

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Author

Genka Rafailova

Author's Affiliations

College of Tourism, University of Economics - Varna, Bulgaria

Contact information of the author

College of Tourism, University of Economics - Varna, Bulgaria

E-mail: genka@rafailova.org

Title of the dissertation

Concept for sustainable development of tourist destination (on the example of Varna municipality)

Supervisor

Prof. Svetla Rakadjiiska, University of Economics – Varna, Bulgaria

Institution awarding the Ph. D. Degree

Institute of Economics, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia

Date of defence

17th April 2008

Goal and objectives of the dissertation

Goal

The main goal is to develop a concept for sustainable development of tourist destinations, and the specific mechanism for its implementation. The author's thesis is that achieving the necessary sustainable development of tourist destination requires clear concepts and specific mechanisms. These are elaborated on the basis of analysed sustainable development of the destination, taking into account specific environment and pre-conditions, in order to achieve a balance between the destination development and preservation of its natural and social environment.

Objectives

1. Presenting a concept for solving negative impacts of tourism development at the tourist destination.

2. Defining a solution for preventing and eliminating the negative consequences of tourism development in the destination, while keeping or increasing its competitiveness and attractiveness.

3. Defining a specific methodology and mechanism for the implementation of the solution for a balance between tourism development and long term development of the destination.

Methodology

1. Theoretical and comparative analysis.

2. Methods of deduction and induction.

3. Survey of 50 respondents, including representatives of tourist organisations, the local government, public institutions and NGOs. The survey was conducted in Varna municipality.

4. Analysis of sustainable development of the tourist destination implementing a specially elaborated methodology.

Results

1. Elaborated concept for development of tourist destinations based on the theory of sustainable development.

2. Elaborated specific mechanism for sustainable development of the tourist destination identified as a key determinant for sustainable development of the tourist destination.

3. Created appropriate methodology for the analysis and assessment of sustainable development of the tourist destination.

4. The methodology for analysis and assessment of sustainable development of the tourist destination as implemented and tested for Varna Municipality.

5. The directions for sustainable development of Varna tourist destination are determined.

Theoretical conclusions

The idea of sustainable development is fundamental for tourism transformation, because the negative impacts on the natural and social environment are minimised fostering positive short and long-term economical and social benefits. Sustainable development of tourism can be better achieved when the specific characteristics and problems are raised and addressed, meaning they should be considered at the local level, namely the tourist destination.

To achieve balance between the development of the tourist destination and preservation of the environment, key resources and values, that are critical for having a sustainable destination, should be identified and protected. This includes the

elaboration of specific mechanism for sustainable development of the tourist destination, for example the preservation of the irreversible natural and social capital.

Practical application of the dissertation

The concept of sustainable development of the tourist destination can be used for:

- solving the problem of “de-coupling” the tourism development from its destructive exploitation of natural and social capital without decreasing the well-being of local population;
- creating a strategy for the development of the tourist destination based on the principles of sustainable development.

Content of the dissertation

Abstract of chapter one

In the first chapter, the concept of sustainable development of tourist destinations is elaborated. The main features of the concept are:

- the idea of the long-term development of tourism, implying the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage, so that the vitality of environment and viability of tourism are ensured;
- the goal of sustainable development of the tourist destination – sustaining or increasing the quality of life of local community, tourists and the next generation;
- consensus between different interests by taking into account the objectives and statements of all relevant stakeholders and participants in the chain of tourist product supply;
- integrative tourism policy based on an interrelationship between its environmental, economical and social aspect.

The principles of the concept and the guidelines for its implementation are formulated and explained. These include:

1. Preserving and improving the quality of environment in the tourist destination;
2. Preserving and improving the quality of the tourist product – experience, services, infrastructure;
3. Taking into account the satisfaction and interests of all relevant stakeholders;
4. Involving the local community in decision-making processes and distribution of benefits of tourism development.

Abstract of chapter two

The second chapter presents:

- the key determinant as the specific mechanism for sustainable development of the tourist destination;
- the methodology for analysis and assessment of sustainable development of the tourist destination.

The main goal of analysis is to determine the degree of sustainability of the tourist destination which includes:

- the problems (or results) concerning sustainable development of destination – in general and with regard to tourism;
- conditions – barriers and possibilities for the implementation of the concept for sustainable development of the tourist destination.

The result is an integrative assessment for the position of destination in regard to the concept of sustainable development. The dissertation analyses and assesses:

- the characteristics of tourist destination and factors for tourism development;
- the interrelationship between tourism and environment;
- the degree of sustainable development of destination (community, region) in regard to environment, economy, society and institutions.

The conservation of irreplaceable natural and social capital, competitiveness and the strategic business areas are suggested as the key determinant of sustainable development of the tourist destination. It is an expression of elements of “critical” capital which should be protected and preserved with proper instruments. They are concrete natural resources and ecosystems, social values connected with competences and factors with significance for the competitiveness and attractiveness of the destination. The key determinant includes elements of natural capital, social values and benefits and elements of the capital used by tourism. All components of this determinant are influenced by the tourism sector and are valuable for the sustainability of environment and welfare. They are interrelated and their exploitation, protection and conservation require an integrative approach.

The chapter includes detailed explanation of methodology for setting the elements of the key determinant – criteria and methods for their assessment and defining.

Abstract of chapter three

Chapter Three presents the results of the research for analysis and assessment of sustainable development of tourist destination Varna, implementing the elaborated methodology and its 3 parts.

In the first part, a description of tourism development in Varna in the period 1984-2004 is provided using 14 indicators, and an assessment of the resources, factors and conditions for tourism development.

The identity and attractiveness of Varna destination are determined by sea and beach, as the competitive advantages are based on the natural resources and climate. At the same time, cultural tourism is developed thanks to the valuable cultural heritage of Varna. It is the ground for the development of culture industry which can have a positive impact on tourism. That is important because the identity of destination should be defined more by existing cultural and social values. The geographical location of Varna is a key factor for business and convention tourism, which should be tied to

recreation, cultural and tourism events. In order, all these factors to get a competitive advantage, it is necessary to preserve their ecological or social value as well as the culture industry to be integrated with tourism.

The second part of implemented methodology concerns analysis and assessment of character and duration of tourism impact on the natural, physical, economical, social and institutional environment. For this a set of 100 indicators is used. Tourism impacts on the economy (0.82) and institutional environment (0.07) are positive, with the lowest degree being 0.01 and the highest 3. There is a negative impact on the natural resources (-1.34), ecosystems and landscape (-0.68), physical, created by man environment (-0.02) and social environment (-0.15), as the measure scale is (-0.01; -3). The conclusion is that tourism impact on the environment is moderate but close to negative for sustainable development of the Varna destination.

The third part of the chapter concerns analysis and assessment of ecological, economical, social and institutional sustainable development of Varna Municipality. The main conclusion is that the development of tourist destination Varna is “low” (“problematic”) sustainable development or ecologically unsustainable, moderately sustainable with regard to institutional and social environment and economically sustainable.

Based on analysis and assessment of sustainable development of destination, the elements of key determinant of sustainable development of Varna destination are defined and described.

As an outcome of the analysis problems, barriers and possibilities for sustainable development of Varna are described. Following that, two directions for implementation of the concept for sustainable development of Varna are presented:

- integrative approaches for proper exploitation and conservation of elements of the key determinant;
- identification of possibilities for balanced development of tourism and maritime industry in Varna in order to achieve positive synergy effect.

For the first direction, three options are suggested and described: “Hard measures”, “Soft measures” and “Compensation”. For the second direction, three areas of common interest with potential for co-operation between tourism and maritime industry and achievement of synergy effect are defined and presented, namely 1) entertainment and sea transport, 2) culture and festivals, 3) sea sports and 4) sciences and research work

RECEIVED: 23.09.2008