

**THE TRILATERAL RELATIONSHIP ECOTOURISM – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
– SLOW TRAVEL AMONG NATURE IN THE LINE WITH AUTHENTIC TOURISM
LOVERS**

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Abstract

There is now an increasing trend of mundane and fashionable world to live together in with the environment, to spend more time in nature, to be closer to all that is unpolluted, peaceful and less known. Tourists requiring nature holidays in rural areas are becoming more and more. Ecotourism in the countryside or in the full nature is increasingly desired by people who live in urban areas with a high financial situation, but stressed out, eager to return to the nature, to the life in rural communities. Ecotourism, sustainable tourism and slow travel- all this forms of tourism have common points in terms of quality of time spent by tourists on holiday and allow them to appreciate a holiday spent far more profound, enabling them to return to long forgotten places and traditions, especially for tourists who come from highly developed countries or in those areas where they only partially preserved traditions and customs, living conditions.

Key words: *Ecotourism, Nature – based tourism, Responsible tourism, Slow travel.*

JEL Classification: *L83, M14, Q01*

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to show the connection between the three forms of tourism: ecotourism, sustainable tourism and slow travel. We made an easy and elegant relationship between the three forms of tourism, with bibliographical material, and then synthesizing the data obtained, and finally we formulated some opinions on this subject. In Romania, this new form of tourism development is barely beginning. Ecotourism in the light of its principles refers to sustainable and responsible tourism, and by what means and definitions of ecotourism, it requires slow travel and responsible places in nature focusing on nature protection and conservation of visited places. It is estimated that nature-based tourism will become the most dynamic market in the coming years, taking into account the new consumption values pursued by tourism: authenticity, nature conservation, individuality, respect the receiving environment, peace and, in general, what characterizes the refusal behavior of "hard" specific mass tourism (Pascariu, 2006, p.154). The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) estimate that 20% - 30% of travelers are aware of needs and values of sustainable tourism; 5% - 10% of travelers demand "green" holidays (<http://www.ecotourism.org>). The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) name de *ecotourism* as following: "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people" (1990). Ecotourism as a dynamic

process represents an element that inspires the transformation, is a beautiful vision above the tourism world and one that attracts many tourists.

Nature-based tourism represents any form of tourism that relies primarily on the natural environment for its attractions or settings.

Responsible tourism is that type of tourism that maximizes the benefits to local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures, habitats, and species.

While the details vary, most definitions of ecotourism boil down to a special form of tourism that meets three criteria (<http://www.planeta.com>):

- It provides for environmental conservation;
- It includes meaningful community participation;
- It is profitable and can be self-sustaining.

Forms of tourism and their definition must contain the term "sustainability". Ecotourism, rural tourism, cultural tourism are some forms of sustainable tourism.

2. ECOTOURISM

In its early *ecotourism* has been used only for simply tourism in protected natural areas, but gradually expanded its area of action and all other existing forms of tourism. With its characteristics propagated the ecotourism differs from other forms of

tourism by the closeness to nature, a rational exploitation of tourism resources.

In response to increased interest in knowledge of nature, but also to alarm signals coming from the farthest corners of the world gradually took shape one new travel called ecotourism (Nistoreanu, 2003, p.72). Ecotourism is a form of tourism as the main motivation for tourists is the *observation and appreciation of nature and local traditions related to nature* and must meet the following conditions: to contribute to preserving and protecting nature, to use local human resources, to have an educational, to cultivate respect for nature - awareness of tourists and local communities to have minimum negative impact on the natural environment and socio-cultural (Nistoreanu et al, 2010, p.19). Those are presented an increasing trend joins the civilized world to live together in good environmental conditions, to spend more time in nature, to be closer to everything is clean and quiet living (Nistoreanu, 2005).

Who are ecotourists and what they want? (România pitorească, 2007, p.7):

- They have studies and important functions in society;
- Are aged between 30-59 years;
- Have high incomes.

Ecotourists want: quality service and a decent level of comfort; professional local guides; small groups (maximum 15 people); educational programs; quality and tasty food, based on traditional local products that are region specific; quiet areas, nongglomerated, quality accommodation, but not luxurious, clean; conditions typical of rural housing; conservation of nature (a part of their money to go directly or indirectly to the conservation of nature).

Ecotourism as a sustainable form of tourism should consider following the development of it (Ionescu, 2000, p.138):

- Respectful and caring way of life of human communities;
- Increasing the life of human settlements;
- Bioecosystems' conservation of the Earth, and their biodiversivities;
- Maintaining the capacity to support Earth;
- Changing individual attitudes in favour for sustainable development;
- Ability of rural communities to keep their own environment;
- Development and realization of the national ambient;
- Integrating conservation;
- Global alliances.

Sustainable development of ecotourism can be achieved through effective management, in order to satisfy tourist' needs or requirements, today's increasingly larger and more demanding.

3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainable tourism represents tourism that meets the needs of present tourist and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future (<http://www.ecotourism.org>). On the other hand, sustainable tourism is a necessity to apply the principles of sustainable tourism development. The concept of sustainable tourism has become a key ingredient in the nation's tourism strategy (Joanne Connel et al, 2009, p.867).

Sustainable tourism is the ability of a tourist destination to remain competitive, while maintaining environmental quality, despite all problems, to attract visitors for the first time, then following that loyalty to him, to remain unique in terms of cultural and be in a permanent equilibrium with the environment. It is based on the consideration that development must meet the present needs without jeopardizing those of future generations (Nistoreanu, 2005, p.42). Sustainable development and its derivative sustainable tourism, although intuitively appealing, widely adopted by international organizations and many governments, and enshrined in legislation, are concepts that have been much criticized because of their lack of precision and because of the difficulties that have been experienced with their implementation (Tao and Wall, 2009, p.90).

Sustainable tourism develops the idea of meeting the needs of current tourists and tourism industry while protecting the environment and opportunities for the future needs to achieve the entire economic, social, aesthetic, etc., actors in tourism, while maintaining cultural integrity, environmental, biological diversity and all systems that support life (Stănculescu, 2000, p.4). Sustainable development plans cover at least three (Ionescu, 2000, p.137):

- *Economically*, by increasing service and resource recovery;
- *Environmentally*, by recycling, avoiding environmental degradation, reduction of land removed from agricultural use;
- *Social*, by increasing employment, practicing traditional population to attract tourism, as measures of physical and political regeneration (Figure 1).

While "nature-based tourism" is simply describes travel to natural places, ecotourism is a type of nature-based tourism that benefits local communities and destinations environmentally, culturally and economically. Ecotourism, when properly executed based on these principles, exemplifies the benefits of socially and environmentally sound tourism development. Like ecotourism, such terms as sustainable tourism and responsible tourism are rooted in the concept of sustainable development.

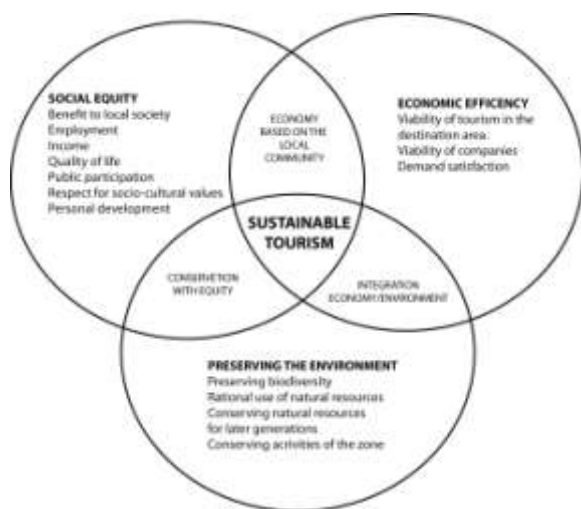


Figure 1 - Sustainable Tourism Model

Source: Sanagustín Fons M.V. Moseñe Fierro J.A., Gómez y Patiño M. – "Rural tourism: A sustainable alternative", 2011, p. 552

New terms are springing up such as the slow travel movement, responsible travel and conscientious tourism. The soft tourism, in the countryside or in the middle of nature is more and more desired by the rich, but stressed people, eager to return to the nature, to the life of the rural communities (Nistoreanu, 2005, p.42). It is a new form of tourism in which tourists are "allowed" to enjoy the scenery, cuisine, traditions, specific routes that not everyone can do, but only those who have patience and hope that in the few days they will be available to be "integrated" into the environment as in their own home. It is the kind of tourism that provides the opportunity to enjoy all that gives purpose and population of the area.

4. SLOW TRAVEL

Slow travel is to reduce the "quantity" of experiences on a vacation, and instead focus on the "quality" of experiences. It is about slowing the pace of a holiday down so you have the opportunity to interact with the people and places you experience, instead of just trying see and do as much as possible in the amount of time available. Using slow travel you experience a deeper type of travel by staying in one place longer and seeing the things that are close to you. It is an easier, simpler and slower way of traveling.

Slow is not a synonym of lazy, and that is why we offer many different options for active holidays, the best way to appreciate local food and culture and nature; various possibilities for your holidays in the mountains or seaside, away from the stress and the noise of the city, to regenerate the body and the spirit, whether you are a sporty person or simply somebody who knows how to enjoy a beautiful landscape.

There are two components to slow travel (www.slowtrav.com):

- *Spend one week in one place:* Spend at least one week in one place on your holiday. To do this, base your trip around one or more weekly stays in vacation rentals instead of hotels.
- *See what is near you:* See what is close to you instead of dashing about on long day trips to see the "must-sees".

Tourists average rate of people living in the area where they spend their vacation, which is a physical and spiritual experience at the same time. Specialists in tourism began to encourage this kind of activities aimed at respect for the environment, conservation and local specificity and leisure (www.agenda.ro).

Slow travel find the concept of the fundamental principles:

- Tourism is not "consumed" in a hurry; the journey is not a means but an end in itself, just as the final destination;
- Tourism is not fast food; a travel is not merely the means but the purpose in itself, just like the final destination is;
- Every place visited should be part of a picturesque landscape and without the existence of a large man-made element;
- Each traveler has the right to explore and "taste" of natural places;
- Slow travel events are occasions of meetings of lovers of nature;
- Lifestyle proposed by the slow lifting travel and helps to maintain physical and mental comfort;
- Slow travel nature your soul.

Consequently, the journey becomes a moment to relax, rather than it being a stressful interlude between home and destination. Slow travel is downbeat, eco-friendly and above all fun.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In Romania has gone from the promotion of ecotourism products isolated or made by local tour operators specializing in the development of ecotourism destinations in which to offer an integrated ecotourism product, born of partnerships made by those involved (government local community, private investors) and promoted by the efforts of the development associations (eco) tourism carried out locally and by central government effort.

Responsible ecotourism includes programs that minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. By slowing down the tourist travel the tourist have the chance to explore beyond the normal scenes, and scratch beneath the tourist façade that plasters the world.

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