

Sustainable Tourism Development an Opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina?

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Abstract: Bosnia and Herzegovina is endowed with many resources such as geographical position, climate, nature and above all its people. Its diversity is a magnet for millions of potential travelers and visitors. Neither its government nor its people realize their huge potential and possible benefits that tourism can bring about helping them not only to prosper economically but also reconcile their differences.

Tourism is playing more and more important role in national and local economies. There is no evidence that this trend will decline. Bosnian climate, geographic position, cultural and historic monuments and before all the composition of its people are key attraction for visitors. Visitors will contribute significantly to the local and national economy and the economic multiplier effect of this spend, in turn, supports employment and secondary tourist facilities.

Similarly, in the determination of future proposals that could impact on the setting, character and appearance of its potentials, special care is needed by planners and promoters to assess its potential, spread the awareness and unleash it to the Globe so that the benefits can be harvested. Bosnia can learn from its neighbors who are well known tourism leaders. There is a huge room for regional cooperation and collaboration. Nonetheless, Bosnia and Herzegovina has its competitive edge in its diversity that none of the neighbors can possibly acquire in the foreseeable future.

Key to the sustainable approach of tourism and the cultural heritage is the preparation of appropriate master plan that takes into account the identified overall effects in order to guide the course of development in a manner that protects those very resources that attract visitors and that does not cause in the short, medium and long term any reduction in their character or appearance.

If managed properly tourism can bring about positive change that its people await for long time.

Keywords: Tourism; Central and Eastern Europe; management, development, sustainability, tourism, tourist, environmental impact; character and appearance; master plan; strategies; visitor, tourist; management plans

1. Introduction

In the limited number of analyses undertaken on tourism development and post-socialist processes of restructuring in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), most attention has been paid to the more advanced societies of Central Europe. By contrast, Europe's less developed and relatively unstable south-eastern corner, where tourism development issues may take on a different complexion, has been relatively neglected. Within this context, tourism's role in post-socialist restructuring in Central and Eastern Europe is examined, reflecting on issues of mass tourism and niche segregation. Rural tourism is examined as a vehicle for sustainable development in South-eastern Europe, and some of the paradoxes facing issues of sustainability in tourism development are examined in relation to recent development processes. With a dynamic mix of mass and niche markets to target, the potential of rural tourism development in South-eastern Europe continues to be constrained by regional instability.

2. Tourism – Its Economic Opportunities

2.1. Background

Tourism is only part of the whole idea of sustainable development. Tourism, as it relates to sustainable development, is tourism which is developed so that the nature, scale, location, and manner of development is appropriate and sustainable over time, and where the environment's ability to support other activities and processes is not impaired, since tourism cannot be isolated from other resource use activities.

Sustainable tourism involves a challenge to develop quality tourism products without adversely affecting the natural and cultural environment that maintains and nurtures them. At the heart of sustainable tourism is a set of implicit values related to striving to integrate economic, social and cultural goals (Wight, 1993).

According to World Tourism Organization (WTO) tourism is said to be the largest and fastest growing industry in the world. Increased leisure time, improved access and infrastructure, increasing disposable incomes and significant reductions in the cost of air travel, despite the current oil price increases, all contribute to huge increases in international travel. On the other hand, changes such as the erosion of international borders and the accessibility of knowledge through increasing use of the internet all assist in the worldwide movement towards a “global village”. Interestingly, the World Tourism Organization predicts that Bosnia and Herzegovina is likely to see one of the greatest increases, worldwide, in tourism up to 2020.

The well managed and regulated development of tourism can be a catalyst of positive change. An understanding of different lives, places and cultures erodes the falsely held barriers of misunderstanding about foreign places. The economic multiplier effect means that very significant economic benefits can flow into local and national economies and these benefits can spread way beyond the principle tourist attractions. This is why tourism is characterized as invisible export. However, unplanned and poorly regulated tourism developments can devalue or even destroy the very potential that otherwise compels people to visit new and special places.

2.2. The International & National Context

An insight into the current international and national trends in tourism is useful for placing the development of BiH tourism in context. In 2007, in terms of visitor numbers, Trafalgar Square in London was Europe’s top tourist attraction with some 15 million visitors, followed by Notre Dame Cathedral in France with 12 million visitors. Significantly, in worldwide terms, out of the top 50 tourist attractions on the planet, 20 are based on a nation’s cultural heritage and only 9 on a commercial theme park such as Euro Disney.

The World Tourist Organization estimated that in 2007 there were 898 billion tourist arrivals. This is expected to increase to 1.6 billion by 2020. Worldwide, tourism brings with it and spends of US\$ 2 billion per day in receipts. Tourism accounts for 35 % of the world’s export of services. Significantly it is now estimated that there are 1.4 billion internet users in the world. So there can be little doubt of the worldwide profile of tourism and, most importantly, the pivotal role played by the built and cultural heritage in attracting visitors.

2.3. Estimating The Economic Impacts of Tourism

If refer to the definition of tourism we will then see that it is a network of services offered to tourists, and the infrastructure needed to support it, the sector involves a wide range of players including private sector tourism businesses, governmental and intergovernmental organizations, development and conservation NGO networks, consumers, development intermediaries and host communities.¹ This simply implies that no single organization runs tourism. This activity takes more than one party, institution or organization. It involves many different sectors.

Economists will often speak of the numbers of jobs that are related to tourism, the amount of “spend” in a local and national economy and, most importantly, the “multiplier effect” of tourist derived income. So as a consequence, tourism can often be held in high regard because it can be seen as a one-way income stream, causing national and local governments to be favorably disposed to promote and regulate tourist facilities at all costs.

Estimating the economic costs and benefits of tourism is a complex mathematical exercise and demands answers to many questions. A full economic impact of the promotion of Bosnia and Herzegovina will need to be carried out by trained experts but a brief overview of the economic benefit process is helpful in understanding broader benefits that can ensue.

¹ www.world-tour.org

Any systematic study of the economic impact of the tourism induced by the development of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina needs firstly to set out the action(s) that are going to bring about tourism growth. Actions will include the development of visitor attractions, marketing, investment levels and the management of the GTA (Government Tourism Association).

3. The Environmental Impacts of Tourism

Responsible tourism is the key to ensuring that the benefits that are so apparent from tourism growth are planned, managed, mitigated and developed in tune with the capacity of the environment to absorb the increased pressures that will inevitably arise. This section of my paper examines the key environmental impacts of tourism and the adverse consequences that could arise if the proper development and management of major tourism facilities is not correctly seen as a key overarching objective

3.1. The Nature of the Problem

The quality of the built and natural environment is essential in order to provide for quality tourism. The direct impacts caused by the erosion and subsequent damage of the historic fabric, the marring of a historic landscape setting; the unwelcome visual impacts of litter, car parking and access; the need for fresh water, toilet facilities and waste water treatment; the building of poorly designed and planned commercial premises and the proliferation of outdoor advertising as local businesses wish to “cash in” on a new phenomena and the building of unrelated tourist facilities targeted at a new captive market can all, singularly and collectively, gradually destroy the very environmental and heritage resources on which they depend.

There is little doubt that unplanned or poorly managed tourism can give rise to pollution, a fact particularly critical in an otherwise unspoilt rural environment. Air quality deterioration from vehicles, noise, littering, sewage, oil and chemical releases can all impact on the natural environment and the enjoyment of their own environment by a host community. More tangible will be new buildings where design qualities play a subordinate role to the wish for local business to construct cheaply and quickly. And we must not lose sight of the effects tourism has on wildlife and flora especially where protected or vulnerable species may experience disturbance or loss of habitat because of human traffic, emissions, sewage run-off or the insatiable need for more concrete and tarmac to cater for more visitors.

An inevitable consequence of any successful tourism development is the attendant demands placed on local infrastructure. Visitors to a regionally, nationally or internationally recognized destination will need accommodation, they will need feeding and they will need transportation facilities to gain access. Hence, unplanned, land use conflicts would arise as development pressures for hotels, car parking and catering establishments, if not properly regulated, could undermine many of the unique assets offered by a sensitive place, especially once that saturation point is reached.

Equally it must be recognized that tourism can be a very seasonal phenomena and if a town or an area becomes too dependent on tourism, its employment structure can be weakened. Mindful that many jobs in the tourism sector tend to be lower paid, lower skilled, part time and seasonal anyway, there can often be an over reliance on transient migratory labor with no direct benefit to a local economy. This is a key consideration when planning for a tourism development. There is a balance to be struck between the environmental impact and the local economic benefits.

3.2. The Environmental Impact Assessment of A Tourism Development

Before being able to develop a master plan for the sustainable establishment of a major tourism destination, it is important to understand the environmental impacts that such a project would have. Indeed within the European Union, the principles of environmental impact assessment (EIA) have been incorporated into national legislation since the implementation of the first European Directive 85/337/EEC. Directive 97/11/EC amended the earlier provisions by extending the extent of developments that were caught by the requirement for EIA and made changes to EIA procedures. Further changes took place by virtue of Article 3 of Directive 2003/35/EC which aligns EIA more closely with public participation provided by the Aarhus Convention.

In accordance with the European Union Directives on EIA, “tourism” falls within a schedule II category of development. That is to say, EIA is required if a tourism development exceeds a specified threshold. If so, it is concluded that the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. Against this statutory background it is perhaps helpful to have regard to current thinking within the European Union on EIA in order to develop a strategy for the sustainable tourism development.

Every development will trigger change which has an impact on the environment but it is the case with every human activity. Bosnia and Herzegovina is endowed with beautiful nature and the environmental aspect should be carefully studied. Tourism should be used to justify conservation by paying its contribution to the environment, which can be in form of:

- Creating an audience for historical and archeological attractions which can provide funds for its conservation. (This is why the lengthy explanation of the Roman and Ottoman period in the area).
- Protection of the forested areas which are now vast but endangered with the illegal logging.
- Transportation system should be redeveloped and reconsidered.
- Introduction of environmentally adjusted domestic products. (leather, rock, marble, wood and other materials are abundant in the area and not properly used)
- Proper zoning, planning and land use should be designed to accommodate the needs of tourists but also to preserve the nature and its landscape.
- Proper facility planning should follow the following guidelines:
- Respect the spirit of the places! The development should blend into the environment and local culture.
- Restore old buildings but respect their original use. Bosnia used to have hundreds of small hans (Inns) and coffee shops that should be restored now and preserved.

4. A Sustainability and Socio Cultural Effects

4.1. Sustainability

Based on the general definition for sustainable development, sustainable tourism has been perceived as simultaneously encompassing the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects in the long-term planning of the sector development. In order to achieve such balanced development integrating and respecting basic principles such as the precautionary principle, intra- and inter-generation equity, and the responsibility for the preservation of the environment and natural resources for future generations is necessary.¹

Sustainable Tourism Products

Dialogue between stakeholders in both private and public sector should lead to the development of sustainable tourism products across various sectors of the travel and tourism industry. This is why the proposal for the small hotels, inns, Hans and B&B joints instead of big hotels to start with. Similarly, domestic production should be encouraged in order to avoid transportation but also to contribute to the sustainability. This initiative should lead to introduction other types of tourism such as agro-tourism, village tourism, and farm tourism.

At this juncture it is worth drawing together the numerous strands identified earlier in this paper. Indeed I have shown that tourism is a growing phenomenon and in particular Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected by the World Tourist Organization to be one of the world's fastest growing tourist destinations up to 2020. Additionally there can be no doubt that tourism brings with it socio-economic benefits and these benefits have direct and indirect effects, illustrated by the economic multiplier effect.

4.2. The Underlying Principles of A Sustainable Approach to Tourism

4.2.1. Natural Heritage Considerations

To address the natural heritage, development must be compatible with the landscape setting of the site; it must maintain its essential ecological processes and recognize the biological diversity and unique biological resources of the park. Visitor management is essential to deflect pressures from key sensitive locations while ensuring "honey pots" attract visitors to important but less fragile places. The design, planning, development and operation of facilities should incorporate the principles of sustainability including micro-renewable energy, heat insulation and the use of recycled materials wherever possible.

Car parking areas should be designed to incorporate sustainable urban drainage facilities that will ensure water retention and dispersal to avoid run off in periods of heavy rain. Special consideration requires to be given to waste management from toilet facilities and litter disposal. Particular care is required in the consideration of development proposals not only within the designated area of the park but out with the park boundaries but nevertheless within its setting.

Views that have been unchanged for centuries, and which contribute to the setting and character of the touristic landscape, would be destroyed by the unsympathetic sitting of buildings, roads, power lines, and telecommunications apparatus even if they have nothing to do with the tourism's development. A special role

¹ European Tourism Forum 2002: "Agenda 21 – Sustainability in the European Tourism Sector", discussion document, Brussels 10 December 2002.

needs to be played by the local planning authority to channel development to sensitive locations that do not affect the tourism development.

4.2.2. Built Heritage Considerations

State regulatory systems impose restrictions on development that could affect the setting, character and appearance of the cultural heritage. In Scotland, for example, the central government imposes very strict controls on work that affects the 5 600 or so scheduled ancient monuments out of the 70 000 or so recorded archaeological sites, under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Scheduled monument consent is needed for any works that have the effect of demolishing, destroying, damaging, removing, repairing, altering, adding to, flooding or covering up a monument. All newly discovered ancient objects in Scotland belong to the Crown.

Legal protection does not always secure the future proper preservation of an ancient monument and it is thus essential to develop a management plan and to carry out regular maintenance to prevent progressive deterioration and decay. In Bosnia the Commission to Preserve National Monuments, as it is called should not be seen as an impediment to any development. Its role should be revised and its responsibility should assume greater authority in order to expedite development of sites that will attract tourists.

4.2.3. Socio-Cultural Effects

In developing Bosnia into successful tourism product and destination socio-cultural effects on the destination and on the way of life of its inhabitants should be considered.

As tourism competes for space, resentment to tourists might be evident. Secondly, the impact visitors make on the people's values and local way of life. The number of tourists from Turkey is increasing steadily every year and there ought to be some development. People usually resist development and change. The influence of the tourists on the arts, music, dance, painting, sculpture, architecture, handicrafts and other art should be assessed. The medieval city is considerably ruined and only during the festive days thousands of people visit it without any control. Some new elements are also introduced. The vendors selling goods on the streets often overshadow cultural performance with their own music boxes which play music that is not at all suitable for the occasion.

Otherwise, the mentioned impacts should have positive effects:

- The number of tourists boosts local economy, create wealth, generate income and propel new facilities and the improvements and preservation of the existing ones.
- As far as the way of life is concerned, tourism provides for two way flows of information and cultural exchange since it provides contacts and encounters that result in exchange of goods, services and ideas.
- Finally, tourism is stimulates local arts, handicrafts and souvenirs.

5. Main Issues

One of the main issues is to convince the Bosnian authorities of the country that Bosnia has great tourism potential and as such it should be explored and exploited.

Why tourism?

There are many reasons why to develop Bosnia and Herzegovina into a leading tourist attraction in the region. Tourism is now one of the world's largest industries and one of its fastest growing economic sectors. While tourism can build understanding, poorly managed tourism can ruin destinations. Yet if handled well, tourism provides an incentive to build and to preserve the best the destination has to offer: religious sites and buildings, unbeatable nature, historic districts, museums, great scenery and cultural identity reflected in its places and people.

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¹ www.world-tour.org

5.1. Lack of Superstructure

The whole country struggles with only two five star hotels and most of it 4 and 3 stars usually run full house in the season. Official occupancy rate is ridiculous due to the gray economy. Visitors are longing for maps printed material and proper tourist information centers.

5.2. Lack of Infrastructure

Bosnia and Herzegovina was once important junction since it has geostrategic location. Its international airport in Sarajevo carried only 900000 passengers in 2007. Many of the inbound flights are expensive. Its national carrier Air-Bosna is struggling with competition but also with their own management. Hopefully the situation will improve with their new partner Turkish Airlines.

The country is not connected with highways and even the motorways are having the reputation of the worst in the Central Europe. The development in this direction is a must for tourism to flourish. Railways and waterways are even worse and we all know that tourism is all about moving people from a destination to a destination.

5.3. Lack of Design and Signage

There is virtually no signage in any language that would lead a potential tourist or traveler to come and visit these small but beautiful lost treasures in the heart of Europe. Tourists in Bosnia and Herzegovina have problems getting their directions. New proper design and signage should be carefully designed and applied.

5.4. Lack of Awareness of The Tourist Destination

As already stated many take it as a sacred or holy place to visit but few think of it as tourist destination. In this sense, both the visitors but also the host people should be trained and education for their respective role and the interaction not only the interaction with one another but the interaction with the environment too. This should be incorporated in the overall awareness program.

6. Practical Steps Forward

For any tourism to develop all three levels of stakeholders¹ should be working together. The three levels are:

1. GOVERNMENT which should take place of policy and planning and give a general framework for cooperation. Governments at all levels, and there are many in Bosnia, should give a kick start for the religious tourism to take off. That is to say that they should consider it as national treasury on which the whole country should capitalize.
2. Second level includes the organizations concerned with tourism development and operations that are in the front line i.e. hotels, other accommodation facilities, catering services, cultural, historic and scenic attractions, and transportations services.
3. The third level includes the whole range of ANCILLARY SUPPORT SERVICES that are both public and private such as: police, post office, customs and immigration, the media, the retail trade, banks, churches, universities and colleges, trade unions...

Various committees, councils, working groups, task forces representing public and private sector should play coordinating and consultative role.

Government

Government tourism administration (GTA²) chiefly depends on the administrative composition of the country. Unfortunately, Bosnia and Herzegovina has many levels of administration and many governments from local to cantonal to the entity and finally the on the level of the whole country herein referred as BiH level. Every municipality has its own tourist association. Similarly, every canton has tourist association. Both entities have their own tourist association and unfortunately it stops there. On the BiH there is no institution that handles tourism and plays coordinating role for the whole country. Ministry of Foreign Trade is responsible for tourism but plays extremely passive role due to several reasons. The major reason is that the tourism has been

¹ Doswell, R., 1997, *Tourism, How effective management makes the difference*, Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, p. 7

² Ibid. p. 86.

very much politicized and it is used in the political campaign aggressively. However, the said ministry does not have a person responsible for the sector let alone the profile of that person nor is there a law on tourism on the BiH level. Secondly, there was no strategy for the development of the country and thus there is no strategy for tourism. Thirdly, as a result of the two, tourism is given a passive support without any funds.

BiH Level Government

Having in mind this, the situation down the ladder is rather chaotic. Since there is no strategy on the highest level, no laws pertaining to tourism and no coordinating body all the governmental instances are left to themselves to create their own strategies. This resulted in many strategies and many overlapping projects where energy and funds are lost. Only lately governments at various levels started cooperating and this is a good sign but far from satisfactory outcomes. Both entities now have ministries for tourism but they respectively lack political independence, appropriate skills, and clarity of objectives, intergovernmental cooperation and coordination. In addition, their jobs are poorly defined and this leads to confusion and duplication.

It is clear that it is a high time for Bosnia and Herzegovina to set up an administrative body that will be in charge of tourism on the BiH level. The long debated law on tourism should provide for this. This body can be either in form of full ministry, part of the ministry or even semi government body. Its function should be:

- Planning and control
 - o Product research and planning
 - o human resource planning and training
 - o licensing and supervision
- Marketing
 - o Representing the whole country as tourist destination
 - o Market research
 - o Production of tourism literature
 - o Advertising
- Financial
 - o Advising business and potential investors
 - o Directing and approving governmental aid programs for tourist projects
- Coordinating
 - o Linking with trade and professional bodies, government and regional or local tourist organizations
 - o Undertaking coordinated marketing activities with private tourist enterprises

The laws should provide for the overarching principles that will clearly define the duties and responsibilities of all the stakeholders in tourism. Only then the government authority will be able to provide for the common strategy and development plan where the religious tourism will be included and promoted.

Local Government

Local government should play important role in developing tourism. They should:

- Assess the number and the distribution of tourists in the area
- Estimate future changes and its implications
- Identify growth opportunities
- Assess the impact of tourism on employment and income in the area,
- Identify the need for conservation

They should also take care of the following:

- Provision of leisure facilities for tourists (so far there is none)
- Planning
- Parking for coaches and cars
- Production of statistics
- Marketing of the whole area
- Preservation of historic buildings
- Public health

In fact, the local government should be a catalyst from the region campaigning and fighting for before the BIH government to draw attention of its potentials. They should do the same campaign before the cantonal government and its tourist association.

7. Summary and Conclusions

Enhanced understanding of a country through international tourism can have significant benefits at the macro-economic level. By complimenting economic development and “showcasing” a country, tourism is a tool that helps overcome ill-conceived international barriers to economic development. A good example may be Northern Ireland where conflicts in 70s and 80s deterred many visitors. The recent peace settlement in Northern Ireland has unleashed countless tourist visits north and south of the border. In turn barriers to trade caused by misunderstanding and an absence of true knowledge are erased, fuelling a boom based upon new found tourism opportunities. Twenty years ago who would ever have seen Belfast as a tourist destination?

Tourism is one of the world’s largest industries and the largest service sector. It is bigger than cars, agriculture or electronics and 52 % of tourism expenditure takes place in Europe, compared with 21 % in the Americas. Tourism is growing fastest in emerging markets such as Bosnia-Herzegovina which is expected by the UN’s World Tourist Organization to be one of the fastest growing tourist sectors in the world by 2020.

The vast majority of tourism jobs are found in small and medium sized firms; new income is generated; new jobs are formed; entrepreneurship is fostered and social conditions are enhanced. Local companies can be supported; improvements flow to local utilities and services; improved infrastructure is provided; local living standards are raised and urban and rural regeneration follows.

The best indicator that Bosnia and Herzegovina can develop its tourism and sustain it is the fact that most of the visitors love the country and most of them would come back. If we listen to them carefully, respond to their needs and wishes considering our resources and capacities we can start harvesting the benefits. The reinvestment of those benefits can bring about the positive change but also secure sustainability o tourism on long run.

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