

THE IMPACTS OF TOURISM GROWTH ON THE ENVIRONMENT OF A DESTINATION: CASE OF STUDY IN THE DESTINATION OF POGRADEC, ALBANIA

Denada OLLI

PhD candidate, Department Marketin – Turizëm, Faculty of Economic, University “Fan Noli” of Korça, Korça, ALBANIA

ABSTRACT

The growth of the tourist flow trend and the development of many tourist attractions have made it necessary to use tourist means to be successful. Therefore, tourism takes many meanings: it is a summary of the relationships and phenomena of two different characters: social and economic; the latter takes priority. Tourism is closely linked to the environment where it operates. Environmental quality is an important part of the product that tourism offers but at the same time many activities related to this industry can bring undesirable effects on the environment. In this way, development should not be considered as independent, but as closely related to the environment. This paper analyzes these phenomena and the relationship between them based on a study conducted for the destination of Pogradec.

Keywords: Natural resources, quality of the environment, nature protection, environment, tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Based on a study the aim of this paper is to:

- Identify the impacts and the effect of the tourism on the environment by minimizing the negative impacts and by maximizing the positive ones.
- Identify the economical benefits of the tourism, the way they contribute to the protection of the environment and also the role it plays in the awareness that the society should obtain in order to keep the environment safe.
- Show that the uncontrolled tourism brings the environmental degradation.

Material and Methods

The research was based on the information gathered from the primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained by the questionnaire, by interviewing the residents, the businessmen and also the tourists who visit these destinations, in order to understand the importance of the environment and tourism in their community. 100 questionnaires were used on the behalf of this study. It was an easy questionnaire adapted to the average tourist. The secondary data was gathered from the statistics of the public institutions like the General Tourism Office in the destination of Pogradec and international institutions in the field of tourism.

The connection tourism-environment

Through the changes that the industrialized and developed societies have undergone, the problem of the tourism as a main effect on the environment is already considered as one of

the first place. Nowadays the development is seen from different angles by considering different elements on which it consists and the relationships that derive from them. In this way we can say that the development is not a purpose on its own. It should be considered as one being deeply connected to the environment and as a result their relationship should be modified continuously. It appears that the tourism and the environment contradict each other. Every kind of development such as economical, social or political cannot be fulfilled out of a certain environment, which means that all kinds of developments have to do with the consumption of the environment where they operate. The main environmental sources play a direct role on life itself whereas the economical development plays a role on the natural, financial, and human resources which are only being found within a certain environment.

The quality of the environment, whether the natural or the manmade one, is an important part of the tourist product, as a result there are many industrial activities that might have undesired effects on the environment.¹ These effects are mostly connected to the management of the tourist enterprises, including hotels, restaurants, shops, and malls. Other effects related to the tourism have to do with the increase in the use of electricity, waste disposals and air pollution.

Tourism as one of the biggest industries in the world, affects not only the social and economical development of a country but also exerts a pressure on the environment where it takes place. If the rights policies are being followed, tourism not only does not damage the environment, but it serves as a tool for the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of a place. Investments done in the infrastructure, the safety of the water resources, and other factors like the quality of the standard of living, the quality of food etc, have created the needed ground for a quick development of the tourism.

Tourism exerts pressure on the environment where it operates, not only through the huge demands for the natural resources like water, electricity, food, and other first-hand materials by increasing the population and also by the pressure on the eco system, seas, lakes etc.

A stable tourism is an industry that tries to have an insignificant effect on the environment. The activities of this kind of tourism have a minimal effect on the environment and also on the culture of the host community. A stable tourism is the one that manages all the resources in such a way that all the economical, social and esthetic needs to be fulfilled by keeping the cultural integrity and the ecological processes safe. The aim of the stable tourism is to keep economical and social advantages of the tourism by reducing the negative effects on the natural, historical, and cultural environment. The ones that should profit from a successful tourism are the locals by giving them the chance to keep safe the natural resources which ensure attractions.

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the effects of tourism and related developments upon the environment of 'destination areas'. The increasing popularity of the concept of sustainable development has resulted in tourism being viewed as an activity which could easily be developed along those appropriate lines. It is argued, however, that such a viewpoint is often simplistic and naïve, because of a lack of understanding of the complex nature of tourism. While tourism is dependent upon the environment for much of its well-being, the prevailing lack of knowledge, responsibility, and long-term planning, has often

¹ Mathieson, A., and G Wall (1982) *Tourism: Economic, Physical and Social Impacts*

resulted in development which is neither environmentally nor culturally sympathetic to the host area and community.

A broad definition of environment is necessary in this context, encompassing both the physical and human realms and also Nature's, as is an equally wide view of human leisure activities, which needs to include far more than tourism. It is necessary to take a critical view of some alternative approaches to mass-tourism, which have been suggested as appropriate for environmentally significant areas; for at least some of the problems resulting from tourism-related developments are more profound, and less easily solved, than has often been suggested. Solutions are inevitably a combination of compromise and positive planning and management, and successful examples are difficult to find. Improved understanding of the complex nature of tourism, and of its linkages to the environment, is crucial if a symbiotic relationship is to be attained and maintained.

It is necessary to appreciate that tourist destination areas evolve and change over time, both responding to, and being altered by, changes in tourism. They are not static environments, and need responsible and pro-active planning and management. Reliance upon local initiatives, uncoordinated planning, and self-regulation in a situation of ill-defined responsibility, will not result in a secure long-term future for either the tourist industry or the environment of the destination area. Coordination of policies, pro-active planning, acceptance of limitations on growth, education of all parties involved, and commitment to a long-term viewpoint, are prerequisites to the successful linking of tourism and sustainable development.

The impact of the environment on the tourism

1. The values of the environment, both the natural and the artificial ones, are important for the tourism.
2. However, the relationship of the environment to the tourism is very complex, many activities might have negative effects on the environment.
3. The negative impacts of the tourism can gradually destroy the natural sources on which they rely.
4. On the other side, tourism possess the potential of creating necessary effects for the environment by contributing on the preserving and safety of the environment.
5. The negative impact of the tourism take place when the level of the users, visitors is higher than the ability of the environment to face all of them within the acceptable limits of change.
6. The uncontrolled traditional tourism brings forth a potential danger for many areas throughout the world.

How can tourism contribute on the protection of the environment

Tourism is one of the biggest and rapidly growing industries in the world. It consists of an ensemble of activities, which are coordinated with each other and have as their own objective the fulfillment of the individuals' needs. Today, tourism represents an industry because it refers to activities, which intend to utilize the touristic resources and the conversion of the natural, human and capital resources into touristic products and services. Tourism has a great potential. It also plays an essential role in the completion of the main objectives, which are connected to the economical growth, employment and to the economic and social stable development. In the recent year, there has been an increased interest on the impacts of the

tourism in the economical growth by the researchers. Tourism has an important and positive impact for the economical development. This impact is connected with the environment too.

The industry of tourism can contribute on the protection of the environment through:

1. Financial contributes:

Tourism can contribute directly to the prevention of the environmental areas which are in danger. The income from the entrance to these areas can be shared for the safety and the management of these areas.

2. Governmental contributes:

The fees, the taxes over the income, the taxes over the sales and other taxes (hunting, fishing) can raise funds needed to manage the natural resources.

3. The improvements of the environmental management and planning

A good management of the tourism objects especially of the hotels, can bring high profits for the natural districts. But all of this requires a careful planning based on a detailed analysis of the natural resources of the region. Such a planning helps on the solution of the conflicts.² A planning in advance on the development of tourism would avoid the dangerous steps toward the environment.

4. Rising awareness for the environment

Tourism has the potential to increase the public evaluation of the environment in order to spread awareness for the environmental problems, when it creates a close connection of people with the nature and environment. This confrontation may increase the consciousness of the value of nature and bring a conscious behavior in relation to the environment and to activities which aim to protect the environment.³ In order to be stable in a long term, tourism has to incorporate the principles and the practices of the stable consumption. The stable consumption includes the construction of the consummators' demand for products which are using clear techniques of production and services including the tourism services which are provided in a way which minimize environmental effects. The tourism industry can play an essential role in providing the environmental information and in the rising of the awareness of tourists for environmental consequences caused by their actions.

Tourism and Environment in the destination of Pogradec

The destination of Pogradec is a lovely modern city, being located in the South East of Albania, it is a wonderful destination for the tourists. As a crossway for other places of Balkan, it is close to Macedonia and Greece. On the height of 1000-1300 m, its climate is mostly Mediterranean. The winter is cold and the summer is warm. The precipitation is mostly in the form of the snow in winter and the rest as rain during the autumn and spring. In the East of Pogradec, 5 km from the town, it is found the tourist attraction called Driloni, situated on the clean and cold waters of the lake. The lake is of environmental and economical importance. It is one of the richest biological reserves of Europe. The natural environment of the town has to be seen as a set of many factors, not just topographical and geographical ones, but all the components that are part of it. The perspective of the

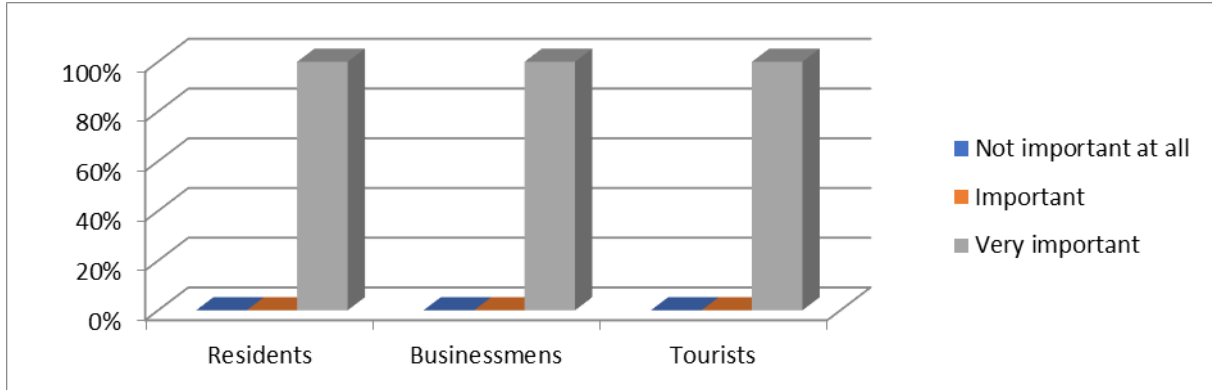
² Mc.Kercher B.(1993) "Some Fundamental Truths about Tourisms"

³ Holden 2005."Tourism,CPRs and Environmental Ethics"

development of this region is closely related to the state of the environment that surrounds it and the impacts created by people as a result of the development.

Graph 1

How important is the protection of the environment in this destination?



Source: Author own research, 2017

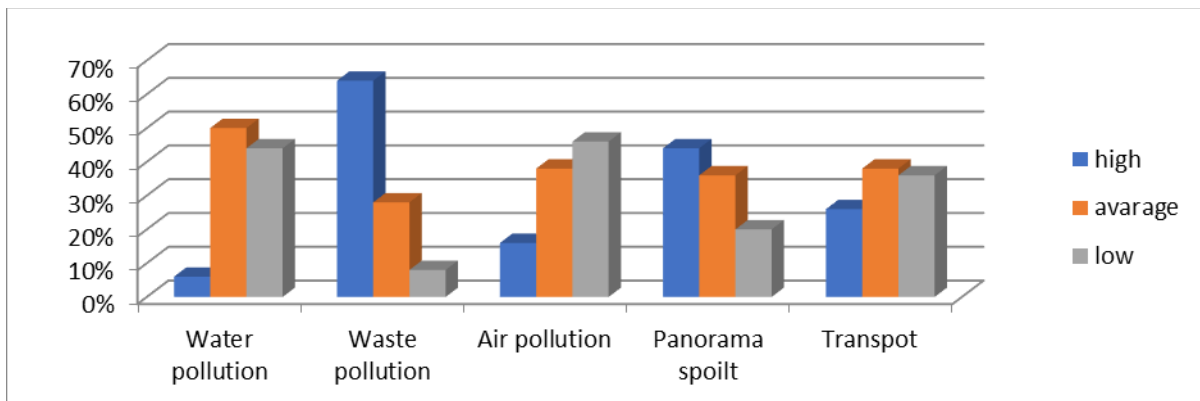
In this graphic, we notice that the environment is very important not only to the residents and businessmen who live and work in that destination, but also for the tourists who visit Pogradec.

What is the impact of the environmental factors in the destination?

Due to the fact that Pogradec is a touristic destination, there has been shown a special attention to the elimination of the waste created from the construction sites and other enterprises that deal with manufacturing and production, by paying attention especially to the lake shore, parks and to the three rivers that cross the town. Thus, in this town the environmental balance has been kept properly. Many parks, playing grounds have been built to give a quality time to the residents and also to the tourists who visit this town.

Graph 2

Impact of the environmental factors in the destination



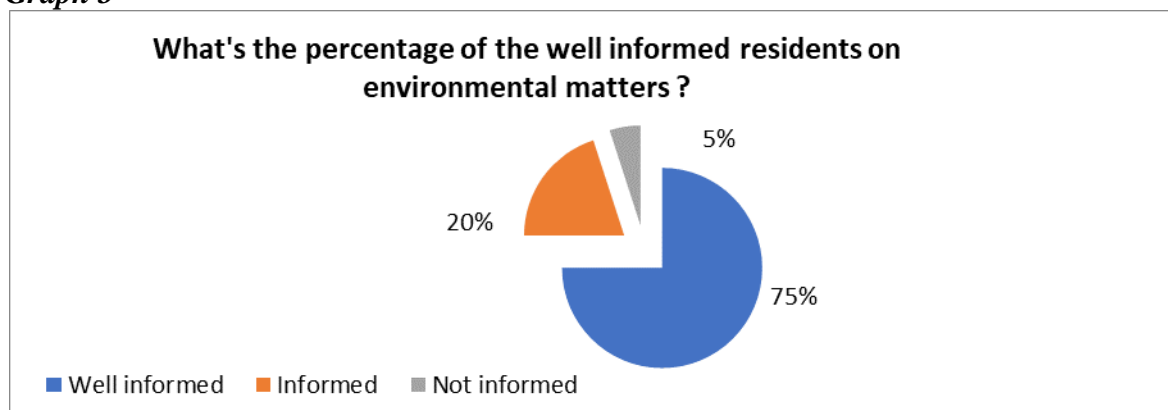
Source: Author own research, 2017

In graph nr 2, it is obvious that the residents have valued the rate of the effect of these environmental factors on the town. These factors have different effects depending on the development they have had and also on the improvements. As it is seen in the graphic the environmental factor of pollution has the greatest effect, 64 %.

The role of the tourism in raising the awareness of the society in protecting the environment

Tourism has a great potential to increase the public awareness in protecting the environment and dealing with the environmental problems, especially when bringing people closer to nature and to the environment. This confrontation might raise the awareness of the public and might create conscious behaviors and also actions to be taken for the welfare of the environment. The tourism industry plays an important role in preparing the tourists to be more environmental conscious. Tourism can contribute deeply in the environment protection and also in the protection and the stability of the natural resources.

Graph 3



Source: Author own research, 2017

The information of the public on environmental matters is very important and also very useful, because its degradation affects directly the health and the wealth of the residents. That is the reason why most of them are well informed on the environmental matters, 70% of them. While 20% are informed and 5% not informed at all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strategies should be promoted to support the stable tourism and to ensure an increase on the quality of tourism so that the environment will be protected.
2. Not only the negative effects on the environment should be reduced, but also the economical benefits of tourism should contribute on the protection and the planned usage of the natural resources.
3. Tourism can play an important role in creating the awareness not only of the tourists but also of the residents in environmental protection.
4. Tourism has a potential to increase the public appreciation of the environment and also to bring awareness as far as the environmental problems are concerned, as it brings people in contact with the nature and the environment.
5. Tourism can contribute to the protection of the environment and the restore of the biological diversity and also to the proper use of the natural sources. Because of the attraction, the natural places and the unspoiled ones have been identified as worth to keep alive the attraction by creating natural parks which will take care of the wildlife.
6. Taking into consideration the measures that should be taken to the protect the environment by the businesses, can decrease the negative impacts on the environment.

Bibliography

1. Butler, R.W.(1980) “ the Concept of a Tourism Area Cycle of evolution:
2. Implications for management of Resources”, Canadian Geographer,(1989)
3. Calantone, R.J., and MaZanec, J.A. (1991) “ Marketing Management and Tourism”,
4. Annals of Tourism Research,p 101-119.
5. Cohen,E.(1978) “ The Impacts of Tourism on the Physical Environment”,
- Annals of Tourism Research, p 215-237.
6. Davis J.(1992) “Ethics and Environmental Marketing “, Journal of Business Ethics, p
- 81-87.
7. Hall,C.M. (1997) *Introdaction to Tourism in Australi: Impacts, Planning and*
- Development*, 2nd ed.South Melbourne:Longman Australia.
8. Holden 2005. “Tourism, CPRs and Environmental Ethics“, Annals of tourism
- Research, vol.32, no. 3,p.805-807
9. Hills T. And Lundgren, T (1997) „ The Impact of tourism in the Caribbean“, Annals
- of Tourism Research, p. 248-257
10. J. Jafari, ed. Routledge, Encyclopedia of Tourism 2000
11. Karwacki, J & Boyd, C. 1995. “Ethics and Ecotourism “, Business Ethic,
- vol.4,pp.224.
12. Lakeford,S.V and Howard, D.R. (1994) “ Developing a Tourism Impact Attitude
- Scale “ , Annals od Tourism Reasearch, 21, 121-139.
13. Mathieson, A., and G.Wall (1982) *Tourism : Economic, Physical and Social Impacts.*
14. McKercher B. (1993)“ Some Fundamentaln Truths about Tourisms :m
- Understanding Tourism’s Socila and Environmental Impaxts“, Journal of Sustainable
- Tourism, vol.1(1), 6-16.
15. Smith, S. (2010) *Practical Tourism Research* (CABI).
16. [www.agjensiakombetare e turizmit.com](http://www.agjensiakombetare.e.turizmit.com)
17. Bashkia Pogradec “ www.bashkiapogradec.gov.al”