



THE 12TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
**EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES**

**The Effect of Tourism on the Environment.
Case of Study in the District of Pogradec, Albania**

Denada Olli¹

Abstract: Nowadays tourism is considered as a quality development of the tourist industry related both to the goods and to the services being offered and also to the organization and to the leading of the tourism itself. The increasing trend of the touristic flow and also the development of many tourist attractions have made it necessary the need of the use of the touristic tools in order to be successful. Therefore, tourism obtains a lot of meanings: it is a summary of relationships and occurrences of two different characters: the social and also the economical one; the last gets the priority. Regardless the aspect, tourism brings benefits. Nowadays it is closely connected to the environment where it operates. Even though they are closely related, tourism and the environment seem to be controversial to each other. The quality of the environment is an important part of the product that the tourism offers, but at the same time many activities which are related to this industry might bring undesirable effects on the environment. In this way the development should not be considered as something independent but as closely related to the environment. Tourism has the potential to increase the public awareness to the importance of the environment. This may lead to many activities done to protect the environment and to the consciousness needed on its benefits. In this way, tourism may contribute to the protection of the environment and also to the right use of the natural resources.

Key words: natural resources; quality of the environment; nature protection; environment; tourism

JEL classification: Z32

Based on a study the aim of this paper is to:

- Identify the impacts and the affect of the tourism on the environment by minimizing the negative impacts and by maximizing the positive ones.
- Identify the economical benefits of the tourism, the way they contribute to the protection of the environment and also the role it plays in the awareness that the society should obtain in order to keep the environment safe.
- Show that the uncontrolled tourism brings the environmental degradation.

The Methodology of the Research

The research was based on the information gathered from the primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained by the questionnaire, by interviewing the residents, the businessmen and also the tourists who visit these destinations, in order to understand the importance of the environment and tourism in their community. 100 questionnaires were used on the behalf of this study. It was an

¹PhD candidate, University "Fan Noli" of Korça, Korça, Albania, Address: Bulevardi Rilindasit 11, Korçë, Albania, Tel.: ++35569 7351969, fax no ++355 82 242230, Corresponding author: ollidenada@gmail.com.

easy questionnaire adapted to the average tourist. The secondary data was gathered from the statistics of the public institutions like the General Tourism Office in Pogradec and international institutions in the field of tourism.

The Connection Tourism-Environment

Through the changes that the industrialized and developed societies have undergone, the problem of the tourism as a main effect on the environment is already considered as one of the first place. Nowadays the development is seen from different angles by considering different elements on which it consists and the relationships that derive from them. In this way we can say that the development is not a purpose on its own. It should be considered as one being deeply connected to the environment and as a result their relationship should be modified continuously. It appears that the tourism and the environment contradict each other. Every kind of development such as economical, social or political cannot be fulfilled out of a certain environment, which means that all kinds of developments have to do with the consumption of the environment where they operate. The main environmental sources play a direct role on life itself whereas the economical development plays a role on the natural, financial, and human resources which are only being found within a certain environment.

The quality of the environment, whether the natural or the manmade one, is an important part of the tourist product, as a result there are many industrial activities that might have undesired effects on the environment. These effects are mostly connected to the management of the tourist enterprises, including hotels, restaurants, shops, and malls. Other effects related to the tourism have to do with the increase in the use of electricity, waste disposals and air pollution.

Tourism as one of the biggest industries in the world, affects not only the social and economical development of a country but also exerts a pressure on the environment where it takes place. One of the definition of tourism is “ a stay of one or more nights away from home for holidays, visitors to friends or relatives, business conferences or any other purpose except such things as boarding education” (Chris Rayan, 1991). If the rights policies are being followed, tourism not only does not damage the environment, but it serves as a tool for the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of a place. Investments done in the infrastructure, the safety of the water resources, and other factors like the quality of the standard of living, the quality of food etc, have created the needed ground for a quick development of the tourism.

Tourism exerts pressure on the environment where it operates, not only through the huge demands for the natural resources like water, electricity, food, and other first-hand materials by increasing the population and also by the pressure on the eco system, seas, lakes etc.

A stable tourism is an industry that tries to have an insignificant effect on the environment. The activities of this kind of tourism have a minimal effect on the environment and also on the culture of the host community. A stable tourism is the one that manages all the resources in such a way that all the economical, social and esthetic needs to be fulfilled by keeping the cultural integrity and the ecological processes safe. The aim of the stable tourism is to keep economical and social advantages of the tourism by reducing the negative effects on the natural, historical, and cultural environment. The ones that should profit from a successful tourism are the locals by giving them the chance to keep safe the natural resources which ensure attractions.

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the effects of tourism and related developments upon the environment of ‘destination areas’. The increasing popularity of the concept of sustainable

development has resulted in tourism being viewed as an activity which could easily be developed along those appropriate lines. It is argued, however, that such a viewpoint is often simplistic and naïve, because of a lack of understanding of the complex nature of tourism. While tourism is dependent upon the environment for much of its well-being, the prevailing lack of knowledge, responsibility, and long-term planning, has often resulted in development which is neither environmentally nor culturally sympathetic to the host area and community.

A broad definition of environment is necessary in this context, encompassing both the physical and human realms and also Nature's, as is an equally wide view of human leisure activities, which needs to include far more than tourism. It is necessary to take a critical view of some alternative approaches to mass-tourism, which have been suggested as appropriate for environmentally significant areas; for at least some of the problems resulting from tourism-related developments are more profound, and less easily solved, than has often been suggested. Solutions are inevitably a combination of compromise and positive planning and management, and successful examples are difficult to find. Improved understanding of the complex nature of tourism, and of its linkages to the environment, is crucial if a symbiotic relationship is to be attained and maintained.

It is necessary to appreciate that tourist destination areas evolve and change over time, both responding to, and being altered by, changes in tourism. They are not static environments, and need responsible and pro-active planning and management. Reliance upon local initiatives, uncoordinated planning, and self-regulation in a situation of ill-defined responsibility, will not result in a secure long-term future for either the tourist industry or the environment of the destination area. Coordination of policies, pro-active planning, acceptance of limitations on growth, education of all parties involved, and commitment to a long-term viewpoint, are prerequisites to the successful linking of tourism and sustainable development.

The Impact of the Environment on the Tourism

1. The values of the environment, both the natural and the artificial ones, are important for the tourism.
2. However, the relationship of the environment to the tourism is very complex, many activities might have negative effects on the environment.
3. The negative impacts of the tourism can gradually destroy the natural sources on which they rely.
4. On the other side, tourism possess the potential of creating necessary effects for the environment by contributing on the preserving and safety of the environment.
5. The negative impact of the tourism take place when the level of the users, visitors is higher than the ability of the environment to face all of them within the acceptable limits of change.
6. The uncontrolled traditional tourism brings forth a potential danger for many areas throughout the world.

How can tourism contribute on the protection of the environment

The industry of tourism can contribute on the protection of the environment through:

1. Financial contributes:

Tourism can contribute directly to the prevention of the environmental areas which are in danger. The income from the entrance to these areas can be shared for the safety and the management of these areas.

2. Governmental contributes:

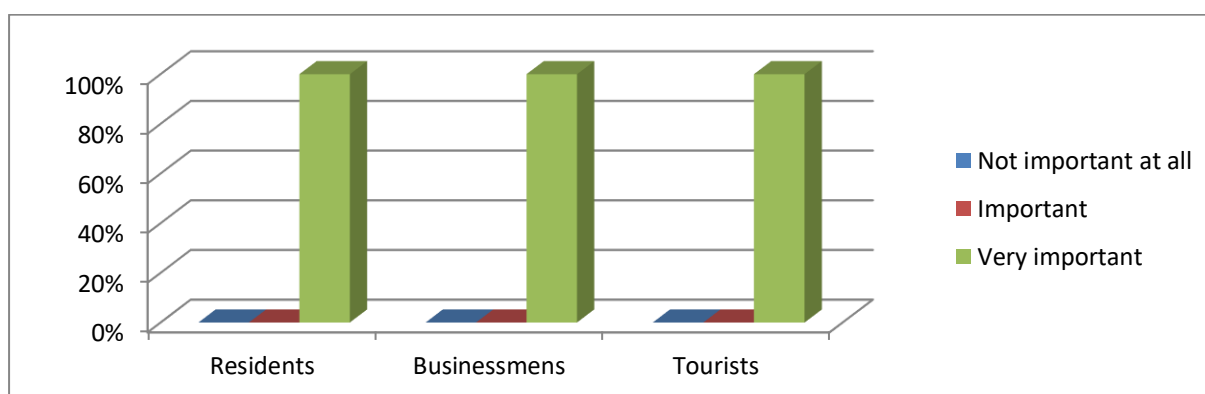
The fees, the taxes over the income, the taxes over the sales and other taxes (hunting, fishing) can raise funds needed to manage the natural resources.

3. The improvements of the environmental management and planning

A good management of the tourism objects especially of the hotels, can bring high profits for the natural districts. But all of this requires a careful planning based on a detailed analysis of the natural resources of the region. Such a planning helps on the solution of the conflicts. A planning in advance on the development of tourism would avoid the dangerous steps toward the environment.

Tourism and Environment in Pogradec

Pogradec is a lovely modern city, being located in the SouthEast of Albania, it is a wonderful destination for the tourists. As a crossway for other places of Balkan, it is close to Macedonia and Greece. On the height of 1000-1300 m, its climate is mostly Mediterranean. The winter is cold and the summer is warm. The precipitation is mostly in the form of the snow in winter and the rest as rain during the autumn and spring. In the East of Pogradec, 5 km from the town, it is found the tourist attraction called Driloni, situated on the clean and cold waters of the lake. The lake is of environmental and economical importance. It is one of the richest biological reserves of Europe. The natural environment of the town has to be seen as a set of many factors, not just topographical and geographical ones, but all the components that are part of it. The perspective of the development of this region is closely related to the state of the environment that surrounds it and the impacts created by people as a result of the development.

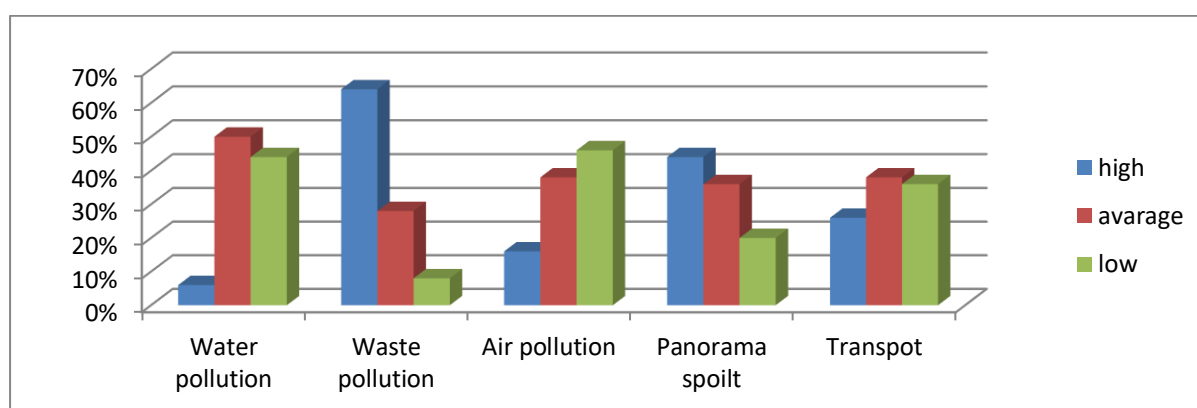


Graphic 1. How important is the protection of the environment of the town?

In this graphic, we notice that the environment is very important not only to the residents and businessmen who live and work in that region, but also for the tourists who visit Pogradec.

What is the Impact of the Environmental Factors in the Town?

Due to the fact that Pogradec is a touristic town, there has been shown a special attention to the elimination of the waste created from the construction sites and other enterprises that deal with manufacturing and production, by paying attention especially to the lake shore, parks and to the three rivers that cross the town. Thus, in this town the environmental balance has been kept properly. Many parks, playing grounds have been built to give a quality time to the residents and also to the tourists who visit this town.

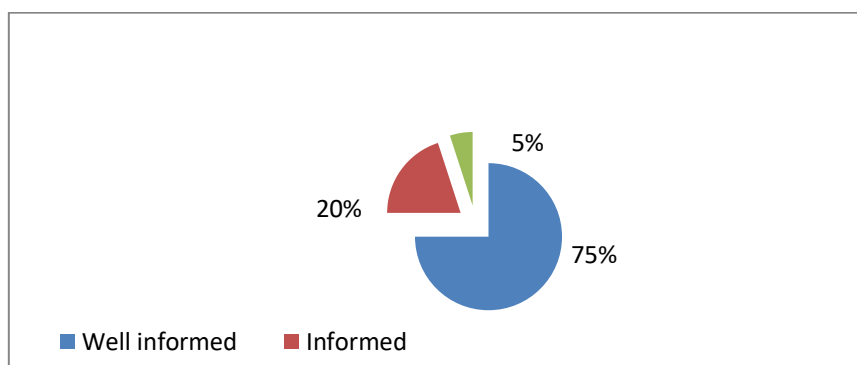


Graphic 2

In graphic nr 2, it is obvious that the residents have valued the rate of the effect of these environmental factors on the town. These factors have different effects depending on the development they have had and also on the improvements. As it is seen in the graphic the environmental factor of pollution has the greatest effect, 64 %.

The Role of the Tourism in Raising the Awareness of the Society in Protecting the Environment

Tourism has a great potential to increase the public awareness in protecting the environment and dealing with the environmental problems, especially when bringing people closer to nature and to the environment. This confrontation might raise the awareness of the public and might create conscious behaviors and also actions to be taken for the welfare of the environment. The tourism industry plays an important role in preparing the tourists to be more environmental conscious. Tourism can contribute deeply in the environment protection and also in the protection and the stability of the natural resources.



Graphic 3. What's the percentage of the well informed residents on environmental matters?

The information of the public on environmental matters is very important and also very useful, because its degradation affects directly the health and the wealth of the residents. That is the reason why most of them are well informed on the environmental matters, 70% of them. While 20% are informed and 5% not informed at all.

Economic Importance of Tourism

Tourism is now considered as one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. This industry has potential economic impacts on the destination countries. Most often tourism is considered as the single largest industry in the world and both the developed and developing countries have started to realize the economic importance of this sector and striving to maximizing the benefit from this sector as much as possible. Frechtling (1994), described that an economic benefit is best understood as a gross increase in the wealth or income, measured in monetary terms, of people located in an area over and above the levels that would prevail in the absence of the activity under study. Goeldner et al (2000), described that tourism contributes to gross domestic product (GDP), capital investment, employment, foreign exchange, and export earnings; the job creation capacity of tourism is its most significant feature. The role of tourism as a positive instrument for the alleviation of poverty and the improvement of the quality of life for all people, its potential to make a contribution to economic and social development, especially of the developing countries, and its emergence as a vital force for the promotion of international understanding, peace and prosperity (Morena, 2004, p.1). Tourism is considered as an important economic sector not only from national perspective but also from an international perspective. Tourism is no doubt exception from this. Because the internationalization of services is at the core of today's economic globalization and tourism has become one of the most important industries in the world, and its economic impacts are vital for many countries. Tourism not only helps the national development but also contribute to regional development. As a result, tourism is increasingly seen as a catalyst for regional development, and a number of studies and projects have investigated how tourism could support development in peripheral regions. Tourism helps in the process of generating foreign exchange, creation of employment and encouragement of local economics especially nature tourism which occurs in rural areas, it can lead to localized economic development in these often neglected areas. The tourism provides values to the tourists it has some social and cultural significance. Tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations and during their stay in the destination, tourists act together with local people which provide the opportunity to have an understanding to the host individuals' and host community's quality of life, value systems, labour division, family relationships, attitudes, behavioural patterns, ceremonies and creative expressions and return home with some new outlooks on life, habits and added experiences. At the same time, the local community or individuals can also get some knowledge and ideas from the tourist which may help to enrich their cultural values. Tourism industry has a great importance not only as a generator of income but also for creating employment opportunities. Tourism which is now most often considered as the more labour-incentive sector than any other industry and has emerged as the world's largest generator of jobs. Tourism is a labour-incentive industry provides the scope of creating direct and indirect employment opportunities for a large number of skilled and unskilled persons.

Recommendations

- Strategies should be promoted to support the stable tourism and to ensure an increase on the quality of tourism so that the environment will be protected.
- Not only the negative effects on the environment should be reduced, but also the economical benefits of tourism should contribute on the protection and the planned usage of the natural resources.
- Tourism can play an important role in creating the awareness not only of the tourists but also of the residents in environmental protection.
- Tourism has a potential to increase the public appreciation of the environment and also to bring awareness as far as the environmental problems are concerned, as it brings people in contact with the nature and the environment.
- Tourism can contribute to the protection of the environment and the restore of the biological diversity and also to the proper use of the natural sources. Because of the attraction, the natural places and the unspoiled ones have been identified as worth to keep alive the attraction by creating natural parks which will take care of the wildlife.
- Taking into consideration the measures that should be taken for the protection of the environment by the businesses can decrease the negative impacts on the environment.

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