

THE IMPACT OF MASS TOURISM ON THE ENVIRONMENT

MSc. Silvija Vitner Marković
Polytechnic of Karlovac
Trg J. J. Strossmayera 9, Karlovac
Croatia

Dubravka Krivačić, BSc.
Polytechnic of Karlovac
Trg J. J. Strossmayera 9, Karlovac
Croatia

ABSTRACT

Tourist activities take part in attractive and high quality environments where tourists take advantage of tourist resources. A significant number of tourists visit natural and social resources, most often in a particular period of the calendar year. The tourist traffic has enormously increased since the Second World War. Mass tourist movements to «ready-made» tourist destinations affect natural and artificial environment. Flora and fauna of particular destinations have been changed. It has also caused water and air pollution, noise pollution, waste, overloaded infrastructure, the increase of built areas, as well as the implementation of new styles in the architecture of the destination. Permanent negative ecological changes give rise to decrease in tourist demand for the areas once having been attractive tourist destinations. Mass tourism and demand create the necessity for the implementation of sustainable development concept in order to reduce potential negative impacts on tourism. Environmental pollution can be prevented by implementing the ecological aspect of sustainable development concept. The ecological aspect of sustainable development should also help raise the awareness among the tourists and local population of preserving attractive tourist resources. The carrying capacity of an attractive tourist resource and the ecological threshold should be assessed, as well as the ecological standards, and other measures of system protection should be defined. It is advisable to develop tourism with defined carrying capacity of a particular tourist destination as well as with factors of natural resources protection.

Key words: mass tourist movement, attractive tourist resources, tourist resources devastation, ecological aspects of sustainable tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become the biggest world industry today. Almost all the social strata take part in tourist movements, since the amount of free spending money has increased, as has the free time of potential tourists. Statistics say that the number of tourists grows daily, and that more and more people have more and more free time. Tourists seek new destinations, travel further than ever before. Tourists move in increasing masses and the movements are directed towards attractive tourist destinations. Mass tourist movements result in some changes in the environment. Detrimental effects of these changes in the environment have led to the need to study the concept of mass tourism and its impact on the environment.

2. CONCEPT OF MASS TOURISM

According to the World Tourism Organisation figures, the number of international arrivals, show an increase from 25 million international arrivals in 1950 to 806 million in 2005. The number of

international tourist arrivals grew at an average growth rate of 6,5% in the period between 1950 and 2005. Currently, tourism marks one billion international tourist arrivals in the world, and 1,6 billion international tourist arrivals are expected in 2020 by the World Tourism Organisation.

Mass tourist movements towards attractive tourist resources have positive impact on tourism development of a particular destination, but quite often they have numerous negative side effects. "Mass tourism is a form of tourism characterized by a great number of tourists who travel in an organised way, usually in package tours and arrangements organised by tour operators or tourist agencies. It emerged at the end of the Second World War and has lasted ever since then. In the overall economic expansion related to the newly liberated states and people, tourism has intensively developed at a continuous annual rate of increase in the volume and travel programmes. Thanks to the rapid development of social and technical prerequisites, it comprises wide areas and a huge number of participants. Mass tourism is not only characterized by large masses of people from all the social strata, but in terms of time, tourism activity is concentrated on the periods of holidays, particularly in summer. The development of alpine destinations has brought about the popularity of winter holidays, in particular skiing as a motivating tourist activity. It has become necessary to provide infrastructure and carrying capacity of a destination for such a broad mass of tourists, polluting the area of such developing trends. Numerous consequences of mass tourism in receptive tourist destinations have made a negative impression with a lot of repercussions on a receptive tourist destination, and on the participants of that type of tourism as well." [5]

3. RESOURCES ATTRACTIVE TO THE TOURISTS

Tourism is an activity that requires the engagement of various resources of a particular destination. The higher quality and more preserved resources guarantee long-lasting tourism. "Resources can be defined as natural or social goods that can be used economically. There is no development of tourism in a particular area, even of marginal significance, unless it has highly attractive natural and social resources that can attract particular segment of tourist demand and provide tourism and economic valorisation. It should be pointed out that some resources due to the level of activity can independently impact tourist arrivals, while many others exist in combination with other resources intensifying their attraction. Tourist resources can be classified in two groups, according to their origin: natural and social. Climate, geomorphologic, hydrographical, biogeographical tourist resources as well as landscapes are natural tourist resources. Social tourist resources are divided into cultural and historic, ethno-social, artistic, event and ambient resources." [2] "Attractive factor is crucial for every tourist offer, because tourists and one-day visitors do not travel to a particular destination because of its good traffic communications or receptive factors (diverse catering), if there are no tourist attractions. All the attractive parts of one area can be considered tourist attractions of the area, and all the other tourist attractions, because they are marked by their regional distribution. The parts of an area attractive to tourists as well as their spatial relations among other tourist attractions and programmes determine the potential characteristics of tourist offer as well as the potential development of particular types and forms of tourism." [3]

4. ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The necessity to protect tourist resources is omnipresent. "Mutual impact of tourism and environment protection is a basic factor the development of tourism is based on. Since the development of tourism is inseparable from environment protection policy, the conflict between tourism development and environment might be eliminated if the polluter pays principle is implemented at all levels. Diverse and higher quality services might increase tourism revenue, which would be directed towards the improvement of the environment quality. It means that the revenue realized on the basis of attractive destination, should be directly or indirectly invested into the preservation of the environment, and these investments should be treated as such as well as business expenditure respecting the polluter pays principle." [1] "Among ecological issues that impact tourism, the following should be pointed out: the use of the area for tourism purposes and the impact on the environment, waist water drainage and the building of adequate waste water purification systems and equipments, disposal of household and industrial wastes, the problem of noise and the identification of main polluters. Tourism, as well as other economic activities using an area as their comparative advantage, often gives rise to negative

changes in the state of the environment. The building of business and tourist facilities and intense housing construction without planning and with no environmental considerations and no respect for local building traditions, often result in degrading the landscape, impacting its quality. Tourism, as a user of rare and ecologically sensitive areas, is one of key stress factors impacting environment and nature, precisely where it is most attractive to tourists. Since tourist movements are currently in Croatia directed towards the seaside and the coast, it results in detrimental effects caused by the impact of mass tourism on those regions. There has been no ecological prevention in terms of developing regional plans and the existing ones are not being implemented. Waste water drainage and the building of adequate waste water purification systems and equipments are major ecological issues associated with tourism. They impact the state of the sea quality along the coast, rivers and lakes since there are numerous tourist destinations. Tourist destinations are often faced with the problem of uncontrolled disposal of household and industrial waste, which impacts the future development of the overall tourist business. Since the issue concerns the overall development of a tourist area, the question of the state of waste dumps, associated with it, should be also considered. Waste dumps are in a critical condition in most tourist areas at the Adriatic coast. Local communities are expected to pay systematic attention, aided by the state, in supplying new dump locations and ensure proper technical conditions for waste disposal. The issue of noise pollution in tourist destinations should also be paid special attention. Noise is unavoidable in towns or city centres, the main sources of noise being road and air traffic. Noise pollution in tourist destinations is most often associated with the transport of tourists, but with other tourist activities as well. However, the first step in solving the problem of environment protection and its impact on tourism development should be identifying main polluters, whose activities and business contributes most to the pollution of the air, waters, soil and which produce most noise. The development of tourism cannot be separated from the environment protection policy. This is why it is necessary to employ proper planning to eliminate the sources of conflict between tourism development and environment protection. The revenue earned from the attractiveness of the premises should be, directly or indirectly, invested in environment protection.”[1]

5. THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The concept of sustainable tourism is a proper answer to the unfavourable ecological consequences of the impact of tourism on the environment. The concept of sustainable tourism development includes protection of the resources from degradation and devastation. Tourist business together with the environment protection institutions and local community should find its interest in protecting attractive resources, since they have a common goal of improving life conditions in tourist destinations. In protecting the resources from saturation, their sensitivity to the impact of tourism should be determined, and proper documentation made, such that could be used by those who create the policy of tourism development. “The carrying capacity and the ecological tolerance threshold should be evaluated, ecological standards defined and other measures for systematic protection proposed”. [4] “Determining load, or carrying capacity is a reasonable and conscious, as well as justifiable limitation of using the resources up to a certain limit, which could, with the least detrimental consequences for the resource, yield optimal economic effects in a commercial exploitation. The purpose of determining carrying capacity is to establish optimal measures and procedures to protect the resources from saturation on a permanent basis. Limiting tourism development up to the level of carrying capacity, which protects the economic value of the premises, its natural values, population and its basic cultural and other structural characteristics, is of utmost importance for tourism. It not only prevents degradation and saturation of the natural and anthropogenic resources, but also ensures permanent protection of attractiveness of the resources, and, through it, the intensity of their activity. This opens the road to the development that will ensure permanent utilisation of the premises, avoiding the degradation of the key natural values and life conditions of the population in the area. Regardless of the author and the model of determining the carrying capacity, the aim is always to calculate the number of the users per square unit of the premises, so that too high a concentration of the tourists should not cause the changes in the natural environment and socio-demographic consequences, as well as too high a concentration of the premises for accepting tourists and infrastructure.”[2] The ecological threshold of tolerance for a particular tourism development project is necessary, since its absence could lead to the uncontrolled expansion of tourist activities in a certain area and have a detrimental impact on the environment. “If

the environmental impact assessment establishes that the detrimental impacts are above the acceptable level, it is necessary to modify the development project in question, or completely abolish it, depending upon the level of impact. The conditions of the environment in the area are investigated and preliminary evaluation is made of the impact of a particular project on the environment. The results obtained are compared with the accepted environment protection policy. Provided there is no significant conflict between them, feasibility study for the project is made and modifications implemented with the purpose of minimising the impact on the environment.”[4]

The ecological aspect of sustainable tourism development contributes to preserving biological diversity of the area, protection of plant and animal life. “The interest tourists find for particular plant and animal species (e.g. bird watching) can stimulate local community to take some active protective measures. Sustainable development is not complementary with the development of tourist activities that ask for extensive exploitation of a particular resource, for example water. Unfortunately, there are sad examples around the world, where extremely high amounts of water are used on preserving some aspects of tourist offer (e.g. golf courses), while at the same time local population suffers water shortage. The infrastructural problems are most acute in the areas where a rapid growth of tourist trade occurs in a short period of time.”[4] To keep pollution at the minimum, it is necessary to take more active and systematic care of the environment and its pollution, primarily by checking the quality of the air, water, noise level, by reducing the loads, as well as by creating and keeping to the proper standards and limits of acceptable pollution. “The implementation of the concept of sustainable development and attracting the segment of tourist market that exhibits a positive approach to the environment, will have a beneficial impact and increase the consciousness of the need to preserve the nature, especially in the younger segment of the local population. Local population is often unaware and does not accept the fact of the values of their natural environment, until they realise the interest of tourists for the environment and the economic benefits resulting from its proper evaluation. The concept of sustainable development is of extreme importance, the protection of the eco-system depends upon it, which means the future of the humanity as a whole. Integral planning of the development should be implemented and the mechanisms for the co-existence of tourism and environment protection developed.”[4]

6. CONCLUSION

Mass tourism has caused a number of detrimental effects in the environment in the course of a few past decades, and has obviously reached the point of crisis. The way out of the crisis is sought in new solutions and ideas that could be able to alleviate the detrimental aspects of mass tourism and, in some manner, make it more noble and profound. Tourism development at numerous destinations around the world has been matched to the previously defined carrying capacities of the destination eco-system, as well as with the implementation of the ecological aspect of the concept of sustainable tourism development. The aim of the concept is to prevent environment pollution, preserve the eco-system and ensure the co-existence of tourism and environment protection. Global tourism development asks for an active ecological and social responsibility at the local, national and international levels, since tourism should not be planned separated from the overall development of the local, national and global community.

7. REFERENCES

- [1] Andrijašević, S., Jurlina Alibegović, D.: Economic instruments used to finance environment protection, *Acta Turistica*, vol. 11/1999, no. 2, Faculty of Economy Zagreb, Zagreb, 119.-169., in Croatian
- [2] Bilen, M.: *Tourism and environment*, Polytechnic of Karlovac, Karlovac, 2006., in Croatian
- [3] Kušen, E.: Care for tourist attractive basis: current state and methodological framework, *Tourism*, vol. 48, no. 3, Croatian Tourist Association and The Institute of Tourism Zagreb, Zagreb, 2000., 313.-334., in Croatian
- [4] Smolčić Jurdana D.: *Advantages and limitation of the implementation of the concept of sustainable tourism development*, doctoral thesis, Faculty of Economy Zagreb, Zagreb, 2003., in Croatian
- [5] Vukonić, B., Čavlek, N.: *Glossary of tourism*, Masmedia, Zagreb, 2001., in Croatian