

## CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND EFFECTS OF ITS DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

*The essence of sustainable development is to enable the satisfaction of current needs that will not prevent future generations from satisfying their needs. The development of mass tourism has threatened its sustainability. Therefore tourism must evolve and develop in accordance with the generally accepted principles of sustainable development. There is an increasingly pronounced necessity for the preservation of natural resources, but also for such tourism development that will not jeopardize authenticity and neglect local culture and customs of destinations. The profile of the modern tourist supports the above because in economically developed countries there is a tendency of demand growth for authentic destinations that nurture local culture and customs. In this paper, the evolution from mass to sustainable tourism will be pointed out. The aim of this paper is to point out the evolutionary flow from mass to sustainable tourism, to highlight their key differences as well as to present the positive effects of sustainable tourism development.*

Key Words: *sustainable development, sustainable tourism, concept, effects*  
JEL classification: *Z32, Q01, Q56*

### Introduction

The importance of sustainable development is multidimensional and its necessity refers to many aspects of social life (Pajtić, 2012). The

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satisfaction of global needs is the ultimate goal whose realization must not jeopardise future generations (Lješević et al., 2012). They must be given at least the same opportunities and conditions as today's generations. Sustainable development implies the reduction of global poverty by improving the quality of life, as well as care for the preservation of natural wealth. Therefore, conditions for smooth economic development with respect of the basic ecological principles should be created. Sustainable development by no means aims to stop the tourism development; on the contrary, it strives to provide tourists with the experience they want, however preventing them from destroying the factors that attracted them to the certain tourist destination (Hamida et al., 2021). Simultaneously, the society, culture and environment of the local population must not be destroyed or endangered. Modern generations must treat resources as a loan from future generations rather than an inheritance from previous ones (Redžić, 2023). For this reason, the United Nations conference about sustainable development was organized in 2015, resulting in adoption of 17 sustainable development goals in accordance with current economic, political and environmental protection problems (Mensah & Ricart, 2019).

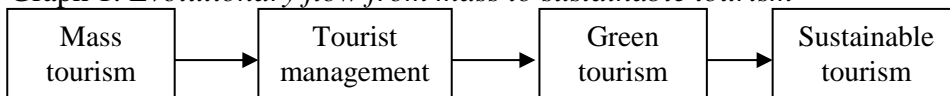
Humanity faces many inequalities, with increasing hunger, poverty, disease and illiteracy. A major threat to the future is also the ecological consequences of ozone depletion, climate change, land degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and pollution of air, water, and land. The gap in the level of development between industrialized countries and developing countries has deepened, and the number of poor people has not decreased (Hardy et al., 2010; Lélé, 1991). Tourism, with its economic importance, has a moral responsibility to take the lead in realizing the transition to the concept of sustainable development (Baum, 2021).

Tourism is an activity characterized by massiveness. The costs of its development in the maturity stage are no longer just material, so today the total social costs of its development, which can be seen through the destruction of natural and social resources, are considered. The origin of the concept of sustainable tourism development should enable the satisfaction of tourists' needs while respecting and protecting all resources. The aim of this paper is to point out the evolutionary flow from mass to sustainable tourism, to highlight their key differences as well as to present the positive effects of the sustainable tourism development

## The concept of sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism as a term was created in the 1970s and initially referred to the development of tourism in national parks and implied care for the protection of flora and fauna (Niedziółka, 2021). Such a narrow understanding of sustainable tourism was later complemented by positive and negative effects, with an emphasis on the economic effects of its development. Understanding and defining the concept of sustainable tourism is extremely complex since it integrates all forms of tourism that must also have the character of sustainability. Therefore, sustainable tourism cannot be considered as the type of tourism, but all types of tourism that are sustainable in the long term can be considered as sustainable tourism (Hardy et al., 2010). Although it is difficult to define sustainable tourism precisely, there is a general consensus that sustainable tourism represents the development of tourism that includes the needs and satisfactions of all participants on the tourism market, both supply and demand, that does not endanger natural resource capacities and, at the same time, enables the realization of all established goals (Janusza & Bajdor, 2013).

Graph 1: *Evolutionary flow from mass to sustainable tourism*



Source: *Authors based on Bošković (2015)*

Since the first industrial revolution, tourism has been characterized by massiveness rather than sustainability and this is the evolutionary phase that lasted the longest. It is characterized by a complete absence of exploitation control of all, especially natural resources (Liu, 2010). The unsustainability of mass tourism became evident in its advanced stage when tourist education was supposed to prevent the negative effects of unwanted activities from affecting natural resources. This marked the transition to the next stage of evolution called „tourist management“. However, since the emphasis was placed exclusively on „limiting tourist activities“, there was no positive reaction from the tourists. Therefore, the sustainability of this phase was partial. In the next phase of „green tourism“ there was a change with the emphasis, which was not placed on the activities that would indirectly protect natural resources, but on their direct preservation. Putting the economic effects aside, or completely ignoring them, this phase was not sustainable from the economic aspect

but only from the ecological one, therefore it was short-term and a partially sustainable phase. After these phases came the phase or concept of sustainable tourism, which has a long-term and completely sustainable character. The concept of sustainable tourism should be ubiquitous in the tourism industry and should enable the realization of all goals (Yazdi, 2012). In this sense, cultural values, ecological processes, and diversity should be protected and preserved. All this should contribute in the long term not only to economic growth, but also to the life quality and overall social well-being.

The implementation of the concept of sustainable tourism implies (Niedziółka, 2021):

- adequate use of all necessary resources for the tourism development;
- care about the preservation of ecological processes and natural resources;
- preservation of socio-cultural heritage and traditional values, which are in the function of understanding different cultures;
- provision of long-term economic activities that will have benefits for all participants and thereby contribute to the reduction of unemployment, poverty, and thus benefits for both local and economic prosperity at the state level.

In order to fully realize the concept of sustainable tourism, the readiness of the state to transfer a part of the earnings to the creation of a new interesting content, as well as the implementation of ecological standards cannot be questioned. In addition, the implementation of this concept requires the engagement of all subjects, as well as an adequate support from political structures, which would establish a much-needed consensus. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that its implementation is a long-term process that must be continuously monitored in order to implement new measures. In this process, the necessity of maintaining tourist satisfaction and awareness for sustainable tourism development importance must not be forgotten.

### **Key differences between mass and sustainable tourism**

A more intense need to change the basic postulates of mass tourism comes at the end of the 20th century because of its unsustainability (Pranjić, 2022). The growth of the world's population also caused the expansion of tourism on a geographically limited tourist areas, which had increasingly negative consequences on the exploitation of limited natural

resources (Slaćanin, 2021). This was an additional argument to accept the concept of sustainable tourism development and responsible consumption in tourism, which must be harmonized with the natural and social possibilities of tourist destinations (Todorov et al., 2023). The following table presents the key differences between mass and sustainable tourism.

Table 1: *An overview of the key differences between mass and sustainable tourism*

<b>Mass tourism</b>	<b>Sustainable tourism</b>
Rapid and unplanned development	Slow and planned development
Maximizing activities	Optimizing activities
Bad leadership	Good leadership
Short-term goals	Long-term goals
Sectoral approach	Holistic approach
Stylized products	Local products
Tourists without prior knowledge	Tourists with prior knowledge
Tourists do not want to repeat the visit	Tourists want to repeat the visit
Tourists are looking for entertainment	Tourists are looking for a vacation

Source: *Authors based on Dražić (2020) and Bošković (2015)*

Creators and carriers of tourism policy strive towards, first of all, economic profitability, i.e. achieving maximum profits from tourist visits. For this reason, in the last two decades there has been a noticeable growth of tourist capacities that could absorb all the demand (Pranjić, 2022). These capacities are often built unplanned and can devastate and completely change the appearance of a tourist destination. Short-term goals aimed at increasing profits can threaten the sustainability of tourism in a specific destination in the long term (Bošković, 2015). Mass tourism describes destinations where local residents and tourists feel that not only are there too many tourists, but also that the quality of life has worsened unacceptably. Tourism itself is not an activity that threatens the sustainability of the destination, but its mass character has resulted in pollution and unplanned allocation of all resources (Stefanović & Azemović, 2012). The consequences of tourism depend exclusively on people, the creators of tourism policy, employees in the tourism industry, but also on tourists themselves. Mass tourism is characterized by the development of tourism in attractive areas, which are often burdened with large and expensive tourist facilities and capacities which can be used in a relatively short period of time. That is why it can be pointed out that mass tourism originated and developed as a seasonal phenomenon.

Due to the previously mentioned negative consequences, there are more frequent critical reviews about mass tourism as the main factor of environmental destruction. At the same time, the awareness to preserve and adequately treat the environment and natural resources is noticeable (Zolfani et al., 2015). Compared to mass tourism, long-term goals and the absence of unplanned construction are prioritized in sustainable tourism, so economic profitability is a slow and long-term achievable process. With mass tourism, tourists do not have a connection with the destination, which is why they generally do not plan to repeat the visit. The motives of their visit are related to entertainment, and they have no significant prior knowledge of the destination. The modern fast-paced lifestyle changes the perceptions and motives of tourists. Therefore, the motives of tourist trips are increasingly inspired by the desire for vacation (Slaćanin, 2021). This motive will become dominant in the future. As the goals of sustainable tourism are long-term, visits to destinations that have implemented the concept of sustainable tourism development will also increase. Their satisfaction will be of key importance as tourists become more and more attached to the destination and tend to repeat their visit. The development of sustainable tourism must therefore be imperative for tourist destinations not only for its sustainability but also for survival on the tourist market.

### **Positive effects of sustainable tourism**

The development of sustainable tourism has positive effects that can be grouped as follows (Bošković, 2015):

- economic;
- social;
- cultural and
- ecological.

Positive economic effects are one of the most important consequences for the development of sustainable tourism. This is why it is necessary for supply representatives to be stimulated, and for the local population to see the possibility of prosperity. Investment activity, as a prerequisite for the development of sustainable tourism, will generate new jobs and create the possibility for local population's living standard growth. As a consequence, this will have a positive impact on the attractiveness of the tourist destination, and will lead to the purchase or lease of land (Budeanu et al., 2016). This would represent additional benefits for the local population that is not ready for private initiative by starting their own

business. In addition, local producers of souvenirs, food and other tourist products will have a bigger market for its placement. Local economic prosperity will also affect GDP growth. The aforementioned effects can only be achieved in the long term. Realization of all the mentioned effects is conditioned by significant investment activity. On the example of developed countries, it can be seen that sustainable tourism has contributed to the distinct economic development of those areas, which often exceeds development at the state level.

One of the main motives of tourist trips is meeting and understanding other cultures and customs. The development of sustainable tourism, especially in economically underdeveloped areas, will have multiple positive social and cultural consequences (Pranjić, 2022). It will enable the preservation of local culture and customs and bring them closer to tourists. In this way, the local population will expand their awareness by meeting other cultures and customs. Economic development will affect both social and cultural spheres through the reduction of migration movements towards economic centers, which will affect the preservation of cultural identity (Bošković, 2015).

In addition to the previously mentioned effects, the environmental ones should be emphasized as the most important for sustainable tourism. The essence of sustainable tourism development are the long-term goals where the environment and natural resources are not endangered. This distinguishes tourism from other economic activities. Regardless of the fact that ecological effects cannot be considered as the primary reason for the development of tourism, their existence gives it the character of sustainability. The fact is that the positive ecological effects are noticeable in destinations where tourism is already developed, so tourists have also developed environmental awareness (Bošković, 2015). The level of achieved economic development is proportional to the development of this awareness. It is noticeable that in economically developed countries the level of environmental awareness is significant. A large number of tourists have the intention to visit areas that are under environmental protection. In developing countries, the demand for these destinations is not dominant. The reasons are not only the level of tourist education, but also inadequate and insufficient tourist offer and marketing activities. Protected areas (national parks and nature parks) through the development of tourism can ensure the preservation of the ecological balance, but also the provision of the necessary funds to finance this preservation (Janusza & Bajdor, 2013).

## Conclusion

Sustainable development implies such development that will enable the satisfaction of current needs in a way that will not jeopardize the possibility of their satisfaction in the future. Thus, sustainable development relies on the responsibility of modern generations to take care of those yet to come. Such responsible behavior requires a general consensus and the development of people's awareness of its necessity. Experience shows that this awareness is more developed in developed than in developing countries. The concept of sustainable development implies not only the place, but also the necessity for its implementation in tourism. At the end of the last century, it was noticed that mass tourism has no long-term sustainability. Higher tourist traffic violates not only the natural resource capacities of the destination, but also its original appearance and attractiveness due to expansive unplanned construction. The short-term goals of mass tourism have neglected the realization of long-term goals, which are the essence of the concept of sustainability.

The transition from mass to sustainable tourism is a process that had its evolutionary stages. Tourist management and green tourism as partially sustainable were followed by the phase of sustainable tourism. It cannot be said that this concept has been applied everywhere, because its implementation requires general agreement and orientation towards long-term and not short-term goals. In addition, it is necessary that all actors and carriers of economic and tourist activities, as well as the local population, see the interest and be ready to participate in its implementation. The interests of all the above mentioned can be found in the positive effects that sustainable tourism enables. Transition to sustainable tourism does not mean giving up on economic goals, but only prolonging them and creating a healthy and sustainable environment that will be the basis of their long-term realization. As the concept of sustainable tourism has already been significantly implemented in developed countries, developing countries will also encourage foreign and domestic tourists to visit such locations through the development of sustainable tourism. This is another economic benefit for the tourist destination that will reduce migration movements towards economic centers. In addition, social and cultural benefits will appear and further contribute to the preservation of cultural identity and heritage. The profile of the average tourist has also changed so the modern tourist tends to spend their vacation in peace and quiet and has expressed the need to learn about the local culture and customs. He also gets attached to the

tourist place and intends to repeat the visit. As the changing profile of tourists is a trend, it is evident that sustainable tourism in the destination will enable modern tourists to get exactly what they need. This can be highlighted as an additional argument in the sustainability of sustainable tourism. This paper presents a theoretical review, so future researches can be based on the quantification of the achieved results based on the implementation of the concept of sustainable tourism development.

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