eco-sustainable tourism aims to satisfy the present needs of tourists in favor and not in detrimental to the interests of future generations, along with educating them in the spirit of reducing negative environmental impacts.

This paper provides a brief overview of the tourism - ecology - sustainable development relationship, by highlighting the evolutionary theoretical considerations regarding the concept of tourism, the need for sustainable tourism development, the ecology as a priority in the development and integration of tourism activities within the coordinates the eco-sustainable development. It also discusses the main indicators used to characterize the tourism activities in Romania in the context of eco-sustainable development.

Keywords: tourism, eco-sustainable development, ecotourism, system of indicators

JEL Codes: L83, O11, Q19

1. Introduction
Tourism is an economic and social phenomenon specific to modern civilization with strong roots in society’s life. Both positive and negative trends in the global economy evolution, influenced tourist activity quantitatively and structurally, stimulating travel and diversifying its spatial orientation.

On one hand, the fact that tourism is oriented towards large segments of the population, that it fully meets their material and spiritual needs is reflected in the intensification of tourist traffic, giving the phenomenon one of the highest growth rates. On the other hand, through scale and complex content, tourism involves a vast natural, material and human potential having profound implications for the dynamics of the economy and society, for international relations.

The twenty-first century debuted as the age of globalization, sustainable development and quality, with a deep involvement of services, and therefore of tourism. In this context, there is a striking interdependence between environmental and tourism products.

Sustainable tourism is defined as “development all forms of tourism, tourism management and marketing which respect environmental natural, social and economic integrity, guaranteeing for future generations the exploitation of natural and cultural resources.” [1].

Sustainable tourism emphasizes the environmental impact of tourism characterized by the relationship among the tourist, the touristic reserve and supplied tourism product. It is the only sector that can focus on social change and on sustainable and cumulative development. The way it contributes to national / regional development is through a combination of mental (education, training and attitudes) and social changes induced in a certain population. As a result, it becomes able to cumulatively and sustainably increase its real global product through a generalized social progress.

The rest of the paper organized as follows: Section 2 discusses the connection between tourism and eco-sustainable development. Section 3 introduces the indicators used for analyzing touristic activities in the context of eco-sustainable development while Section 4 concludes.
2. Tourism and eco-sustainable development

In a continuously changing world, the development of eco-sustainable tourism is seen as the interaction of elements compatible on various levels: economic, environmental, human, technological, environmental, ethical, etc. Through eco-sustainable tourism, the needs of present tourists are met favoring and not detrimental to the interests of future generations, while educating them in the spirit of reducing negative environmental impacts.

Promoting ecologically sustainable tourism is conducive to eco-sustainable development and the results are [2]:
- a better understanding of the effects of tourism on the natural, cultural and human environment;
- achieving territorial planning and zoning allowing tourism development adapted to the capacity of ecosystems;
- orientation towards the development of recreational facilities which can be beneficial for the local population;
- cost-effective use of land with low agricultural yield; and
- ensuring compliance with environmental requirements.

Degradation and environmental pollution are due to a variety of factors and they have a negative impact on tourism. The factors with negative influence on the environment, and therefore on tourism, are grouped into two main groups [3]:

- **Factors directly resulting from economic activities:**
  - air, water and soil pollution due to industry through the emanations of ash, gas, steam, hot air, gas, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen and so on; the storage of garbage and waste; agriculture and forestry using chemical fertilizers, polluting machinery, intensive grazing, uncontrolled garbage and waste disposal etc.; and even tourism through the disposal of waste in water bodies, using unsupervised fire in unauthorized areas and sometimes causing fires.
  - pollution of vegetation and fauna due to inadequate climatic parameters, quality of air, water and soil;
  - noise pollution since the sound is a source of pollution that negatively affects human auditory system and also touristic activities;
  - visual pollution caused by damage to the landscape due to cutting forestland for construction sites, quarries and mining, waste disposal, etc.;
- **Natural factors** such as natural disasters that directly or indirectly contribute to environmental degradation: volcanic eruptions, floods, tectonic movements, rapid movement of air masses, etc.

Tourism development has as a prerequisite the assessment and analysis of both the availability of environmental resources in the touristic circuit and also the chemical, physical and biological capacity of ecosystems to absorb the waste discharged as a result of touristic activities.

Solutions for ecotourism development can be determined starting from two levels: the level of environmental protection and conservation (since tourism can significantly contribute to environmental protection, conservation and restoration of biodiversity and wise, sustainable use of natural resources) and the level of activities (aimed at a clean and eco-efficient production, green production, preventing pollution and minimizing waste quantities).

In this context, in the future, tourism should adopt sustainable principles and practices to move towards the demand for products and services adapted to environmental requirements and obtained with a minimal environmental impact.

In recent years, ecotourism, as a topical concept, is viewed and treated with much interest due to the orientation of tourism towards sustainable development. As an immediate consequence of tourism-environment relationship, the scope of sustainable development is very broad, including not only elements of conservation or regeneration but also green (ecological) elements.

Over time, in order to highlight the relationship ecology-sustainable development-tourism, various definitions have been provided, some simple and others more extensive, all of them trying to capture the fullest manifestation of the interdependence of the three elements.

One of the first definitions of ecotourism is mentioned in the Programme for Belize [4] related to the initiative of the 1988 Rio Bravo Conservation & Management Area as “a form of tourism with low environmental impact, based on its assessment and where a conscious effort is made to reinvest an appropriate share of income for conservation of resources employed. It is a form of sustainable tourism providing benefits to the local people.” [5].

Tourism expansion after 1990 and the structural changes of the field oriented it towards sustainable development. Thus, in 1992, Valentin Peter defines ecotourism as “sustainable environmentally friendly nature-based tourism in green areas, no degradable, harmless tourism helping protect the environment...” [6].

Towards the end of the twentieth century, Fennell formulated another definition of ecotourism as a “form of sustainable tourism which is based on natural resources, focusing particularly on the appreciation and knowledge, and which is ethically managed, with little impact, as opposed to consumption and oriented to support local communities. Usually occurs in natural areas and contribute to the conservation and protection required.” [7].

At the beginning of the 21st century, in the context of increasing pollution, the definition of ecotourism becomes more laborious, “a form of tourism that encompasses education and awareness (appreciation) of the natural
environment or of some of its components, associated with its cultural context. It gives the impression that it is sustainable from the environmental and socio-cultural point of view, preferably in a way that meets the basic natural and cultural resources of the area of destination, promoting the sustainability of the process in financial terms.” [8].

Based on the definition of the World Tourism Organization, the Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER) argues that “ecotourism is a form of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature and local traditions related to nature and which meets the following conditions: i) it contributes to the conservation and protection of nature; ii) it uses local human resources; iii) it is educational; iv) it fosters respect for nature; v) has minimal negative impact on the natural and socio-cultural environment.” [9].

Regardless of the ecotourism definition, it can be said that ecotourism is the core for the eco-sustainable development of tourism.

3. Tourism activity indicators in the context of eco-sustainable development

The peculiarities for the quantification of Romanian touristic activity reside in the significant interdependence of tourism - space - ecology - sustainable development. The quantification of tourism in the context of eco-sustainable development is based on the System of Tourism Statistics and also uses indicators of eco-efficiency and sustainable development.

The Tourism Statistics System provides consistent and appropriate statistical information for the structure and development of tourism and it integrates economic and social statistics. Differently, the indicators of eco-efficiency are developed primarily at the micro level. Tourism enterprises craft their own eco-efficiency indicators based on identification and design of individual ways of using energy and water, waste storage or regarding emissions.

The system of indicators is determined by the interplay of absolute, relative, mean, interdependent indicators set for the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of tourism, tourism demand and supply indicators taking into account their implementation in terms of environmental protection and sustainable development.

If the quantification of tourism supply is achieved using the indicators for material and technical base and for labor, tourism demand is very difficult to commensurate due to its peculiarities: focused demand; dynamic nature of demand; pronounced feature of inter-regionalism; diversity and heterogeneity of requests; sharp and rigid seasonality, etc.

The analysis of tourism demand requires determining its overall demand indicators: indicators of demand distribution by travel motivations; indicators of demand distribution by ways of organizing the trip; tourist traffic indicators; tourism demand seasonality indicators; tourism demand satisfaction indicators; fidelity indicator of tourism demand and the elasticity of tourism; indicators of tourism demand by social criteria, etc.

Interdependences among core and complementary indicators of tourism, efficiency and environmental effects indicators, and indicators of sustainable development along with the complex relationship among tourism - space - ecology - sustainable development have generated a new system of eco-sustainable development tourism indicators, i.e. tourism indicators to quantify the physical space; tourism indicators to quantify the physical-geographical space.

The complexity of the tourism sector and tourism market requires constant monitoring and quantification through appropriate indicators, as a result of environmental trends and changes in tourists’ consumer demands, with significant impact in terms of eco-sustainable tourism development.

4. Conclusions

Globalization and sustainable tourism activities are aimed at practicing under ecological and rational use of resources. The complexity and heterogeneity of the tourism product has profound implications for efficiency in this sector, broadening the scope and purpose of the evaluation and expressing the result of a set of specific activities: tourist transport, catering, provision of other basic services and complementary sales of goods, domestic tourism and international tourism and so on, and the results, by their nature, have both direct and indirect effects, all in the context of eco-sustainable development.

The need for coordinated efforts in Romania, both regionally and nationally, to carry out large touristic projects oriented towards eco-sustainable development is connected to the quantification of the activities involved. In this context, the use of statistical methods for the analysis of tourism in terms of eco-sustainable development is necessary.

The interrelationship among tourism - ecology - sustainable development can be analyzed through rural tourism, protected natural areas tourism and cultural tourism.

In the current conjuncture, the features of eco-sustainable tourism development involve a substantial financial and human flow and contribute to public awareness and to the start of programs and projects to promote it.
5. Bibliografie


