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LEADING FACTORS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AFTER AND DURING THE PANDEMIC CONDITION

Recommendations make it possible to promote the sustainable development and rapid resuscitation of the tourism industry. Sustainable development can be defined as the process of economic and social changes where the exploitation of natural resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of scientific and technological development, personal development and institutional changes are coordinated with each other and strengthen the present and future potential for human needs and aspirations. The article includes theoretical explanations regarding sustainable development with emphasis in the tourism industry.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Tourism, Tourism Industry.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Since the end of 2019, the spread of the pandemic around the world has claimed the lives of many people. In addition, an impact of this process has more or less affected almost all areas of national economy and service production. In this study, we have tried to show the factors contributing to the development of the tourism industry, both, in the usual and in the conditions of further rehabilitation after the pandemic condition. These recommendations make it possible to promote the sustainable development and rapid resuscitation of the tourism industry. Sustainable development can be defined as the process of economic and social changes where the exploitation of natural resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of scientific and technological development, personal development and institutional changes are coordinated with each other and strengthen the present and future potential for human needs and aspirations. In many ways it is about ensuring the quality of life of people. The design of the article includes theoretical explanations regarding sustainable development with emphasis in the tourism industry.

Findings: More effective policies promoting the industry in addition to specific projects improving the infrastructure and the social feelings about tourism are proposed.

Practical Implications: A set of measures have been identified able to influence the industry in a positive way regarding its direct and indirect effects in the state, regional and local economies of tourism destinations.

Originality/Value: This is a first attempt describing and identifying issues related to the Georgian tourism sector. It is a valuable piece of information for policy makers to adopt the article's proposals for the improvement of the industry.

Introduction

Due to the pandemic condition of the world, one of the first sectors of the economy that has been suffered by reducing the number of tourists and, consequently, revenues and then, final closure of it was – tourism and its neighboring industries. Therefore, it is very important to resuscitate the field in parallel with the process of weakening restrictions. In this article we will try to show general picture of sustainable tourism development importance, leading factors to ensure sustainability and give some recommendations for quick resuscitate of the field.

The necessity for sustainable development in tourism becomes more and more noticeable every year because of the high competition among touristic destinations. It is of great importance all negative aspects influencing the tourism industry to be removed. The development of tourism around the world has a significant impact on income's state and the natural environment. Tourism as one of the world's largest economic sectors, supports one out of ten jobs worldwide generating 10.4% of world's GDP (about US\$ 8.8 trillion). In 2018, travel and tourism industry also experienced a 3.9% growth, compared to the global economy which was 3.2%. One out of five new jobs were created by the industry over the last five years.

From the visual impact of the architecture of hotels and resort complexes to noise and air pollution from the increasing traffic flow, pollution of water sources and loss of natural habitats (Deutscher Reiseverband, 2015; Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2016) tourism has been characterized as an obstacle to sustainable development if the industry discard issues relating to green economy, sustainability of natural resources, cultural habits and ethics, legal and environmental actions.

2. Research Methodology and Procedures

In order to create long-term conditions for the development of tourism within a proper and preserved status in natural resources and the cultural values of the society, the aim of this research is to establish theoretical approaches for a sustainable development of the tourism industry in the state of Georgia. As the tourism industry itself contributes to the country's socio-economic development it is required to be treated as such. Sustainable development through a growth model with adequate use of natural resources, supporting human needs while at the same time preserving the environment, the social and the cultural aspect of the local society could be a well-balanced strategy to be used satisfying present and future needs. Future generations have the right to enjoy life, to be able to work under better working conditions and to continue efforts improving economic and social life.

Sustainable development consists of a system which provides community economic development and environmental protection in the interest of human well-being, growth and quality of life for future generations, quantitative and qualitative changes for the protected natural resources and the surroundings (Frolova, 2010;

Naumova, 2003; OECD, 1980). It implies a form of economic growth that ensures the welfare of the general public for short, medium and long term. It is based on the principle that today's demands must be satisfied so as not to threaten future generations. Sustainable development means to create conditions for the long-term economic development with considerable consideration on environmental issues. The Copenhagen World Summit on sustainable development in 1995 emphasized the necessity of combating social segregation and public health (Frolova, 2010).

By considering the approach to tourism development, it should be taken into account needs of other industries, ensuring their interconnection and interdependence. Despite a rather long time of development of this concept, the researchers did not come to a common opinion regarding the definition of sustainable tourism. Today, the most common definitions are:

- ✓ Sustainable development of tourism industry is all forms of tourism development and management that do not contradict the natural, social, economic unity and well-being of established societies in an indefinite period (World Federation of Natural and National Parks, 1992);
- ✓ Sustainable development of tourism industry is ensured within the limits of environmental sustainability, allows to effectively restore the productivity of natural resources, takes into account the contribution of local communities to leisure tourists;
- ✓ Provides the equality of the rights of the local population to the economic benefits of tourism;
- ✓ Human wishes and needs of the receptive sides are seriously considered (Tourist Concern & Wild World Fund, 1992);

Sustainable development of tourism industry allows modern inhabitants of the world to satisfy their own needs for rest and recreation without the threat of future generations losing this opportunity (UNDP, Production and consumption branch, 1998).

We can determine the principles of sustainable tourism as follows:

- ✓ Promote the adoption of a full and healthy life in harmony with nature;
- ✓ Contribution to the conservation, protection and restoration of the Earth's ecosystems;
- ✓ Development and application of sustainable production and consumption patterns as a basis for travel and tourism;
- ✓ Peoples' cooperation in the field of an open economic system;
- ✓ The abolition of protectionist tendencies in the provision of tourist services;
- ✓ Obligatory protection of the environment as an integral part of the development of tourism, respect for relevant laws;
- ✓ The participation of citizens of the country in solving problems related to the development of tourism including those relating directly to them;
- ✓ Ensuring the local nature of decision-making in the planning of tourism activities;
- ✓ Exchange of experience and introduction of effective tourism technologies;
- ✓ Taking into account the interests of local population.

3. Factors Affecting Tourism Development

At the present stage, the essence of sustainable development of tourism is considered as the most important factor for the sustainable development of the society. This provision is clearly stated in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, adopted by the SRT in 1999. It proclaimed the commitment of all participants of the tourism process to preserve the natural environment for sustainable and balanced development. An important role belongs to the central, regional and local authorities; they should support the most environmentally friendly forms of tourism.

In order to change the negative impact of large tourist flows, measures should be applied to distribute tourists and visitors uniformly, thereby reducing the seasonality factor. Planning of new objects of tourist infrastructure should be carried out taking into account the peculiarities of the terrain, to guarantee the preservation of the habitual way of life of the population. Sustainable development of the territories able to attract tourism activities is provided through the creation of tourism infrastructure, the organization of new jobs, the attraction to the standard activities in the field of tourist services for the local population. As a result, the living standard of the inhabitants of peripheral regions rises, and their consolidation takes place in the historical territory of residence.

The protection of tourism is the obligation to preserve the biodiversity of recreational areas and centers. For the realization of such approaches, it is required to use environmental technology, practical experience, recommendations of fundamental and applied sciences. For the protection and restoration of recreational areas new schemes of financing and lending environmental activities within the boundaries of the recreational areas could be an effective way to keep the level at the highest possible height (Frolova, 2010;Naumova, 2003).

All the recreational resources are used for sustainable tourism development, and directed in such a way to satisfy economic, social and aesthetic needs while preserving cultural identity, ecological balance, biological diversity and life-support systems of the recreation region. To enhance sustainable development in tourism several measures are appropriate among them a contemporary development strategy. These measures, either state, regional or local may describe the framework of the industry not only in terms of legal and/or economic aspects bus in terms of societal behavior of the work force involved in this industry:

- ✓ Approval at the state level sustainable development provisions, in particular on tourism;
- ✓ Cooperation and exchange of experience with the international community on issues of theory and practice of sustainable development, adapting their methods and tools;

- ✓ Increase of the level of the ecological consciousness of the population, dissemination of information on the quality of the environment and methods of protection;
- ✓ Economic and legal support of nature protection activities;
- ✓ Stimulation of environmental initiatives of the population by supporting non-governmental organizations.

The goals of sustainable development of tourism industry as an integrated holistic paradigm for the development of the society is the development of managerial mechanisms for the tourism industry based on a balanced unity of economic, social (including demographic), ecological and environmental characteristics for general economic progress. Scientists around the world and high-ranking nations have repeatedly stressed the importance of using the potential of tourism to achieve the goals of social and economic development, which are known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development of the society.

Through the improvement of the basic infrastructure and the full involvement of local communities, tourism can contribute to poverty reduction, the first of eight MDG (Millennium Development Goals). The provision of the possibility of attracting such external sources of income and their equitable distribution within the community in a tourist-attractive area primarily contribute to improving the quality of life of the local population (Keller, 2004).

During the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) General Assembly meeting in October 10, 2011 in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea, about 70 ministers from all regions of the world agreed to promote such a tourism policy aimed at achieving the MDG (Millennium Development Goals) by 2015. In parallel, the capacity of tourism is to promote the construction of a «more secure, fair, green and prosperous world for all» (OECD, 1980;Debbage and Ioannides, 2003).

Tourist activities with proper planning have a positive effect on destinations, and contribute to improving the quality of life of the population because:

- ✓ It serves an additional source of income for the local population;
- ✓ Allows to diversify economic activities in destination;
- ✓ Provides new jobs and increases opportunities for the local population;
- ✓ Tourism is an effective catalyst for the restoration of the traditions of the area, the maintenance and the development of local culture;
- ✓ Increases the level of education and qualification of the local population in order to improve the quality of the services provided to tourists in the destination;
- ✓ Allows to develop micro, small and medium business for which advertising is a very important factor, proper outdoor advertising and manufacturing give chances to attract new customers;

- ✓ Reduces the isolation of the terrain due to the improvement of transport infrastructure, the emergence of IT technologies and modern means of communication;
- ✓ Improves the quality and accessibility of various services, including health care. The income from tourism is distributed;
- ✓ The income remaining in the region (that part is necessary for a positive change in the quality of life of the population) as income of local entrepreneurs, owners of infrastructure facilities, salary of local staff, income from sales of locally produced food products, income from sales of locally produced souvenirs, payment for maintenance of infrastructure and environmental conditions of the area;
- ✓ Income from the region as income of foreign investors and foreign travel agencies, expenses for the development of tourist products, marketing and advertising, transfers to destination, the cost of importing food, energy, technology, communication systems, highly qualified personnel, industrial goods, services.

Concluding, sustainable development of the tourism industry is a precondition for the solution of many economic and social problems. Precondition of sustainable development of tourism industry is created from different factors, such as:

- Research / analysis of tourism and resort potential;
- Determination of regional tourist policies;
- Planning and organization in tourism activity;
- Developing environmentally friendly and economically advantageous tourism programs (Diagram 1).

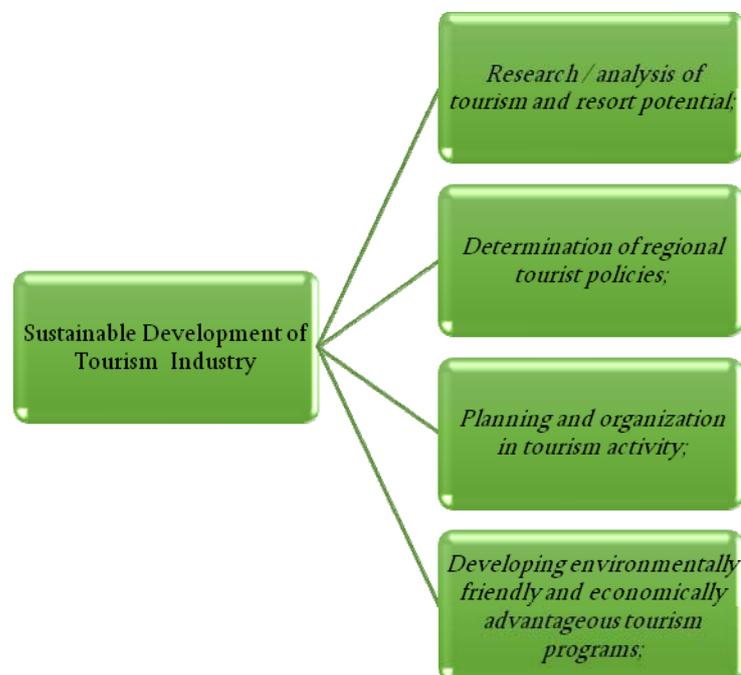


Diagram 1. Factors of Sustainable Development of Tourism Industry

Source: Formed by the author.

The pandemic period is characterized by many restrictions – including restrictions on travel, which literally influenced the development of tourism around the world. In such conditions, the entire sector has been stagnated and came to a negative balance (Table 1).

Table 1

International Travel 2020

Country	2019: 3 Month	2020: 3 Month	Difference	Difference %
International Arrivals	1 617 548	1 333 089	-284 459	-17,6%
Other Visits	284 048	212 596	-71 452	-25,2%
International Visits	1 333 500	1 120 493	-213 007	-16,0%

Source: <https://gnta.ge>

As can be seen from the table, compared to the same period of the last year, in 2020 international visitors decreased by -16%, international travelers' visits by -17% and other visits (non-tourist) by -25%, which was reflected in other economic indicators. That is why we need fast and irreversible maintaining the industry, to insure pace and sustainability of its development.

In order to overcome the crisis created by the conditions of the pandemic for the tourism industry, we consider it expedient for the state to take the following measures due support the sector:

- ✓ Exemption from hotel business taxes for at least 6 months;
- ✓ Subsidizing Hotel Business Bank Credits (50–80%);
- ✓ Assist hotels in introducing the World Tourism Organization's Security Standards (UNWTO);
- ✓ Assist food establishments in introducing the World Tourism Organization's Security Standards (UNWTO);
- ✓ Subsidizing the amount of participation fee in tourism exhibitions.

This is the minimum of steps that will help the tourism industry to manage the rehabilitation process with the fewer losses.

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