

TOURISM IN GREEN ECONOMY – SOME KEY ISSUES

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ABSTRACT. Tourism has significant potential as a driver of growth for the world economy. The development of tourism is accompanied by significant challenges. Green tourism has the potential to create new, green jobs. Travel and tourism are human resource intensive, employing directly and indirectly 8% of the global workforce. It is estimated that one job in the core tourism industry creates about one and a half additional or indirect jobs in the tourism related economy. The greening of tourism, which involves efficiency improvements in energy, water and waste systems, is expected to reinforce the employment potential of the sector with increased local hiring and sourcing and significant opportunities in a tourism oriented toward the local culture and the natural environment. Tourism development can be designed to support the local green economy and reduce poverty.

Keywords: tourism, green economy, sustainability

ТУРИЗМЪТ В ЗЕЛЕНАТА ИКОНОМИКА – НЯКОИ КЛЮЧОВИ ВЪПРОСИ

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РЕЗЮМЕ. Туризмът има значителен потенциал като двигател на растежа за световната икономика. Развитието на туризма е съпроводено със значителни предизвикателства. Зеленият туризъм има потенциал да създаде нови, зелени работни места. Пътванията и туризмът са интензивни за човешките ресурси, които наемат пряко и косвено 8% от глобалната работна сила. Смята се, че една работа в основната туристическа индустрия създава около една и половина допълнителни или непреки работни места в икономиката, свързана с туризма. Навлизането на зелените идеи в туризма, което включва подобрения в ефективността на енергийните, водните и отпадъчните системи, се очаква да засили потенциала за заетост на сектора с увеличено местно наемане и набиране на ресурси и значителни възможности в туризма, ориентирани към местната култура и природната среда. Развитието на туризма може да бъде насочено към подпомагане на местната зелена икономика и намаляване на бедността.

Ключови думи: туризъм, зелена икономика, устойчивост

Regardless of the initial approaches to the green economy, the main importance for it is the integration of economic and environmental policies, where opportunities for new sources of economic growth are at the forefront while avoiding pressure on nature that leads to unsustainable consequences for the quality and quantity of natural assets. All of this involves a wide range of measures, ranging from economic instruments such as taxes, subsidies and trade schemes, as well as regulatory policies, including standard setting to non-economic measures such as voluntary approaches and the provision of information.

The term "green economy" was first used in the work "Green Economy Project" (Blueprint for a Green Economy, Pearce et al., 1989), which is the programme text for supporters of this still emerging discipline, the focus of which is sustainable development economy. The most authoritative and widely used definition of this concept is formulated by UNEP (UNEP, 2011a): A green economy is an economy that provides long-term improvement of human well-being and reducing inequalities, while allowing future generations to avoid significant risks to the environment and its depletion (*Tourism in the Green Economy*, 2012).

A green economy is a system of economic activities related to the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services that lead to an increase in human well-being in the

long term, while not exposing future generations to significant environmental risks or ecological scarcity.

A green economy can also be viewed as a system of principles, goals, and measures. As a rule, among the basic principles of a green economy are the following (ECLAC, 2010; EEA, 2010; UNEP, 2011a; OECD, 2011a):

- equality and fairness both within one generation and between generations;
- compliance with the principles of sustainable development;
- applying the precautionary principle to potential impacts on society and the environment;
- adequate accounting of natural and social capital, for example, through internalisation of external social and environmental effects, green accounting, cost accounting throughout the life cycle, and improved governance with the participation of stakeholders;
- sustainable and efficient use of resources, consumption and production;
- contributing to the achievement of existing macroeconomic goals through the creation of green jobs, the eradication of poverty, increased competitiveness and growth in key sectors of the economy (*Tourism in the Green Economy*, 2012).

Green economy includes industries that create and increase the natural capital of the earth or reduce environmental threats and risks. If a traditional economy combines labour, technology and resources to produce end-use goods and waste, then the green economy must return the waste back to the production cycle, causing minimal damage to nature.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has identified ten key sectors for transition to a green economy: agriculture, housing and utilities, energy, fisheries, forestry, industry, tourism, transport, waste management and water management. One of the priority themes for the green economy is tourism. The ability of tourism to create jobs, stimulate economic growth, accumulate foreign exchange, improve infrastructure, and promote environmental protection makes this industry an attractive tool for alleviating poverty and accelerating local development. With proper management, the development of tourism will benefit not only the country as a whole, but also individual regions and local communities. The tourism planning process needs to take into account employment opportunities and decent working conditions for the local population, as well as such important factors for local communities as infrastructure improvement, access to water supply, sanitation, health care, and education. The development of tourism provides women, youth and disadvantaged groups with disabilities a significant opportunity to become producers of tourism services.

The tourism sector, in general, can play a significant role in the process of transition to a green economy, including through the development of depressed regions. Regions can get various synergistic and multiplicative effects. However, it is necessary to remember about the possible exacerbation of environmental problems caused by the growth of tourist flows: an increase in anthropogenic pressure on local ecosystems and biodiversity; increased water and food consumption, waste and pollution in tourist areas; increase in greenhouse gas emissions due to increased traffic movements, etc. Ecologisation of tourist activities is a long-term, phased process of introducing environmentally friendly and safe forms of technological support for the provision of tourist services based on innovative technologies and products, and taking into account cultural, historical and other traditions.

UNEP and the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) believe that tourism in the context of a green economy means tourism activities that take full account of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, as well as meeting the needs of consumers of services (tourists), industry and local communities. This is not a separate form of tourism - all types of tourism should become "green" and sustainable, namely:

- 1) make optimal use of environmental resources, which are a key element for the development of tourism, support key environmental processes and promote the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity;

- 2) respect the sociocultural identification of local communities, help preserve their cultural heritage and traditional values;

- 3) ensure sustainable long-term economic activities that provide socioeconomic equitable benefits for all parties involved, including tourist satisfaction, stable employment, and opportunities for income and social services to host communities.

Studies show that the choice of tourists is increasingly influenced by environmental considerations - more and more people take into account the health of the environment when planning trips and prefer to stay in an environmentally friendly hotel. Such consumer preferences give additional impulses to initiatives to introduce green tourism. Currently, the transition to a green economy is one of the priorities of the world community on the path to sustainable development. Tourism is an important sector where transformation is necessary and possible. Tourism has significant potential as a driver of growth for the world economy. The development of tourism is accompanied by significant challenges. Green tourism has the potential to create new, green jobs. Travel and tourism are human resource intensive, employing directly and indirectly 8% of the global workforce. It is estimated that one job in the core tourism industry creates about one and a half additional or indirect jobs in the tourism related economy. The greening of tourism, which involves efficiency improvements in energy, water and waste systems, is expected to reinforce the employment potential of the sector with increased local hiring and sourcing and significant opportunities in tourism oriented toward the local culture and the natural environment. Tourism development can be designed to support the local economy and reduce poverty. Developing green tourism requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide public participation in the decision-making process and consensus building. The growth of tourism is of great economic importance for the least developed countries. In about half of these countries, it accounts for more than 40% of GDP and is the most important source of foreign exchange. In addition to the source of foreign exchange for destinations and job creation, the tourism sector has other positive direct and indirect impacts on the global economy, such as providing incentives for small, medium and micro enterprises to trade, income growth and entrepreneurship (especially in the service sector). This activity also causes the creation of a new public infrastructure that preserves and finances the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage. Practical leading projects around the world demonstrate the positive changes that can be achieved through sustainable tourism practices, making tourism an exemplary sector for the green economy. The greening of the tourism sector strengthens its employment potential with increasing recruitment of local staff and expanding opportunities in tourism oriented towards the local culture and natural environment (*Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook*, 2013).

There are several challenges in front of tourism development. Under normal business practices (without reducing emissions), by 2050 tourism growth will imply an increase in energy consumption (154%), greenhouse gas emissions (131%), water consumption (152%) and solid waste disposal (251%) (Towards the Development of the 10YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme). The tourism industry is faced with many serious problems associated with "greening" and sustainable development. Specific tasks to be solved are related to the following areas:

Energy and greenhouse gas emissions

Tourism is an important source of greenhouse gas emissions globally. The development of tourism is associated with an increase in energy consumption (mainly based on

renewable energy) in travel, including transport, in places of residence and in the provision of tourist services. All this contributes to the exacerbation of climate change. Worldwide tourism accounted for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions from 2009 to 2013. Tourists contribute to climate change in a number of ways – through travel by air, rail and road, for example, and by consuming goods and services, such as food, accommodation and souvenirs (Lenzen, M. et al. 2018). All this, in turn, negatively affects the prospects for the development of tourism, increasing uncertainty and risks for its development.

Water consumption

Tourism accounts for a minor share of global water use. In comparison to agriculture, which constitutes an estimated 70% of total water consumption, tourism is far less relevant at 1% (Gössling, 2002). Thus, according to UNEP, in Europe an average of 300 liters of fresh water per day is consumed per tourist, and in expensive hotels up to 880 liters. For comparison: the average per capita water consumption for each European is estimated at 241 liters per day. Water in tourism is used both directly for drinking people and hygiene, as well as for landscaping landscapes, in the hotel industry, catering facilities, laundries, swimming pools, spas, health centers, etc. With regard to geographical location, hotels in the tropics are more likely to have irrigated gardens and swimming pools – the two most significant individual sources of water demand in this sector – while hotels in rural areas will usually occupy larger areas than their urban counterparts. High-rise hotels will have lower water use levels than resort style hotels, and campsites are likely to consume considerably less water than five star hotels, specifically hotels associated with golf courses, which can consume up to 1 million m³ of water per year. Such distinctions can be of major importance in regional planning and water management (Gössling, 2013).

Waste and waste water

According to UNEP estimates, every international tourist in Europe in the mid-2000s generated at least 1 kg of solid waste per day, and in the US – up to 2 kg. Globally, at the expense of domestic and international tourism in the world 35 million tons of solid waste are generated per year. Tourism can also directly affect water quality, for example, by discharging untreated sewage. This often happens in developing countries, but it also happens in relatively rich developed countries. For example, according to the WWF, in the mid-2000s wastewater discharges from hotels directly into the sea have been a common practice in the Mediterranean region, and only 30% of these have been cleaned before.

Loss of biodiversity

Tourism and biodiversity are closely linked both in terms of impacts and dependency. Many types of tourism rely directly on ecosystem services and biodiversity (ecotourism, agri-tourism, wellness tourism, adventure tourism, etc.). Tourism uses recreational services and supply services provided by ecosystems. Tourists are looking for cultural and environmental authenticity, contact with local communities and learning about flora, fauna, ecosystems and their conservation. On the other hand, too many tourists can also have a negative, degrading effect on biodiversity and ecosystems and the increased tourism forecast to biodiversity hotspot countries will

require careful planning and management to avoid negative impacts on biodiversity (*Tourism Sector and Biodiversity*, 2010). There are many examples where large-scale tourism has a negative impact on biodiversity, including coral reefs, coastal wetlands, forests, arid and semi-arid mountain ecosystems. Coral ecosystems have been severely affected by the use of corals for building materials for hotels; fish populations are reduced due to over-fishing for feeding tourists; habitats of many species are disturbed due to improper placement of tourist buildings, parking lots, golf courses. Flora and fauna also suffer from the creation of beaches. The preservation of biological diversity is recognised by the world community as the most important task on which the survival and development of mankind depends. In addition to the destruction of the global and local natural environment, problems in this area narrow the possibilities for the development of the local economy and generate conflicts with the local population. At the same time, the situation in biodiversity largely depends on how tourism develops, especially in developing countries. In this regard, the world has a lot of work on the integration of sustainable development principles in the tourism planning process. For example, UNWTO and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have developed the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development.

Cultural heritage

The tourism and cultural sectors have emerged worldwide as leaders in the revitalisation of redundant buildings and open spaces for contemporary purposes, providing opportunities for sustaining traditional and contemporary cultural values (*WTO*, 2004). Tourist interest in unique cultures can lead to negative consequences and serious destruction of local communities. The number of negative examples of the deterioration of the situation in unique places is growing due to the large number of visitors, the commercialisation of traditions and the threat to the cultural survival of communities due to unplanned and uncontrolled tourism. Tourist destinations are often created by outsiders (usually with government approval) in areas that indigenous or traditional communities consider to be theirs and where the development of tourism would be, from their point of view, undesirable. This creates conflict situations that make cooperation and obtaining mutual benefits very difficult. Recently, awareness of the problem of the impact of tourism on cultural heritage from government, international and non-governmental organisations, as well as the tourism industry, has begun to grow.

Conclusion

According to the UN Green Economy Report, the greening of tourism, which involves significant investment in efficiency improvements in energy, water and waste systems, would stimulate job creation, especially in poorer communities, with increased local hiring and sourcing, and have a positive spill-over effect on other areas of the economy. The direct economic contribution of tourism to local communities would also increase; maximising the amount of tourist spending that is retained by the local economy. Finally, a green tourism economy would ensure significant environmental benefits including reductions in water consumption, energy use and

CO₂ emissions. Given tourism's sheer size and reach, even small changes towards greening can have significant impacts (UNWTO and UNEP, 2008). In order to move to a green economy, tourism requires: a focus on the private sector, the development of relations with representatives of the tourism sector, management, planning and development of tourist destinations, fiscal policy and economic instruments, and investment in green tourism (Khalil, 2018).

In order for such tourism development to be ecologically acceptable and cost-effective, infrastructure arrangements are needed for recreational facilities and the environmental education of the holidaymakers themselves in accordance with the principles of green economy and sustainable development.

Optimisation of the tourism industry in the region or countries, in the transition to a green economy, should be based on the preferential development of those types and forms of tourism that allow the maximum and comprehensive use of available resources. A distinctive feature of this development is to focus on the launch of small projects aimed at the development of the tourism industry in cities and regions. Projects may be aimed at supporting the activities of district and city administrations in the development of the tourism sector, the development of tourist routes, the training of specialists, the development of information and marketing materials and teaching aids, the promotion of tourist products, the construction of small tourist infrastructure, the reconstruction of rural houses and information technologies. They can use the six elements of socio-ecological mechanisms and the four financial-organisational mechanisms for the transition to a green economy presented above. At the same time, from a certain pool of projects supported at the regional and local levels, there can be significant economic, social and environmental effects for the territory and population.

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