

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES AND FACTORS IN LARGE NATURE PROTECTED AREAS: CASE OF LATVIA

Agita Livina
Vidzeme University of Applied Science
Valmiera, Latvia
e-mail: agita.livina@va.lv

and

Iluta Berzina
Vidzeme University of Applied Science;
Latvia University of Agriculture
Valmiera and Jelgava, Latvia
e-mail: iluta.berzina@va.lv

ABSTRACT

The article deals with conducting factors and principles of sustainable tourism management in large nature protected areas in Latvia. Analysis of sustainable tourism management is done by internal and external factors and 10 principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

Results of the research show that it is important to consider balanced development and co-operation principles in inclusive management model. Balanced development principle is related with geographical location of nature protected area and distribution of population or large cities. Local initiatives of inhabitants and entrepreneurs are drivers for sustainable tourism development in large protected areas. The Principle of tourism for nature protection is not yet implemented in sustainable management of large protected areas in Latvia.

Key Words: sustainable tourism management, large nature protected areas, sustainable management principles and factors.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism dimensions based on nature resources are: activities and business, philosophy and symbol, nature conservation principles and objectives (Wiley, 1994). National parks, areas of protected landscapes and biosphere reserves are appropriate for tourism and leisure activities. Some 51% of total travel in 2010 was for leisure, recreation and holidays, indicates the continuing importance of the proper management of recreational areas, and especially wilderness and parks (UNWTO, 2011). More than a third of travellers are found to favour environmentally-friendly tourism and be willing to pay for related experiences. Ecotourism, nature, heritage, cultural, and “soft adventure” tourism are taking the lead and are predicted to grow rapidly over the next two decades. It is estimated that global spending on ecotourism is increasing about six times the industry-wide rate of growth (Pratt et al. 2011).

Target group of visitors for large nature protected areas includes international tourists, domestic tourists and locals – one day visitors. International tourist arrivals had seen growth from 25 million in 1950 to 940 million in 2010. International tourist arrivals are forecast to reach 1.8 billion by 2030 according to the newly released United Nations World Tourism Organization long-term forecast, *Tourism Towards 2030* (UNWTO, 2011). Large nature protected areas as recreational areas are important for local inhabitants, especially of urbanized and densely populated territories (Washowiak, 2005).

The number of nature protected areas is growing from year to year in the world. From the first established Yellowstone National Park in 1872 to the now 3,551 national parks in the world by 2010. In 1971 the UNESCO Man and Biosphere programme was created which contains 580 biosphere reserves in 114 countries. In Latvia there are 14 large nature protected areas: 1 biosphere reserve, 4 national parks and 9 areas of protected landscapes. This is a challenge for scientists, managers and society how to manage nature protected areas in a sustainable manner to serve both interests: nature protection and tourism development.

The authors have studied the factors and principles used in the inclusive and exclusive management models which have an impact on sustainable tourism management in large protected areas as national parks,

areas of protected landscapes and biosphere reserves. The study is based on literature studies of tourism planning and development in nature protected areas, on separate in-depth interviews of managers and visitors, normative documents of large nature protected areas, including organisational chart, functions; data are triangulated by observations of the authors of the article.

The objective of the paper is to discover the main factors and principles of sustainable tourism management in large nature protected areas. The authors analysed these factors and principles from the point of view of four sustainability keystones: environmental, economical, social and institutional environments (Livina and Druva-Druvaskalne, 2009).

Results of the research show that it is important to consider strong sustainability principle in the management and to assess such factors as geographical location, distribution of populations, the goal for establishing a nature protected area, the type of land, functions of governance and others.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT IN PROTECTED AREAS

Management principles are the statements of fundamental truth based on logic which provides guidelines for managerial decision making and actions. There are several principles of internal management, for instance, unity of direction(-s); authority and responsibility; processes order, discipline; initiatives; centralization and de-centralization; etc. Managing principles cause of planning, organization resources, staffing, directing and controlling as a management functions (WebCraft Inc, 2008). Management external factors are the conditions that have an impact on the management process and the aims of the organization. Management model can become a source of advantage and vary according to the type of organization, company, and objectives. Different management or governance approaches are practiced in large nature protected areas (Glover et.al. 1998; More, 2005; Eagles, 2008).

Management system of large scale nature protected areas historically is developed differently in the world. Leisure and tourism in rural areas, including protected areas, first became of high relevance in the 1960s. In this period a few ecological but mainly economical issues determined destination development. In the 1970s the concept of “nature parks” includes balance between nature protection and tourism development (Washowiak, 2005). This sense is still topical till nowadays in practice and academic research. We agree to Washowiak that it is significant to create and implement environmental protection policies and to analyse leisure, tourism consumption.

Since the 1960's and 1970's two fundamentally different management models for national parks are being used: the *exclusive* management model in the United States, Canada and other countries, and the *inclusive* management model in Europe, int. al., Latvia. The management plans in the exclusive model are developed distinguishing interests of the local community because protected areas usually are not in private ownership. Development and nature protection occur in the parastatal collaboration. In its turn the management of the inclusive model characterises by priority of respecting needs of locals. The reason – the large protected areas are in private hands mainly, excluding the United States and Canada (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996). According to Buckley (2003), changes in the distribution of population, reduction of biodiversity, climate changes, increasing of welfare and nature protected areas or their border territories have become more populated, visited and developed in the world makes it necessary to search for new management approaches for national parks. Problems and new targets for the future are similar for both existing management models (Buckley et.al. 2003). European Sustainable Trade Union indicates sustainability of management which takes into account consideration of economic, technological, environmental, socio-cultural and political factors. These factors are well known as external environment analysis in business. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is underlying drivers of change for protected areas as: demography, socio-economic changes, technology, catastrophic events, politics and institutions (Wilkinson et.al. 2011). The Report of Tourism in green economics mentions sustainability drivers in such areas as: energy, climate change, water, waste, biodiversity, cultural heritage and linkages with local economy (Pratt et.al. 2011). The implementation of the 10 principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (Charter) serves as the way to ensure the use, preservation, and aggrandizement of resources of tourism in the European protected areas. The principles are:

- (1) To involve all those implicated by tourism in and around the protected area in its development and management.
- (2) To prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for the protected area.

- (3) To protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage, for and through tourism, and to protect it from excessive tourism development.
- (4) To provide all visitors with a high quality experience in all aspects of their visit.
- (5) To communicate effectively to visitors about the special qualities of the area.
- (6) To encourage specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area.
- (7) To increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainability issues amongst all those involved in tourism.
- (8) To ensure that tourism supports and does not reduce the quality of life of local residents.
- (9) To increase benefits from tourism to the local economy.
- (10) To monitor and influence visitor flows to reduce negative impacts (EUROPARC, 2001).

The Charter directly addresses key principles elaborated in the International Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism developed under the "Convention on Biological Diversity". The Charter's underlying aims:

- (1) To increase awareness of and support for Europe's protected areas as a fundamental part of heritage, which should be preserved for and enjoyed by current and future generations.
- (2) To improve the sustainable development and management of tourism in protected areas, which take into account needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors (EUROPARC, 2010).

Currently the Charter Park (CP) certificate has been received by 50 different protected territories in Europe but not in the Baltic States. CP certificate is an international confirmation that the development of the protected area has been advisedly planned, respecting interests of all interested parties (EUROPARC, 2010). We support Wachowiak's (2005) statements on management protected areas in Germany that general objective is to involve the visitor in the protection of nature. Dowling (2002) considers that tourism in protected areas exists in the environment, about the environment, for the environment (Newsome et.al. 2002). In that viewpoint authors see not only the various manifestations of tourism in large protected areas but also the evolution of people's understanding about the nature protections' substance what over the time has changed from consumption of natural resources to their protection. Tourism serves as a tool for ecosystems' protection. It is a modern understanding of the economic role of tourism, development of human responsibility, and tourism interaction with protected areas.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Institutional systems and sustainable management

Administration or management of protected nature territories means power, relationship and responsibility. It is interaction between structures, processes and traditions. Management of protected territories has a broad range – from politics to practice, from behavior to awareness, from investments to influences (Borrini-Feyerabend, 2003). Many people are directly interested in use of protected territories for tourism: development and territory planners and managers, visitors and tourists, volunteers, businessmen, employees, local community, land owners, the state and local authorities, their institutions, education and research institutions, experts, NGOs, media, etc. (Eagles et.al. 2009).

We have elaborated the institutional review on basis of literature studies and analysis of involved institutions in sustainable management of tourism development in protected areas (see Tab.1).

Table 1
Institutional review of involved organizations in sustainable management by analysis from the point view of Europe and Latvia

Level	Institutions of Environment Protection	Institutions of Regional development (include tourism and environment issues)	Institutions of Tourism and Economic
International level	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) European Network of Site Management Organisations	United Nations (UN) Council of the European Union (CEU) European Commission (EC) Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBBS)	United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) European Travel Commission Baltic Sea Tourism Commission (BTC)

	(EUROSITE) Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe (EUROPARC)		
National level	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia (MEPRD RL) State Regional Development Agency (SRDA) Radiation Safety Centre of the State Environmental Service (RSCES) Nature Conservation Agency (NCA) Latvian Environmental Protection Fund (LEPF) Latvian Fund for Nature (LFN) Public Administration of Cultural Heritage (PACH) Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)		Ministry of Economic of the Republic of Latvia (ME RL) Latvian Tourism Development Agency (LTDA) Public Administration of Cultural Heritage (PACH) Latvian Rural Tourism Association „Lauku ceļotājs” (LRTA LC) Latvian Union of Ecotourism (LUET) Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
Regional and local level	Gauja National Park (GNP) Kemeru National Park (KNP) Razna National Park (RNP) Slitere National Park (SNP) Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	Development Council of Riga Planning Region (DCRPR) Council of Vidzeme Planning Region (CVPR) Vidzeme Development Agency (VDA) Development Council of Latgale Planning Region (DCLPR) Latgale Region Development Agency (LRDA) Development Council of Kurzeme Planning Region (DCKPR) Development Council of Zemgale Planning Region (DCZPR) local municipalities; Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	

Source: Constructed by authors using information from webpages of organizations, planning documents.

Table 1 combines a list of institutions which deals with environment and tourism issues on the international, national, regional and local levels. There are five institutions on the international level which work for regional development, including tourism and environment issues, focusing on sustainability. We noted that regional development organizations on the international level are mainly descriptive from the point of view of Europe as the tourism world region. On the international level organizations which mainly take care of environment protection and sustainable development dominate. These organizations deal indirectly with sustainable development via sustainable development platform. We analysed all organizations from the point of view of sustainable development indicator. Our results show that only some of them work with development of creating new nature based sustainable tourism products and services. At the same time, exactly organizations which work for regional development are involved in marketing activities of place, destination. The main aim of all institutions of environment protection is nature protection, sustainability of resources and integrated monitoring, including tourism flows and capacity. The main aims of institutions of tourism development are sustainable tourism development, cooperation and partnership as well as monitoring. These organizations are implementing monitoring mainly with focus on economical benefit from tourism industry for the state, region and local community. The greatest part of input for sustainable tourism development is provided by environment institutions on international level.

A significant role in sustainable tourism development is played by non-governmental organizations, particularly rural tourism association “Lauku ceļotājs” and the Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development on the national level. The Ministry of Economics is responsible for defining and implementing tourism policy with the main emphasis put on economic growth and marketing of Latvia as a tourism destination. The Nature Conservation Agency (NCA) is the main body of nature protection policies, management plans and implementation of nature protection activities, including all nature protected areas in Latvia. This institution is generating ideas and concepts of sustainable development, including tourism for regional and local self-governments and entrepreneurs and other stakeholders. The structural reform of nature

protected areas management system changing it from decentralized to centralized one is being implemented since 2009.

The most crucial level of management of nature protected areas is regional and local level. Large nature protected areas are located in different self-governments which create territories of planning regions. After NCA structural reforms administrations of NP and North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve have been liquidated. Now large nature protected areas are managed by NCA territorial offices. On this level partnership principle between all stakeholders is important and this level is close to implementing sustainability principle in the practice by realizing environment protection, environment awareness, biodiversity, economic diversification, cultural heritage, infrastructure et.al. projects. The authors assessed interaction between EUROPARC defined sustainability principles and functions of self-governments, large nature protected areas and NGOs and found out that nature protection function is more implemented in nature protected areas, sustainable planning in nature protected areas, self-governments, support of economic development in self-governments, NGOs, quality of tourism services, products in NGOs, partnership, communication in self-governments and NGO. Finally we concluded that monitoring activity is more advisedly implemented and organized on the international, national level, but some minor activities as public monitoring are implemented on the local level.

2. Tourism Development and Large Scale Protected Areas in Latvia

We are analyzing large scale nature protected area management using internal (strategic aims, functions, sustainable management principles, interests of stakeholders, supply and demand of services, and performance of results) and external (environmental, economical, social and institutional) factor groups. Geographical and spatial distribution of supply and demand of leisure, tourism activities as significant in large scale protected areas is indicated in research by Wachowiak which gives added value to SWOT analysis for protected areas.

We are providing overview of tourism development, including domestic and international, and characteristics of large protected areas in Latvia. Non-resident travelers in Latvia had seen growth from 1914 thousand in 2000 to 5042 thousand in 2010 according to sample survey data. In 2010, 4582 non residents used rural tourism accommodation services. Since 2000 tourism holidays have increased from 10.7% to 23.8% in 2010, it indicates the continuing growth of tourism development in nature protected areas. Domestic recreational trips within Latvia in 2010 are 13179.6 thousand (Tourism of Latvia 2011, 2011). The total number of visitors in all four national parks in Latvia is above 200 thousand per year. Domestic visitors are important target audience for national parks. It creates 83% of all visitors in national parks (Unpublished data, 2010). The table 2 shows the situation in management planning of large nature protected areas in Latvia. Razna NP and Gauja NP are the only ones that has elaborated and accepted a Tourism development program, but management plans have been prepared for other territories.

Table 2
Profile of Large Scale Protected Areas in Latvia

Title, year of establishing	Area (ha)	Accepted management plan	Tourism development is included in the management plan
Gauja NP, 1973	91745	2004-2014 2012-2020	Action plan for sustainable planning and recreation infrastructure
Kemeris NP, 1997	38165	2001-2015	Action plan for sustainable planning and recreation infrastructure according with principles of EUROPARC Charter
Razna NP, 2007	59615	2009-2019	Action plan for sustainable planning and recreation infrastructure
Slitere NP, 2000 (1921-2000 had status of nature reserve)	26490	2010-2020	Action plan for sustainable planning and recreation infrastructure
North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, 1997	474350	2007 (Landscape ecological plan)	Landscape policies and defined territories of culture heritage values
North Gauja protected landscape, 2004	21749	2007-2017	Action plan of tourism infrastructure
Augsdaugava protected landscape, 1990	52325	none	none
Augszeme protected	20828	Management plan	Not available information

landscape, 1977		for one restricted territory in 2001	
Adazi protected landscape, 2004	6126	2008-2018	Action plan of recreation infrastructure
Kaucers protected landscape, 2004	2762	2008-2020	Action plan for sustainable planning and recreation infrastructure
Nicgales forest, 2004	915	2005-2015	Action plan of tourism infrastructure
Veclaicene protected landscape, 1977	20892	Management plan for two specific territories 2003-2013	Action plan of recreation infrastructure
Vecpiebalga protected landscape, 1987	8945	none	none
Vestiena protected landscape, 1977	27150	2011-2020	Action plan of recreation infrastructure

Source: (NCA, 2011)

In Latvia large protected nature territories might include also other smaller protected territories, for example, restricted areas. Not always management plans are elaborated for the whole territory, but for separate parts of the large territory, as it can be seen in the examples of Augszeme and Veclaicene. All management plans are focused on nature protection in each particular territory, but not all of them provide for tourism development. They mainly deal with formation of tourism small infrastructure. The authors discovered that those large protected areas that are located in central Latvia and are densely populated, pay more attention to tourism development in the long term with strategic tourism planning, introduction of new services, marketing, introduction of joint tourism products, cooperating with local governments, businessmen, NGOs. The authors also found out that territories located farther away from populated and developed areas use protected nature territories for the purposes of tourism to a smaller extent.

CONCLUSIONS

In case of Latvia using inclusive management model is significant to consider principle of co-operation and partnership between stakeholders on all policy making and implementing levels as well as interaction up to down sustainable management levels. It is more difficult to implement it particularly in large protected areas because the numbers of potential partners are higher, cooperation is more fragmented. The principle is implemented and approved on project basis between project partners from local till global.

The principle tourism for nature protection is not yet implemented in sustainable management of large protected areas in Latvia. The institutional system shows that this principle is not implemented. Functions and regulations of NCA do not include sustainable tourism planning and development, but only environment awareness in NCA and recreation infrastructure and tourism services on basis of nature resources and interpretation in national parks. Principles of co-operation and tourism for nature protection are important for internal environment of management large nature protected areas.

Among external environment factors for sustainable management of large nature protected areas the balanced development principle is significant. Balanced development principle is related with geographical location of nature protected area and distribution of population or large cities. Distribution of population creates supply of tourism and recreational services, products because 83% of visitors are locals in national parks in Latvia.

Local initiatives from inhabitants and entrepreneurs are drivers for sustainable tourism development in large protected areas. In cases when locals have initiatives to develop tourism services and products sustainable development of the territory is stimulated.

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