

NEW TRENDS FOR TOURISM PRODUCTS: THE ISSUE OF TOURISM RESOURCES

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Abstract

The existence of tourism resources is a key factor and competitive advantage for countries who try to be developed. The shift to a more sustainable tourism development underlined the need to create new tourism products, which would match the shift from “quantitative” demand to a more “qualitative” one. The pursuit of sustainability through SIT development and planning is in the framework of the current study.

Key word: tourism resources, SIT, sustainability, tourist motives

Introduction

Tourists, travel to pursue personal interests, enjoy other environments and nurture personal needs and wants. The time and effort people put into tourist travel are therefore valued differently from other goods and services. Tourism, nowadays, has become far from being dependent on sand-sun-sea and holiday and it has become a phenomenon that integrates with requests such as entertainment, sport, excitement, discovery of culture, and gaining of health. So, demands for places with a wide variety of services and high quality have increased as much as those for conserved, extraordinary, interesting and isolated places. Places that create demands for tourism have acquired these features depending on the presence of some of their strengths.

The tourist resources besides natural (climate, natural environment etc.) and cultural (tradition, cultural events, local customs etc.) also include infrastructure and services that contribute directly or indirectly to tourism development (hotels, agencies, transport and communication

networks, etc.). The continuous increase of tourist countries and regions in worldwide level requires parallel development, promotion and management of all types of tourism resources. Recent years it is observed a dynamic trend of development in technological made resources (theme parks, tourism and recreation areas).

1. The Pursuit of Sustainability¹

According to the World Tourism Organization' definition of sustainability, meeting the social needs of the present should not undermine the fragile ecosystems or jeopardize the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The three pillars of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental are inseparable. "Sustainable tourism 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.

The sustainability and marketing tool provides an introductory bridge between the two specialist fields of marketing and sustainability. The identification of key opportunities for sustainability should be through understanding customers and market, assessing the sustainability attributes of the organisations products and services and determining which sustainability issues have the greatest potential for use in a marketing campaign.

Sustainable tourism requires the participation of local residents and businesses at the planning stage. The effective collaboration among different stakeholders from the government, tourism boards, businesses and local communities is crucial to successful sustainable tourism management and operations.

The basic principles and objectives of an approach to tourism from the perspective of sustainable development according to World Conference on Sustainable Tourism, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain 1995 are (Cocossis, Tsartas, 2001):

- Sustainability in tourism development means that it should be environmentally friendly now and in the future, as well as economically viable and socially equitable for local communities.
- Tourism should be in harmony with the natural, cultural and human environment.
- Tourism should ensure its effects on cultural heritage and tradition of the local community.
- An active contribution of tourism to sustainable development requires joint actions and of all the public and private sector bodies and effective coordination mechanisms at all levels (local, regional, national, etc.).
- Primary objectives in tourism development should be the preservation of the tourist destination and servicing capabilities of tourists in a strategy for sustainable development.
- Tourism should be based on exploring opportunities for local communities, contributing the most to the local economy.
- Tourism should effectively contribute to improving the quality of life for all and social-cultural enrichment of each destination.
- The central government and related bodies with the participation of local government and NGOs, should take actions that contribute to the integrated planning of tourism development.

- Priority should be given to actions that contribute to the protection and promotion of the environment and integration mechanisms of environmental costs on investment and assistance for tourism.
- The environmentally and culturally sensitive areas should receive special care.
- In the research for alternative forms of tourism, priority should be given to those that contribute to a sustainable development perspective, with respect to the natural and cultural environment.
- Particular attention should be paid to the dissemination and exchange of experience and knowledge to actions and technologies that integrate tourism in sustainable development strategy.
- The policy of sustainable development in tourism requires the support and promotion of environmentally friendly tourism management systems.
- Particular attention should be paid to the role and environmental impact of transport, use of alternative energies and waste management.
- The adoption and implementation of environmentally friendly conduct is important for all actors in tourism.
- Awareness of all is essential for the implementation of the above principles and objectives.

2. Major changes in tourism demand and supply; The Special Interest Tourism (SIT) growing Market ²

The major trends mainly in demand (tourists and tourism businesses) but also in supply (locals and local planners) constituted a rapidly growing and extremely diversified market -regarding especially motives and infrastructure. Furthermore, the development of SIT is an inseparable part of the regeneration programs in mature mass tourism destinations in order either to renew their traditional products or to differentiate and target new markets or market segments.

The major trends of this enormous change in the overall development of Tourism the last 30 years are the following:

Tourists prefer more independent modes of travel. In the same period tourists started questioning the basic characteristics of mass tourism: this type of organization did not leave room for freedom to the tourists which chose this pattern of travel. Tourists started seeking a more independent type of travel by choosing: the timetable, the destination, the accommodation, the means of travel, the prices, the sites-to-visit etc. Additionally, the internet has contributed heavily to this trend because it provided the user with information, the opportunity to cross-check prices and book on-line.

An increased number of trips in combination with high travel expenditure. Travel and tourism has gradually become an inherent component of the social and economic status of the middle class in the developed countries. The development of the SIT market is linked to an increased number of domestic and outbound trips during the last thirty years and significant increase in family spending on traveling every year. The tourist is now traveling more and consequently chooses different types of travel (in

terms of duration, price and motive) and is thus boosting this new market (SIT). The tourist needs to make difficult choices between different products and destinations as the disposable income sets specific limits.

Table 1: SIT based on motives of tourism (Coccosis, Tsartas, Gkrimpa, 2010)

<p>Acquaintance (accommodation, tour, sport) with the nature and the outdoors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Agrotourism</i> ▪ <i>Ecotourism</i> ▪ <i>Skiing</i> ▪ <i>Mountaneering</i> 	<p>Culture, region, science and education, promotion of products and services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Cultural</i> ▪ <i>Religious</i> ▪ <i>Educational</i> ▪ <i>Urban</i>
<p>Business reasons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Conference</i> ▪ <i>Exhibit</i> ▪ <i>Incentive</i> ▪ <i>Personal Business trip</i> 	<p>Sea (tour, sports, accommodation and leisure)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Maritime</i> ▪ <i>Yachting & sailing</i> ▪ <i>Cruise</i> ▪ <i>Water sports</i>
<p>Social reasons, health and quality of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Spa/ Therapeutic</i> ▪ <i>Medical</i> ▪ <i>Wellness</i> ▪ <i>Social</i> ▪ <i>Tourism for Special Needs people</i> ▪ <i>Senior tourism</i> 	<p>Hobbits, combining leisure and tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Casino</i> ▪ <i>Theme parks</i> ▪ <i>Golf</i> ▪ <i>Adventure</i> ▪ <i>Mega events</i>
<p>Holidays, organised real estate holiday homes and timeshare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Holidays organised</i> ▪ <i>Real estate cottages</i> ▪ <i>Timesharing</i> 	

The notion of "locality" and the bottom-up planning positively affected the development of SIT. According to the principles of sustainable development, locality and bottom-up planning were adopted by tourism regions that sought an integrated approach respecting local culture. The issue of locality was raised by tourism academics, local planners and inhabitants of the tourism regions, who supported that: a development plan should take into account the specific features of the local economy, society, environment and culture. Contrary to the mass tourism development pattern that has a negative impact on the tourist destination mainly due to the infrastructure and the touristification of the local community, the development of SIT can contribute to the development of different types of tourism. The bottom-up planning approach ensures the involvement of the locals in planning as well as the implementation of basic sustainability principles. Therefore, many tourism regions are now pioneers in SIT infrastructures and services.

Tourists are now choosing a more active and rich travel experience. Experiential tourism is becoming more and more important. The trip functions as an opportunity for the tourist to learn the history, culture, and environment and interact with the local society. Moreover, tourists seek a variety of activities at the destination they visit (in contrast to the passive type of travel experience that the organized mass tourism pattern offers). Both these trends constitute the essence of SIT: it offers more active vacations and travel experiences by urging the tourist to develop a different relationship with the destination.

Tourists, especially after the 80's, started traveling for more than one reasons or for more than one dominant reason. This was the result of a change in motives: tourists wanted to do more things than just take a vacation. The new type of multimotivational client wanted to make use of different tourism services and infrastructures in the tourism resort he/she visited. This also forced local governments and local entrepreneurs to develop new products in order to diversify their supply and match the new type of demand (Agrotourism, Ecotourism, Cultural Tourism etc). Thus in many tourism regions we have now besides the traditional vacation tourism infrastructure a number of services provided for this new products which may have different characteristics in their organization and management. A huge turn both in offer and demand was thus the result :beside the traditional massive vacation tourism product we had a vast number of tourism products related to a demand for totally different motives: Environment, Education, Rurality, Heritage, Culture, Sports, Health, History, Congresses, City breaks, Hobbies of all shorts, Casinos, Profession, Experiential travels, Adventure Travels, Thematic Museums ,Thematic Parks etc. This evolution posed a large number of issues for the tourism regions and first of all to create the necessary and specialized infrastructure for this new type of demand.

3. Constructing Tourism Resources ³

Tourism resources could be defined as those factors that make it possible to produce a tourism experience and include culture (Avila' wall, Great Wall China, Egypt Pyramides, Tour Eiffel etc.),

environment (Birdwatching in Lesvos, Amazon Forest, Sarek National Park in Sweden etc.), infrastructure (transportation, accommodation, health, natural).

A tourism resource as a tourism destination. One has to admit that the management of massive vacation Tourism was in many cases a rather easy task for tourism regions planners. Most of the decisions regarding demand were taken outside the regions, the "product" was organized and thus easily managed. Two issues than had to be deaed with: promotion and the management of impacts. This is not the case with the new era of having a usually big number of Tourism products in tourism regions with different characteristics, season, clientele, management needs etc. The principles of Sustainability are the proper tool for sustainable local development in an area which has different tourism resources and thus products (Vacation Tourism and SIT).

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Ecotourism of Costa Rica

- *One of the most bio-diverse regions in the world, divided in 20 natural parks*
- *8 biological reserves and a series of protected areas that captivate ecotourism lovers.*
- *Highlights: National Parks, rivers and lakes, rain forest's Aerial team, flora and fauna, horseback riding, canopy tours, birdwatching*
- *Tortuguero National Park is especially famous for sea turtle nesting that takes place every year, and the natural canals that abound with protected species such as crocodiles, manatees, and otters.*

Charles Dickens Museum:

- *Number 48 Doughty Street was an important place in Charles Dickens's life where he resided from 1837 until 1839.*
- *Two of his daughters were born there, his sister-in-law Mary died aged 17 in an upstairs bedroom and some of Dickens's best-loved novels were written there, including *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*.*
- *The Charles Dickens Museum holds the world's most important collection of material relating to the great novelist and social campaign. Holds over 100,000 items including manuscripts, rare editions, personal items, paintings and other visual sources.*

Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau

The Auschwitz Memorial is more than extensive grounds and original camp blocks, barracks, and guard towers. It is also tens of thousands of objects of a special nature, special meaning, and special symbolism.

- *Above all, it is the personal possessions brought by deportees and found at the site after liberation. They make up a unique collection of items connected with the suffering of the people deported to Auschwitz to be killed immediately, and with those forced into slave labor by the Germans.*
- *It is also the objects connected with the life of prisoners in the camp, which bear testimony not only to the primitive living and hygienic conditions and starvation, but also with attempts to preserve humanity behind the barbed wire of Auschwitz.*
- *The Museum collections also contain objects connected with the SS garrison, the perpetrators of the crime.*

Museum of QIN Terracotta Warriors and Horses, China

- *The Terra Cotta Warriors and Horses are the most significant archeological excavations of the 20th century.*
- *Life size terracotta figures of warriors and horses arranged in battle formations are the star features at the museum. They are replicas of what the imperial guard should look like in those days of pomp and vigor.*
- *The museum covers an area of 16,300 square meters.*
- *There are columns of soldiers at the front, followed by war chariots at the back.*

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