

Environmental Conservation, Green Tourism, and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and one of its fastest growing economic sectors. In Lebanon, tourism is seen as a main instrument for local development because it stimulates new economic activities. However, it may also have negative impact on the environmental conservation and sustainable development. The article provides a theoretical framework for sustainable tourism when addressing the relationship between environmental conservation, green tourism, and sustainable development as a multidimensional phenomenon. Also, it refers to the management structures that are needed to achieve this end. The article concludes that green tourism is a responsible and low-impact environmentally-led form of sustainable tourism development. It is, however, employed as a vehicle for conserving and sustaining natural and cultural environments as well as their resources.

Key words: Environmental conservation, green tourism, ecotourism, sustainable development.

Introduction

Tourism is a global phenomenon. Estimation from the World Tourism Organization (2005) anticipate that by the year 2020, international arrivals are expected to reach over 1.56 billion.

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and one of its fastest growing economic sectors. In recent years, the matter of tourism, along with its negative impacts on both environmental conservation and sustainable development, has attracted a noticeable interest of scholars, as well as local and international organizations (Faraji & Aghajani, 2010).

According to Butler (1991), 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. By the same token, Creaco and Querini (2003) indicated that sustainable tourism has three interconnected aspects: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic. Sustainability implies permanence. Therefore, sustainable tourism includes optimum use of resources, including biological diversity; minimization of

ecological, cultural and social impacts; and maximization of benefits for conservation and local communities.

Environment, tourism and sustainable development have been a popular topic of debate in the tourism and environment. Thus, several articles and studies have been published on the topic. The study approached the literature as a multi-dimensional phenomenon which addressed both theoretical and applied research. In a recent study, Aall (2014) concluded by claiming that prevailing European Union as well as Norwegian national policies aimed to make tourism more sustainable will most likely result in “sustaining tourism” more than actually making tourism more sustainable. However, Muzvidziwa (2013) indicated that the issue of sustainable eco-tourism developments in the form of conservancies was debated in the light of the socio-economic challenges Zimbabwe is going through. Also, Muzvidziwa strongly argued that to avoid another case of entrenched failed development, conservancies need to be seen in a holistic manner that takes into account the role of all stakeholders or actors including the role of local communities.

Furthermore, Brandl et al. (2011) concluded that the interrelationships between tourism and nature conservation are extremely complex and dynamic. This is with conflict being most acute where tourism development occurs rapidly and without strategic planning. The successful integration of tourism and nature conservation objectives is of increasing importance because it enhances people’s choices and helps in maintaining or enhancing the quality of the environment. While the study of Sharply (2010) argued that tourism development remains embedded in early modernization theory, the principles of sustainable tourism overlook the characteristics of the production and consumption of tourism. Therefore, there were significant differences between the concepts of sustainable tourism and sustainable development. This, however, suggests that the principles and objectives of sustainable development cannot be transposed into the specific context of tourism.

Additionally, Faraji and Aghajani (2010) argued that tourism itself has become an increasingly complex phenomenon, with political, economic, social, cultural, educational, bio-physical, ecological, and aesthetic dimensions. However, natural environments, cultural heritages, and their diversities are major tourism attractions. Also, the achievement of proper and desirable correlation between tourism and environment or between the potentially conflicting expectations and aspirations of visitors and host or local communities has created many challenges and opportunities. The study of Robinson and Picard (2006) indicated that

tourism, by definition, involves a journey, a passage through time, space and through a diversity of cultures, people and pasts. As a result, tourism has a critical role to play in generating knowledge, dialogue, and understanding across and between cultures. This is based on the fact that it also has a critical role in the development process.

In another study, Muhanna (2006) concluded that the concept of community-based tourism provides substantial benefits of resources utilization at the community level. It also encourages a more sustainable use of these resources. However, the management of resources and the community that utilizes these resources is a crucial issue. The research proposes that building up a representative and transparent community based organization can assist the national government in the adequate management of resources and facilities. In addition, it deals with conflicts of interests and enforces the government regulations in terms of environment protection, human resources development, and sustainability of the area. However, Creaco and Querini (2003) indicated that sustainable tourism has three interconnected aspects: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic. Sustainability implies permanence; thus, sustainable tourism includes optimum use of resources, including biological diversity; minimization of ecological, cultural and social impacts; and maximization of benefits for conservation and local communities.

Moreover, Neto (2003) conclude that new approaches to sustainable tourism development worldwide should not only seek to minimize local environmental impact, but also give greater priority to community participation and poverty reduction. In particular, more emphasis should be given to a 'pro-poor tourism' approach at both national and international levels. Consequently, the study of Butler (1991) indicated that it is necessary to appreciate that tourist destination areas evolve and change over time, both responding to, and they are being altered by changes in tourism. Also, they take into consideration the fact that they are no static environments. As a result, they need responsible and pro-active planning and management. However, 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. In addition, 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.

Aims and Scope

Despite the significant attention paid by tourism scholars to tourism development, far less attention has been devoted to the environmental conservation, green tourism, and sustainable tourism which remain unclear. The general purpose of the current study is to increase the knowledge about environmental conservation, green tourism, and sustainable tourism; to create some theoretical frameworks with some overall and structural approaches that can be broadly used in practical sustainable managing of tourism. It aims to assist policy makers and practitioners working in the field of tourism and culture by highlighting and critically examining the role of tourism in the processes surrounding these relationships. The study was considered as the first of its kind based on the author's knowledge. Therefore, it is one of the leading studies that demonstrated how tourism affects environmental conservation, green tourism, and sustainable tourism.

Tourism's Inherent Relationship with the Environment

To understand the interaction that exists between tourism and the environment, it is necessary to understand the complexity of tourism. It is in fact a product of a variety of interacting factors in our home environment. This factor, however, have consequences for destination environments. Since the 1950s, the impacts of tourism have been experienced more widely. This is attributed to the fact that the numbers of tourists traveling internationally have increased and destinations have diffused.

This trend has been accompanied by increased amounts of domestic tourism, notably in the rapidly developing economies of many countries and regions of the Mediterranean Basin. This growing demand for tourism is a reflection of changing economic and social conditions in home environments. Furthermore, it is about the physical and cultural characteristics of the environments that tourists travel to.

According to Neto (2003: 4), the two main areas of environmental impact of tourism are pressure on natural resources and damage to ecosystems. Furthermore, it is now widely recognized not only that uncontrolled tourism expansion is likely to lead to environmental degradation, but also that environmental degradation, in turn, poses a serious threat to tourism activities.

The Environmental Dimension of Tourism

Attempts to define tourism are made difficult because it is a highly complicated amalgam of various parts. Thus, these parts are diverse, including human feelings, emotions and desires; natural and cultural attractions; suppliers of transport, accommodation and other services; and government policy and regulatory frameworks. Subsequently, it is difficult to arrive at a consensual definition of what tourism actually is. What makes it even more problematic is the fact that different stakeholders or groups with an interest in tourism are likely to have different aspirations of what they hope to achieve from it. In addition, holds different perspectives on what it means to them. The stakeholders in tourism include governments, the tourism industry, donor agencies, local communities, non-government organizations (NGOs), and tourists.

If we have to plan the use of natural resources and manage impacts associated with its development, a convenient definition that overcomes the above complexity and that all commentators would probably agree upon the one proposed by the World Tourism Organization (1991). However, this definition was subsequently endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in 1993: “Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes” (WTO, 1993).

From this cited definition, it can be inferred that tourism involves some element of interaction with a different type of environment to the one found at home. The consequences of this interaction are commonly referred to as the “impacts of tourism.” Also, it can be categorized into three main types: economic, social and environmental. These impacts can either be positive or negative (Creaco & Querini, 2003; Muzvidziwa, 2013).

If we have to introduce a further dimension of resource usage, tourism can be defined as a human activity which encompasses human behavior, use of resources and interaction with other people, economies, and environments. This definition draws attention to the fact that natural and cultural resources are the focus of tourism. Thus, these are used in various ways; for pleasure, financial gains, and economic development.

This brief analysis of various definitions of tourism demonstrates its real complexity and highlights that it is much more than simply “going on vacation or holiday.” Tourism is based

upon the economic and social processes and the changes that are occurring in the environments of the societies where tourists come from. Its development in destinations, focused upon the use of natural and cultural resources, will have economic, environmental, and cultural impacts (Creaco & Querini, 2003; Muzvidziwa, 2013).

Tourism as a System: An Environmental Perspective

The problem in describing tourism as an industry is that it does not have the usual production function, nor does it have an output which can be physically measured, unlike agriculture, beverage industry, or manufactured products. A tourism industry does not exist because it does not produce a distinct product. Certain industries such as transport, accommodation, and entertainment are not exclusively tourism industries. Hence, they sell these services to local residents as well. The key difference between tourism and other industries is that it is the consumer who travels to the product and not vice versa. Therefore, this implies that the natural and cultural resources of destinations can be treated as a form of product, and the qualities can be traded in the marketplace. It is based on these characteristics of environments that create expectations in tourists and form a vital part of their experience (Neto, 2003).

Another approach to understanding tourism is to think of it as a system, incorporating not only businesses and tourists, but also societies and environments which are interlinked. This system includes a range of different inputs such as government policy, entrepreneurial activity, as well as human and natural resources. Critical to the system is the tourism “industry” which “processes” these inputs to meet the needs of tourists. Outputs of the system include economic opportunities and changes in the cultural and physical environments of destinations. These changes demonstrate the dichotomy of tourism in the sense that they can be either positive or negative. Tourism can both conserve and pollute the physical environment. It can also bring positive and negative cultural changes, such as employment opportunities or might result in alienating indigenous cultures. Similarly, it can create economic opportunities for communities, and can also result in an economic overdependence on tourism and encourage price inflation.

Another output of the system, which is essential for ensuring the profits of enterprises based upon tourism and its help to secure the economic benefits desired by governments, is tourist satisfaction. The tourism system is also subjected to a range of influences exerted by changes in the society. However, these changes include economic, technological and political changes

influence as well as participation in tourism either positively or negatively. Positive developments that facilitate travel include economic prosperity; political freedom; cheaper, faster and more comfortable transport options; and the spread of the internet. Conversely, negative changes such as economic recession and poverty, or terrorism, threatens tourism demand. By threatening tourism demand, the livelihoods of many people in tourism destinations are made vulnerable. Therefore, all the above framing conditions illustrate the complexities and inter-linkages of the tourism system (Creaco & Querini, 2003; Faraji & Aghajani, 2010).

The rapid growth in international tourism, combined with an expected and even larger number of arrivals as a consequence of domestic tourism, places pressures upon natural environments and resources. It is not possible to facilitate the visitation of millions of peoples to destinations without the development of facilities to accommodate their needs. Consequently, the ability to understand, plan, and manage tourism will be decisive in deciding the degree to which its relationship with the environment is held positive or negative (Faraji & Aghajani, 2010).

The Destination Environment: Different Experiences and Attitudes

Tourists are not homogeneous and they are likely to search for different experiences from the destination environment. Also, they are likely to choose a destination environment because they feel it will be appropriate for the type of experience they are searching for. Their attitudes towards the environment will be reflected in their behavior, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Taxonomy of environmental experiences

Mode of experience	Interpretation	Environmental attitude
Environment as a field of action and pursuit of activities.	The environment is essentially interpreted as a place for excitement, relaxation or recuperation.	Lack of interest for natural and cultural environment and disregard for environmental codes of behavior, leading to negative environmental consequences. Examples: littering, coastal degradation, and disregard for local customs and traditions.
	The environment is regarded	The physical setting becomes

Environment as a social setting.	as a place to interact with friends, family, and society.	unique as the center of experience on social relationships.
Environment as an emotional surrounding.	The environment provides strong emotional feelings and a sense of well-being.	Sense of well-being and wonder in a contemplative environment.
Environment as an inherent property and personal belonging.	Merging of the physical and cultural environment with self. Any damage or harm to the environment is perceived as damage to oneself.	Strong attachment to cultural and physical environment and close interaction with the local community. Example: protection of landscape and community assistance.

The Evolution of Tourism’s Relationship with the Environment

The reliance of tourism upon the natural and cultural resources of the environment means that its development induces change which can either be positive or negative. There is an increased awareness of the environmental effects of tourism amongst governments, NGOs, the private sector, donor agencies, academics, and the public. This interest is reflective of a marked change in attitudes to our interaction with the environment that has occurred during the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty first century.

By the late 1960s, as the effects of the pursuit of the economic growth upon the environment became more evident, environmental issues began to gain more prominence, especially based on the fact that industrial growth and progress did not come free of environmental cost. At that stage, tourism remained largely immune from environmental criticism, and the image of tourism is predominantly one of an ‘environmentally friendly’ activity (Neto, 2003).

By the 1970s, people were becoming more aware and concerned over environmental issues, and questions about environmental impacts of tourism began to be raised more widely. This is observed as tourism expanded into new geographical areas and the negative impacts of its development became more obvious. Negative effects on the environment such as the loss of natural landscape, pollution, and the destruction of fauna and flora were already being noted (Faraji & Aghajani, 2010).

During the 1980s, the spread of mass tourism around and beyond the Mediterranean basin shows that there was an increasing focus on tourism as a form of economic development in developing countries. Besides economic aspects, this focus also included concern over the

environmental and cultural consequences of tourism development. The awareness that tourism could have negative effects was increasingly being recognized by NGOs (Creaco & Querini, 2003).

In the 1990s, new environmental concerns became prominent reflecting both local and global protests especially against road building and the loss of country side and nature deterioration. Green politics began to gain increasing recognition by governments, and environment ministries were formed by the end of the decade when tourism development had, for the first time, been attacked by eco-warriors (WTO, 1993).

A growing number of tourists similarly became more interested to varying degrees in the environmental aspects of tourism as green consumerism became more popular. Alternative types of tourism, including ‘ecotourism’ and ‘sustainable tourism,’ became established in the tourism vernacular. In the first decade of this century, the relationship between tourism and the environment was becoming more hotly debated than ever. The term ‘sustainable’ has become integrated into government policy and industry strategies, and has transcended to include all stakeholders and consumers (Muzvidziwa, 2013).

Whilst there is evidence to suggest that tourism can act as a negative force of change upon nature, it may also act as an agent of conservation. The virulent debate that sometimes appears to be raised against tourism needs to be tempered with consideration that the use of natural resources brings economic and social benefits to destinations, and may also aid human development.

The Negative Environmental Consequences of Tourism

There is a broad range of negative environmental impacts resulting from tourism development. These impacts may be categorized into three major issues of concern: natural resource usage, human behavior consideration, and pollution (Cooper et al., 2005; Holden, 2000; Faraji & Aghajani, 2010). These issues are explained in Table 2.

Table 2. The negative environmental impacts of tourism.

Type of concern	Problematic issue	Environmental examples
Resource usage: Tourism competes with other forms of development and human	Some natural resources that tourism relies upon have the characteristics of Common	Construction and development of tourism facilities using large areas of

<p>activity for natural resources, especially land and water. The use of natural resources leads to the transformation of ecological habitats and loss of flora and fauna.</p>	<p>Pool Resources. Thus, there is a natural tendency for overuse. The local people can be denied access to natural resources upon which they base their existence and livelihood. Land transformation for tourism development can directly destroy ecological habitats and ecosystems. The use of resources for tourism involves an “opportunity cost”, as they are denied to other sectors of economic development.</p>	<p>land, often depriving local people from water and electricity supply.</p> <p>Deforestation of mountain slides associated with tourism project, causing slippage and landslides.</p> <p>Cutting of trees and industrial pollution causing increased land sedimentation.</p> <p>Erosion and loss of beach ecosystems</p> <p>Logging, quarrying, and sand extraction.</p>
<p>Human and tourists behavior towards the destination environment.</p>	<p>Local people encouraged by the revenues generated from tourism, and tourists may be ignorant or disregard environment indulging in inappropriate behavior. This can lead to a range of consequences for the physical and cultural environments.</p>	<p>Disruption of ecological habitats and breeding patterns, reducing the number of species of flora and fauna.</p> <p>Anarchic construction, uncontrolled tourist activities, illegal hunting and irresponsible pruning leading to the deterioration of the ecosystem and high risk of fires.</p> <p>Increased crime, prostitution and drug taking.</p> <p>Offence caused to local cultures by foreign tourists due to inappropriate behavior.</p> <p>Commercialization and commoditization of local cultures to satisfy tourists.</p>
<p>Various pollution types:</p> <p>Water pollution</p>	<p>A range of different types of pollution can result from tourism. These impact on</p>	<p>Problems of human waste disposal generated by tourists.</p>

<p>Noise pollution</p>	<p>different spatial scales from the local to the global. The effects of pollution are often associated with the level of tourism development and the degree of implementation of planning and environmental management controls.</p>	<p>Addition of untreated sewage into rivers and lakes leads to water contamination, and eutrophication, stimulating proliferation of algae and threatening of the whole ecosystem.</p>
<p>Air pollution</p>		<p>Noise pollution in economically booming environments and crowded tourist spaces, provoked by traffic congestions and city hustle and bustle.</p>
<p>Aesthetic pollution</p>		<p>Air pollution caused by various transportation means, industrial and jet engine emissions contributing to global warming and acid rain.</p> <p>Many tourist areas under development are aesthetically transformed by standardized construction of tourist accommodation and are indistinguishable from each other.</p>

The Positive and Beneficial Effects of Tourism

The afore-mentioned negative effects must be offset against the economic benefits offered through tourism. These may be of significant importance in combating poverty and aiding human development in developing countries. Tourism can help protect the environment from potentially more damaging forms of development and it can have a particularly beneficial role in the regeneration of economically depressed environments. When we talk about the beneficial effects of tourism for the environment, we are in essence talking about tourism being used as a way of protecting and improving the quality of the environment. The development of tourism will particularly emphasize on the maintenance of a ‘good-quality’ environment in a destination, if tourism is intended to play a long-term role in the local economy. It is certain that the long-term success of tourism is often dependent upon maintaining a level of quality in the natural environment, which will satisfy the demands of tourists. Tourism would not exist without a healthy and pleasant environment, with well

preserved landscapes and harmony between people and nature (Holden, 2000; Faraji & Aghajani, 2010).

Tourism can play a significant role in the conservation of the environment by giving it an ‘economic value’ through the revenues generated from tourist visitation, revenues that can help protect natural habitats from other more environmentally harmful forms of development, or from other forms of destructive human activity. The environment, including both its cultural and physical resources, is the key to satisfying the needs of the tourists and building sustainable economic prosperity for tourism. It is therefore in the long-term interest of the destination community to ensure that the landscape remains well preserved and that they provide stewardship of the environment. One of the best examples of tourism making a positive contribution to environmental improvement is the urban environment. One advantage of improving the environmental quality of the urban environment is that it enhances the image of the city and makes it more probable for other businesses and services to be attracted to relocate and invest there. Besides, tourists who come to the area to spend money induced a multiplier effect by generating further demand for goods and services in the local economy. The redevelopment of urban areas through tourism can also be aided by the development of tourist attractions that are rooted in the local heritage and in the history of the area. As for all forms of tourism, urban tourism must be carefully planned and managed as it has threshold limits beyond which the environment will be perceived as having declined in quality, with consequences for both local residents and tourists (Cooper et al., 2005; WTO, 1999).

The Sustainable Development Concept: An Environmental Approach

The concern over the negative effects of tourism upon the environment, as explained above, has led to a new conceptual approach to development. This conceptual approach has been termed as “sustainable development” and has become a new paradigm for sustainable tourism development.

In contemporary terms, the term ‘sustainable’ development is usually credited to the Brundtland Report, which is officially the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987). The origins of ‘sustainability’ as opposed to ‘sustainable development’ lie in concerns over conservation. Also, it can be traced back to the conservation movement of the mid-nineteenth century. The concept of ‘sustainable

development' first originated in the World Conservation Strategy published by the World Conservation Unit (IUCN) in 1980. However, the popularization of the term did not occur until its use in the Brundtland Report seven years later. This is perhaps because by 1987, environmental awareness was at a much higher level.

Consequently, this report defined 'sustainability' as the "process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Later, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) provided the following definition for Sustainable Development: "Sustainable Development is a process which allows for the development to happen without damaging and depleting the resources that make it possible. This goal is usually achieved by managing resources so that they can be replenished at the same rate at which they are used, or changing from one resource which slowly regenerates to one with a faster rate of replenishment. Thus, resources can support present and future generations." Development of sustainable tourism with a focus on the natural environment, requires action from all relevant parties, as "Sustainable tourism is one that meets the needs of present tourists and of today's hosting destinations, but which also protects the environmental resources and improves the chances of future tourism... sustainable tourism cannot only work at the expense of public administration's impositions; it is also necessary for the private tourism sector to take this notion and cooperate in its execution, and for local communities and tourists themselves to cooperate in the process" (WCED, 1987).

Since the early 1990s, the sustainable tourism debate has become more general to cover not just environmental issues, but also socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions. A large differentiation can be made between 'sustainable tourism', in which emphasis is placed on the customer and marketing considerations of tourism to sustain the tourism industry and 'sustainable development', in which emphasis is placed on developing tourism as a means to achieve wider social and environmental goals. Therefore, sustainable tourism will not necessarily equate with the aims and objectives of sustainable development (Creaco & Querini, 2003).

Within this context, the 'economic sustainability of tourism' seen as a tourism imperative is primarily concerned with satisfying the needs of tourists and players in the industry. This approach is known as 'product-led tourism' which is aimed at promoting the growth of the tourism sector and the existing tourism product irrespective of or with little concerns to environmental issues. Unlikely, the 'environmentally-led tourism' approach stresses on the

promotion of various types of tourism that are reliant upon a good-quality environment. The main aim would thus be to make the link between the success of the tourism industry and environmental conservation so obvious to all the stakeholders that the stewardship of the environment becomes a priority. This refers to ‘sustainable tourism development’, where the protection of the environment is seen as a key component of the long-term economic viability of the industry. However, the main difference compared to ‘product-led tourism’ is that the environment is prioritized and non-damaging forms of tourism are developed. Tourism would therefore be centered upon attracting tourists who would wish to be educated upon the natural environment and eventually participate in its protection and conservation.

The Growth of Green Consumerism and its Tourism Implications

Knowing that tourism can be understood as a type of consumerism, the extent to which environmental considerations affect buying behavior is likely to have a major influence on how tourism interacts with the natural environment. By the end of the twentieth century, ‘green consumerism’ and the purchasing of ‘environmentally friendly’ products has become a significant special market, a trend that has continued, grown up, and established itself as an integral part of the consumer market. The selling of selected produced services on their green, bio- and eco-environmental credentials became common to many consumer markets. However, consumer surveys of behavior patterns, based upon environmental attitudes, have shown that environmental concern will be playing an increasing part in consumer behavior in the future. People would be nowadays more likely to buy products that are recyclable or biodegradable and consume it in a healthier, less environmentally damaging and more ethical ways. They would be consciously willing to pay premium prices for environmentally sound produces and environmentally friendly services.

In the tourism sector, besides the (ISO) logo that is available to companies who implement ‘environmental management systems’, other green labels emphasizing green credibility have appeared over recent years such as ‘Greenpeace’ and ‘Green Globe’. The Green Globe scheme was originally launched by the World Travel and Tourism Council ‘WTTC’ incorporating many of the leading multi-national travel and tourism corporations. The Green Globe accreditation was granted to many tour operators, transport services, visitor attractions, hotels, local communities, and destinations who wanted to be involved in sustainable tourism development. The use of Green Globe logo acted as a signifier of environmental responsibility to the tourists who were influenced in their purchasing behavior by

environmental concerns. The main function of these users consisted therefore in promoting environmentally friendly holidays, selling green packages, and employing green practices in their management (WTTC, 1999).

The Emergence of Ecotourism as an Alternative to Mainstream Tourism

Although the effects environmental concerns will have on the future of the tourism market are difficult to predict, an evident trend since the dawn of the twenty first century entails the growth of a range of holiday types that infer greater awareness of the environment. Many interchangeable terms have been used to describe these new forms of tourism including ‘alternative’, ‘green’, ‘sustainable’, ‘responsible’, and ‘ecotourism’. A common theme of these labels is that they are indicative of a more caring approach on how tourism should be developed and consumed, as they designate low-impact tourism programs which might result in some form of sustainable benefits to the destination area (Aall, 2014).

Owing to the growth in environmental consciousness, the idea of alternative types of tourism to mass tourism seems to have found the favor of a significant segment of the tourism market, especially based on the fact that consumers became over-familiar with mass tourism and had a subsequent desire for new types of holidays. In accordance with this concept, alternative tourism can be interpreted as a form of more environmentally aware tourism that is different from prevailing mainstream tourism. Whilst there is no universal agreement on a definition of what alternative tourism actually is, it is possible from what preceded to highlight the characteristics of alternative tourism which differentiate it from mainstream tourism. This, however, is described as follows: small-scale development activities with high rates of local ownership; minimized negative environmental and social impacts; maximized linkages with other sectors of the local economy reducing a reliance upon imports; retention of the majority of the economic expenditure from tourism by local people; localized power-sharing and involvement of people in the decision-making process; and pace of development directed and controlled by local people rather than external influences (Muzvidziwa, 2000; Slinger, 2000).

All these characteristics contrast with large-scale multinational concerns typified by high leakages and external influences that characterize mass tourism. Using the above criteria, alternative tourism exceeds a pure concern for the physical environment to include economic, social, and cultural considerations. If the physical, environmental, and cultural dimensions of the environment are considered in an integrated fashion, and tourism is developed according

to the afore-mentioned characteristics, then alternative tourism can be viewed as synonymous with the concept of sustainable tourism development.

Another notorious kind of tourism that is often associated with the characteristics of alternative tourism outlined above is 'ecotourism'. The goals of this tourism include awareness and respect for culture and the environment, and the preservation and betterment of local communities. The term 'ecotourism' refers, as defined by Ziffer (1989), to a trend of tourism that is managed by the host country or region which commits itself to establishing and maintaining the sites with the participation of local residents, marketing them appropriately, enforcing regulations, and using the proceeds of the enterprise to fund the area's land management as well as community development.

Recently, Williams and Shaw (1991) proposed a four-dimension model of ecotourism that is more widely accepted in the literature. This model includes:

1. Consumer awareness and education. Although the average consumer has been sensitized about environmental issues, such as global warming and depletion of ozone layer, more needs to be done to develop an awareness of tourists' responsibility to preserve and enhance environmental quality of the destination. It is essential to promote ethical standards concerning the use of natural and cultural resources and to assist consumers in choosing tour operators who follow conservation guidelines.
2. Tourism industry action. The private sector is responsible for delivering the products and services to tourists and therefore, they should take the responsibility for the protection of biosphere by minimizing pollution, which causes environmental damage. The industry should also work together to develop guidelines for resort developments and concession operations which utilize low-impact design criteria and the latest technologies for recycling and conserving resources.
3. Destination planning and development. Government and non-government organizations need to share responsibilities for ecotourism development.
4. An extended concept of marketing ecotourism that includes, price, promotion, place and product.

Green Tourism: An Environmentally-led Form of Sustainable Tourism Development

As ‘sustainable development’ and ‘environmental conservation’ have become nowadays prevailing worldwide issues and due to the growth of green consumerism and environmental awareness among the new generations, we can consider that ‘Green Tourism’ has emerged as a new breed of nature-based and environmentally responsible tourism as well as an advanced and more complacent form of ecotourism.

Green tourism, in its generic sense, encompasses the domains of responsible, alternative, sustainable, low-impact, and ecotourism. In addition, it constitutes the paramount of all these themes as it focuses more on the following aspects:

1. It is responsible because it guides travelers on the most appropriate and respectful ways to act in a host country as guests and it raises a feeling of appreciation for biodiversity and for local cultures.
2. It is environmentally-friendly as it involves travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the object of enjoying, admiring, and studying the nature (the scenery, plants and animals) as well as any cultural aspect (both past and present) found in these areas.
3. It is sustainable because it seeks to optimize the present social and economic benefits, without compromising the potential to obtain similar benefits in the future. It meets as well the needs of present tourists and of today’s hosting destinations, but also protects the environmental resources and improves the chances of future tourism.
4. It is ethical because it seeks the wellbeing of local communities without alienating the appreciation and conservation of the environment.
5. It is a low-impact form of travel as it aims to avoid the alteration of each place’s ecosystem, the disruption of the natural environment, and the distortion of the cultural heritage.
6. It is a supreme alternative form to mainstream tourism as it stresses on local ownership, reducing reliance upon imports, low leakages, small-scale development, retention of tourism expenditures by local people, involvement of local communities in the decision-making process, direct control over pace of development, and minimization of negative and social environmental impacts (Holden, 2000; Muzvidziwa, 2000; Slinger, 2000).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The concept of tourism involves a journey, a passage through time, space, and through a diversity of cultures, people, and pasts (UNESCO, 2006). Tourism is expected to resume its rapid growth in the near future; as such, tourism has a critical role to play in generating knowledge, dialogue, and understanding across and between cultures. It also has a critical role in the development process. Green tourism provides incentives for local communities and land owners to conserve their natural habitats upon which the industry depends. Also, it promotes conservation by placing an increased value on existing natural areas and resources. Green tourism is a responsible and low-impact environmentally-led form of sustainable tourism development, employed as a vehicle for conserving and sustaining natural and cultural environments as well as their resources. The involvement and cooperation of local community representatives, conservationists, tourism operators, property owners, policy makers, those preparing national development plans, and site managers in every country is necessary to achieve this end and enhance the protection of natural resources for present and future generations. Therefore, further research is essential to expand understanding of environmental conservation, green tourism, and sustainable development. Also, a cross-sectional study would be interesting for more understanding of environmental conservation, green tourism in different cultures.

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