

Tourism National Program in Conflict Countries: Cases of Western Balkans

Shofi Karima¹, David Ronald Tairas²

^{1,2}School of Strategic and Global Studies (SKSG) Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia

Email: shofikarimaa@gmail.com

Abstract

Cultural differences, economic and social development, and demographic trends among the countries of the Western Balkans are the causes of the conflict. This research focuses on tourism development strategies in conflict countries in the Western Balkans. This study raises the question of how conflict states develop long-term strategies for sustainable tourism. The method used is exploratory (qualitative) which produces a tourism development strategy. The theory used is sustainable tourism by Ramon Adillon using seven elements for sustainable tourism development. The result shows there is a correlation and mutual support between each of the main components of the 'Diamond Sustainable' as well as the main components and supporting factors. This research shows that they have strengths and opportunities that can be optimized as a strategy to maintain tourism, on the other hand, the existence of weaknesses and threats can hinder the sustainability of tourism in the Western Balkan.

Keywords: Tourism, Sustainable, Western Balkans.

A. INTRODUCTION

The struggle of the tourism sector in developing countries. This research focuses on tourism development strategies in conflict countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo. This study raises the question of how conflict states develop long-term strategies for sustainable tourism. Tourism activities have a very positive impact on the social and economic development of society. Tourism helps people from all over the world to thrive and is currently one of the most important industries in the world.

B. METHOD

Using an exploratory qualitative research methodology, which produces insights on tourism development strategies at the national and international levels, where this methodology is flexible, does not involve hypothesis testing, and does not try to offer final and conclusive answers. This study uses secondary data sources by taking sources from government publications, websites, books, and scientific articles. The theory used in this study is the theory of sustainable tourism by Ramón Adillón uses seven elements for sustainable tourism development. Diamond: Sustainable Tourism.

1. Carrying capacity is a framework for describing the environmental boundaries of certain socio-economic systems. According to SEIDL and Tisdell (1999), the carrying capacity as long been applied in the context of the

environmental impact of human activities, especially in the management of natural resources and ecosystems of protected areas such as national parks.

2. Local communities must be involved in the development of tourism in protected areas because it is the community that knows the most natural and cultural potential.
3. Tourism experience is defined as the process of observing or participating tourists in events or objects of goals, and psychological feelings arising from this process.
4. Destination Management Organization According to Gillovic & McIntosh (2020), several problems in the tourism sector lead to destination management. Destination and Governance Management Destinations play an important role in sustainable tourism development, where the planning, implementation, and evaluation process can be directed and run well.
5. Seasonal demand is generally considered one of the main challenges in the tourism business. Seasonal can harm the development of sustainable tourism because of its impact on the economy, environment, community, and labor market.
6. Demand management, according to Kastenholtz (2004), demand management has the aim to attract tourists who bring the greatest benefits to rural areas and increase the linkages of various suppliers, communities, visitors, and cultural and natural resources of the area.
7. Smart tourism depends on the technology used to collect and analyze data and create personalized experiences.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Albania

Investments in the tourism sector in the central and northern coastal regions of Albania have exceeded the environmental support capacity due to the lack of development of an appropriate development framework. This has caused excessive pressure on coastal resources, leading to the risk of exhaustion of remaining areas. Therefore, appropriate policies and a more in-depth evaluation of supporting capacity are needed to manage development sustainably.

Cross-sector collaboration, sustainable development, and urban or environmental planning are essential when considering tourism carrying capacity assessment (TCCA) to integrate holistic coastal area management. Albania, compared to other tourism destinations in the Mediterranean, has not experienced significant development in the tourism sector. Therefore, a more specific approach is needed that takes into account sensitive environmental characteristics, climate, rich cultural heritage, local traditions, and other factors.

Implementation of the TCCA program will be more successful if it involves active participation from the community and involvement in the planning process. Even though Albania opened its doors to tourists 30 years ago, the country is still

one of the least visited in Europe. The main challenge is the reliance on seasonal tourism, where the increase in visitors peaks in July and August.

Experience shows that sustainable tourism projects require consistent support from the government and the private sector. However, a lack of coordination in environmental policies to manage this support has been a challenge. Therefore, investments in baseline studies, feasibility studies, needs analysis, and market research are needed to guide effective interventions.

The active involvement of the private sector from the start of the project is essential, as the success of Albanian tourism depends heavily on development led by a strong and diverse private sector, with the government facilitating. A key aspect of the intervention needs to focus on ensuring that the products developed are compatible with identified international and domestic market needs.

Wise investment in the heritage of tourist attractions and preservation of natural assets to high conservation standards can ensure that these unique assets are preserved for future generations, supporting the sustainability and competitiveness of Albania's tourism industry. In this way, Albania can maintain and increase its attractiveness as a sustainable tourist destination with great potential in the Mediterranean.

2. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Development of the tourism industry in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) over the last 20 years, which was influenced by external conditions such as war, aggression, refugees and political transition. Despite this, BIH has a long history in international tourism, including hosting the Sarajevo Winter Olympics in 1984 and maintaining the famous pilgrimage site in Medjugorje.

BIH has demonstrated positive progress in sustainable tourism development, with all of its sustainable tourism development tools receiving high ratings. The main focus is given to maintaining natural and cultural resources, which are the main drivers for sustainable tourism. Future development at BIH is centered on ecological aspects (preservation and protection of natural resources), socio-cultural (protection of historical and cultural heritage), as well as economic principles of sustainable development.

However, BIH faces challenges with the lack of a sustainable and long-term tourism development strategy. A strategy covering a period of more than ten years is considered essential to ensure sustainable tourism development. Great potential is seen in the development and packaging of existing products as well as the introduction of new products such as health tourism, the meetings industry, rural tourism, gastronomy, and others.

The importance of goal integration and coordination in tourism promotion is also emphasized, considering that current promotions tend to be fragmented and disharmonious. BIH faces challenges in increasing its brand recognition globally due to the lack of a coordinated strategy to develop a national brand.

Some additional obstacles include high dependence on seasonal tourists, short trips, lack of innovation in brand development, and tourism products that are not yet popular in the global market. The solution is expected to be through intensifying integrated promotional strategies and increasing innovation in developing tourism products that can attract global market interest more effectively.

3. North Macedonia

Tourism development in North Macedonia requires efforts to clearly define and implement development activities. The main challenge faced is the lack of a positive strategic approach in determining the main direction of strategy. This requires eliminating existing inconsistencies in strategic development and updating the accepted guidelines. North Macedonia also faces a lack of a tourism product capable of competing at regional, European, and global levels, which demands a focus on changing trends in contemporary travel demand.

Tourism activities in North Macedonia are currently fragmented and disorganized, especially in terms of assessment, marketing and communication. Collaboration between various stakeholders is important but not yet optimal. Therefore, proposals for new tourism brands are suggested to be redefined through a cluster approach. This approach will organize tourism development activities based on the main potential in each region and strengthen each region's identity.

Each thematic cluster is expected to address unique challenges related to current tourism activities that are considered inconvenient. Information obtained through research highlights the negative conditions caused by existing tourists, including impacts on consumption, use of existing facilities, and the need to develop new facilities that are attractive, environmentally friendly, and effective in communication.

The surveys conducted help in formulating concrete solutions to identified problems, ranging from necessary activities to targeted market strategies, as well as the implementation of proposed solutions through effective management, marketing, communication, and promotion.

In addition, North Macedonia's tourism development strategy includes several crucial aspects such as supporting the development of tourism areas, providing financial assistance for tourism projects, tourism data management, coordination of law enforcement including international conventions and agreements in the field of tourism, as well as collaboration with international organizations that have programs tourist.

Overall, these efforts demonstrate North Macedonia's commitment to improving its tourism sector with a structured and sustainable approach, as well as overcoming existing challenges to achieve sustainable growth and competitiveness at the global level.

4. Montenegro

Montenegro's tourism development strategy until 2020, which is the latest initiative of the national government to advance the tourism sector. This strategy has five main objectives supported by 20 detailed policies to achieve them:

- a. Improving Existing Tourism Infrastructure: Focus on improving the quality of existing infrastructure.
- b. Creating Unique and Integral Tourist Destinations: Development of tourist destinations that have special and comprehensive appeal.
- c. Tourism Product Diversification: Dealing with seasonal variations by offering a variety of tourism products.
- d. Improving Institutions and Legal Frameworks: Strengthening institutional structures and legal frameworks that support tourism development.
- e. Local Community Involvement: Actively involving local communities in all aspects of tourism activities.
- f. In the context of the policy explained:
- g. Montenegro's Clean Image: This initiative aims to link the country's tourism image with addressing critical waste management issues. The aim is to increase public awareness and build new infrastructure for handling waste.
- h. Entrepreneurship in the Tourism Sector: This policy is designed to encourage entrepreneurship in the domestic tourism sector. This aims to increase awareness of the importance of the tourism sector for the country's economic growth.

This strategy shows Montenegro's commitment to sustainably developing tourism, involving various parties including the government, local communities, and tourism entrepreneurs to achieve the strategic goals that have been set.

5. Serbia

Serbia as a tourist destination requires a comprehensive analysis through several criteria and indicators. The tourism industry in Serbia is fragmented with no unique tourism resources. The country relies on its geographical position as a competitive advantage in long-term regional socio-economic development, but this is also a weakness in Serbia's competitiveness in the international market. Understanding of competition and its impact remains limited, and there is no clear definition of Serbia's destination in the global tourism market.

The main challenge facing Serbia is the difficulty in converting the results of socio-economic development into successful tourism activities. Serbia is known as a tourist destination that faces very tough competition in Europe; only Bosnia and Herzegovina has a lower level of competition according to Blanke and Chiesa (2013).

Serbia's competitive position is evaluated through several indicators included in the Tourism and Travel Competitive Index (TTCI) Methodology. Serbia shows a poor competitive position in indicators such as natural resources, price competitiveness in the travel and tourism industry, and environmental sustainability. Serbia's competitiveness as a tourist destination, according to the

World Economic Forum (WEF) Competitiveness indicators, can be compared with its main competitor countries.

Economically, Serbia seeks to increase its competitiveness as a tourist destination by comparing itself with direct competitors and other best tourist destinations that have a leading position in the tourism industry. This involves external comparative analysis as well as functional benchmarking to identify and address weaknesses and enhance Serbia's strengths in attracting international tourists.

6. Kosovo

Kosovo's government is developing a tourism strategy as part of a broader effort to develop the private sector. This strategy aims to improve the hotel sector and the quality of accommodation and involves various promotional activities such as participation in international events and exhibitions.

Although Kosovo has great tourism potential with its diversity of ethnicities, religions, cultures, and natural resources, the country faces challenges in achieving sustainable tourism. Kosovo, as a relatively new country in the tourism industry, needs to take steps to develop this sector in accordance with international standards. This involves increasing government budgets for the tourism sector, improvements in tourism regulations, and protecting tourist destinations from pollution.

In addition, Kosovo does not yet have a National Tourism Board or National Tourism Organization that could assist in strategy development, tourism promotion, and tourism infrastructure development. By establishing such a body or organization, Kosovo can be more effective in managing and advancing the tourism sector sustainably, as well as increasing its competitiveness in the global tourism market.

D. CONCLUSION

Tourism is currently considered an important success story, with the hope that it can continue sustainably and positively into the future. The European continent is predicted to become one of the main sources of consumer demand and significant international tourism development in the next two decades. To ensure the sustainability of the tourism industry, effective policies and planning are needed now. Strategic stakeholders and policymakers must be able to recognize global trends and propose mechanisms to develop tourism products and services of international quality. Several countries in Europe have demonstrated awareness of the importance of the tourism sector by developing structured tourism strategies, including a long-term view and detailed policies. For example, North Macedonia's Ministry of Economy is updating tourism-related legislation after consulting with various other ministries, while Kosovo is developing the first draft of its tourism strategy.

REFERENCES

1. Adillón, R. (2019). Diamond Model: A theoretical framework for the sustainable development of tourism. *Art Human Open Acc J*, 3(1), 11-23.
2. Albrecht, J. N., & Haid, M. (2023). Sustainable product development for visitor experiences in nature-based tourism: Applying and extending the Double Diamond Design Process. In *The Routledge Handbook of Nature Based Tourism Development* (pp. 543-554). Routledge.
3. Bot, G. (2011). *Tourism and National Parks in Chile: Curriculum Development for a Tourism and Management Program*. North Carolina State University. College of Natural Resources.
4. Center of Excellence for Evaluation and Policy Research. (2022). *Tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: In-depth Analysis*. Retrieved from: https://www.efsa.unsa.ba/ef/sites/default/files/peer_sebs_tourism_report_clean_2022.04.05.pdf
5. European Commission. (2021). *EU support to a tourism-led model for Local Economic Development*. Retrieved from: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6fdf2bb5-0f22-486a-8c93-62fc9ec0d782_en?filename=ipa_2017_040210_01_eu_support_to_a_tourism-led_model_for_local_economic_development.pdf
6. Hallenga-Brink, S., & Brezet, J. C. (2005). The sustainable innovation design diamond for micro-sized enterprises in tourism. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 13(2), 141-149.
7. Muragizi, H. I., & Olivier, M. N. (2019). Contribution of tourism revenue sharing (TRS) program on transforming the living conditions of communities around Nyungwe National Park. *East African Journal of Science and Technology*, 9(9).
8. Pasko, G. (2021). Carrying capacity assessment-an essential tool for sustainable tourism development in coastal areas of Albania. *European Journal of Economics and Business Studies*, 2(1), 164-171.
9. Porfido, E. (2020). Tourism development in the Western Balkans: Towards a common policy. *Annual Review of Territorial Governance in the Western Balkans*, 2, 24-45.
10. Šarenac, N., Rebić, M., & Bojat, M. (2019). Instruments for sustainable tourism development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Academica Turistica-Tourism and Innovation Journal*, 12(2).
11. Sorakunnas, E., Räikkönen, J., Konu, H., Grénman, M., & Tyrväinen, L. (2024). Biodiversity, leadership, and resilience in a national sustainable tourism program. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 1-19.
12. Suhirwan, S. (2021). Tourism Village Government Program, Characterized by State Defense as the Economic Foundation of National Defense. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 5(5), 197-201.
13. Trang, N. T. T. (2022). The solutions to develop the rural tourism with the national target program of building the new rural construction in Viet Nam. *VNUHCM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(1), 1412-1420.