

Transition of tourism in Montenegro – from sustainable development to sustainable tourism

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Abstract. Tourism, as well as other economic areas, in addition to contributing to greater economic benefits, also leads to the creation of problems such as increasing negative impact on the environment, as well as excessive energy consumption. Namely, due to the expansion of travel, many tourist destinations are affected by large tourist flows, which negatively reflects on the quality of life of the local population. As the application of technology in all areas, including tourism, is changing at an increasing speed, numerous challenges for the sustainable development of tourism are occurring, so research on this topic is very current both in domestic and foreign literature. The aim of this paper is to indicate the possibility of developing sustainable tourism in Montenegro, taking into account recent development trends. The results of the research show that due to the natural potential and resources that Montenegro possesses, sustainable development is very promising, with a special emphasis on sustainable (eco)tourism.

1 Problem definition and background

Many world destinations feel the negative consequences of tourism development and that is why there is more and more talk about sustainable tourism. However, it is necessary to know *what exactly it represents?* In order to be generally focused on the analysis of this topic, we cite the first definition of sustainable development, which was given in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission: “it is development that meets the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [1]”, and that's when the harmonization of tourism with the goals of sustainable development begins. In this regard, sustainable tourism should optimally use natural resources, which are an essential element in the development of tourism, but do not endanger basic ecological processes and help preserve natural wealth and biodiversity. Namely, we can explain it as an economic branch that has a negligible impact on the environment and local culture, and therefore contributes to the protection of local ecosystems, the creation of new jobs and the acquisition of income. Numerous studies have dealt with this topic [2-6]. The key question in the analysis of sustainable tourism that

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needs to be answered is how to put sustainable development into practice in the field of all tourism activities.

In order to reduce the negative effects of tourism, the UNWTO (The World Tourism Organization) [7] “has designated 2017 as the year of sustainable tourism”, calling on everyone to respect the principles of sustainable tourism and to give importance to local communities. Tourism, based on the position it promotes in the world economy, first of all has a moral and social responsibility in realizing the transition towards sustainable development.

2 Methodology and preliminary results

An exploratory research approach was applied in the paper. Qualitative methods were used along with a deductive way of drawing conclusions. In the part of deriving conclusions and recommendations for future research, the synthesis method was used, in order to unify all the findings obtained by the analysis method and their clearer and simpler interpretation. Starting from the goal and the mentioned methods, the author tries to get an answer to the research question (RQ): *Should tourism in Montenegro, based on the principles of sustainable development, be one of the priorities in the future?*

Namely, the natural resources of the country, as well as the local infrastructure, are very often at odds with the increasing number of visitors during the tourist season. For the sake of comparison, not so long ago in 1950, 50 million people traveled around the world annually, and already in 1980 this figure rose to 278 million, in 1995 to 527 million, while in 2016, 1.18 billion traveled to international destinations billion tourists [8]. It is expected that by 2030, the number of annual passengers will exceed 1.8 billion [8]. Various researches confirm that the number of tourists for whom a healthy environment is a very important criterion when choosing a vacation destination is constantly growing in the world.

Governments play an extremely important role in the creation of strategies, promotion and development of sustainable tourism. Their role is very complex and must be defined through the actions of different participants and the implementation of policies. Namely, it is necessary to maintain a high degree of satisfaction of tourists' needs, increase their perception of sustainability issues and propagate the practices of sustainable development and tourism among them. The COVID-19 pandemic and the immeasurable risks of future uncertain events have imposed new challenges and feats for the sustainable development of tourism. „Although it takes a long time for the tourism world to return to its original state, British travel magazine *Culture Trip* points out that sustainable and environmentally conscious destinations should be chosen [9].” This magazine ranked Montenegro among the best sustainable destinations in 2021 [9].

On the other hand, in developing countries, such as Montenegro, ecotourism is one of the effective ways to promote sustainable economic development [10]. Ecotourism is, above all, based on the principles of sustainable tourism, and represents a paradigm of sustainable development.

According to the research conducted in Montenegro in 2021 [11], it is believed that “eco-tourism will be one of the most prevalent trend in the post-COVID period”. Namely, the public's interest in the environment is increasing, so this trend in tourism occupies a leading place [12]. The author states that “Montenegro is considered one of the most suitable countries for the development of ecotourism due to the abundance of natural beauties and attractions” [11]. Ianioglo and Rissanen [13] think that the pandemic also has its positive aspect, which is “improved environmental protection as a result of reduced air, sea and land pollution, and that such an increased perception of the value of nature can lead to more sustainable models”. Some of the researches [14, 15] emphasize that in the post-pandemic period, the focus will increasingly be on the production of organic and healthy

food, as well as the promotion of rural tourism. Also, analyzing the level of representation of agritourism in Montenegro comes to the conclusion that "agritourism activity in Montenegro is very useful for the development of rural areas and ensuring their sustainable future [16]". The analysis of the mentioned researches points to a very pronounced need for (eco)tourism based on the principles of sustainable development, as an authentic trend in Montenegro.

3 Further work and conclusions

All participants in the tourism sector show a strong interest in the application of sustainable tourism services, because they have an affirmative impact on the environment and the local population. However, there are very big challenges to change the environment, to increase the motivation of tourists for sustainable tourism services and finally to move the behavior of tourists towards more sustainable ones.

The general conclusion that emerges from the findings of this paper is intention is to affirm ecotourism in less developed economies as one of the most effective ways to promote sustainable tourism. However, it is important to emphasize the recommendations for future research in this area, through a parallel analysis of related forms of ecotourism and evaluate their degree of representation in the overall sustainable tourism, and sustainable development generally.

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