



## Developing a Sufficient and Effective Coastal Tourism Model

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### ABSTRACT

Coastal tourism is nowadays the most important tourism activity worldwide and its development is based on the optimal combined use of tourism resources available in the coastal region. Over-development of a destination, however, leads to significant environmental, cultural, economic and social impacts on communities and infrastructures of destinations. Important differentiations are, therefore, needed for re-designing existing destinations and developing new and under-developed ones in sustainable ways. This model must be based on a strategy to regulate, control and finance tourism development proposals using universally accepted rules and practices. It is concluded that sustainable tourism development of a certain coastal area requires the involvement of all stakeholders, as well as the strong commitment of the state to ensure broad participation and consensus. Sustainability in tourism is a continuous process that requires thorough impact monitoring and adoption of all necessary measures to prevent, suppress and/or correct all emerging problems on a case-by-case and day-by-day basis.

### 1. Introduction

Coastal areas are transitional areas between the hinterland and the sea: these areas are currently under very high population pressure due to urbanization, as over 50% of the world population lives within 60 kilometers from the seafront (UNEP, 2009). Tourism development in coastal areas is called coastal tourism and is defined by the EU as tourism related to recreational activities such as swimming and sunbathing as well as a wide range of other activities, such as coastal walks, athletics and the observation of wildlife. For these activities, proximity to the sea seems to be their major advantage (European Commission, 2014). Coastal tourism is an activity of the persons who travel for entertainment and stay far from their home-place for a period less than one consecutive year, in an area located either on the coastal strip or in the hinterland, but at a relatively short distance (up to 60 km) from the coastal area (Smeenge & Offringa, 2013).

This form is based on an attractive combination of resources available in these transition regions that are called coastal tourism destinations. Many of these destinations have been overdeveloped in recent years due to the high economic impact of coastal tourism. Indeed, in France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey tourism income account for nearly 5% of these countries' gross domestic product (Williams, 2010). This growth and subsequent competition, both between destinations and also between businesses within the destination, has led to new and expensive infrastructure development in order to continue providing high-quality services at affordable prices. As a result, almost 65% of European tour operators are currently working within these destinations (Coastlearn, 2012; Smeenge & Offringa, 2013).

This paper aimed to analyze the current situation and propose measures to face the negative impacts of coastal tourism overdevelopment.

### 2. The Magnitude of the Problem

Due to its significant profitability, coastal tourism in Europe, even in saturated destinations, tends to be further enriched with the new activities that deplete its capacity: this leads to significant negative effects on the environment and the natural, historical and cultural heritage of destinations, as well as the life quality of the inhabitants (Coccosis & Mexa, 2004; Honey & Krantz, 2007; Lytras & Papageorgiou 2014; UNWTO, 2019). Indeed, statistics are rather worrying as in the Mediterranean region, which is the world's leading tourist destination, where about 350 million visitors are expected in 2020, and 84% of these tourists are expected to come from the northern and western Europe. In 80% of cases, tourists state that their desired destination is Spain, France, Italy and Greece (Smeenge & Offringa 2013). As a result, mass tourism is considered to be one of the main causes of ecological disasters in coastal areas, leading to

- loss of marine resources due to the destruction of coral reefs and overfishing,
- pollution of water resources, with a profound rehabilitation cost,
- soil degradation and loss of soil resources resulted from desertification and high-water consumption, excessive use of fertilizers and corrosion,
- air and sea pollution,
- social upheaval and loss of cultural resources and the particular character of the destination (these characteristics made the destination popular and their alteration is responsible for a possible rapid decline),
- urbanization, increased the cost of living and deterioration of the quality of life of locals,
- the high cost of infrastructure maintenance and

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development with dubious paybacks (for instance cruise infrastructure's economic benefit is minimal if the ports are not the starting point or the end of the cruise),

- restricted public access to the maritime front,
- expansion of tourism development from the narrow coastal area to the hinterland and, consequently, the economic imbalance between communities living in the neighboring areas,
- the risk of sea-level rise due to climate change.

Also, among the 10 Mediterranean regions at the risk of an ecological disaster that is listed below, WWF includes the Aegean and the Ionian Sea and states that some sites, once a virgin, have nowadays been severely damaged beyond repair (Coastalwiki, xx). These ten Mediterranean regions at risk are:

- Moroccan Mediterranean Coast and the Alboran Sea, Coral Coast of Tunisia (Spain, Morocco, Tunisia),
- Dalmatian Coast and Islands (Croatia),
- Cyrenaica and Gulfs of Sirte and Gabes (Libya, Tunisia),
- Southern Anatolia and Northeast Levantine Coast and Sea (Turkey),
- The Aegean Sea and Coasts (Greece, Turkey),
- Sardinia and Corsica (Italy, France),
- The Balearic Islands and Sea (Spain),
- Liguro-Provençal Sea (France, Italy),
- Southern Tyrrhenian Coast and Sea (Italy),
- South-Western Balkans Coast and Sea, Ionian Islands (Albania, Greece)

The protection of the environment should, therefore, be a principal concern in strategic planning for coastal tourism development.

### 3. Environmental Problems of Coastal Regions

Negative environmental impacts of tourism development in the coastal regions derive from tourism activity itself, overpopulation, pollution, excessive building of houses, hotels and resorts in coastal areas, as well as intensive agricultural and industrial development, overfishing, maritime transport and climate change (Gossling, 2002; Honey & Krantz, 2007; Lal Mukherjee, 2013; UNEP, 2005).

Coastal tourism is extremely profitable, and all destinations aim to further develop it and attract larger numbers of tourists, and this increases tourist demand. However, it also requires additional infrastructure (financed by the government) that is needed to serve both a large number of visitors and the new trends in quality tourism. This costly infrastructure includes airports, motorways, railways, harbors, marinas, as well as golf courses and swimming pools that consume huge water resources. Tourism growth has a significant ecological impact on the coastal areas where fragile ecosystems exist, such as coastal forests, wetlands, delta rivers and coral reefs. At the same time, the increased sewage contaminates the sea despite the existence of biological purification, as such facilities often have limited capacities and cannot cope with this overpopulation. Marine pollution can also arise from tourist boats and, in particular, cruise ships in coastal areas, which are particularly burdensome to the marine environment, as pollution is caused by wastewater discharge and the release of other pollutants, predominantly petroleum products (European Environment Agency, 2017; WWF, 2019a; WWF, 2019c). Wastewater discharge in marinas and seaside coastal areas is a potential danger due to the lack of suitable port facilities for solid waste, especially in small islands, as well as the lack of waste disposal facilities on-board: this means that these deficiencies (and also the illegal discharge of petroleum products) heavily pollutes the seawater (Honey & Krantz, 2007; Tempesta, 2013).

Pollution severely affects the habitat and the life of amphibians and other animals, while excessive water consumption exhausts groundwater resources, thus heavily damaging local agriculture. This habitat degradation and pollution also affect directly rare and endangered species, leading to biodiversity loss (Honey & Krantz, 2007; Tempesta, 2013; WWF, 2000). Indeed, it has been estimated that approximately 24% of mammals (1,130 species) have disappeared during the last three decades, while 12% (1,183 species) of birds face the risk of extinction worldwide (UNEP, 2003b). Finally, over-consumption of "local cuisine" dishes significantly reduces food resources (UNEP, 2003b; European Environment Agency, 2017; WWF, 2000), leading to price increase and degradation of traditional products, as substitutes are widely used.

Deterioration in the life quality of the residents is also another negative consequence often seen, and in a very short period of time, a large number of people influxes such areas: these people require transportation, accommodation and large amounts of food, energy, water and other resources, leading to a price increase in the destination. Moreover, several infrastructure development activities, such as port and marinas expansion and dredging, may result in coastal erosion and traffic congestion around ports (European Environment Agency, 2017; WWF 2019a; WWF 2019d).

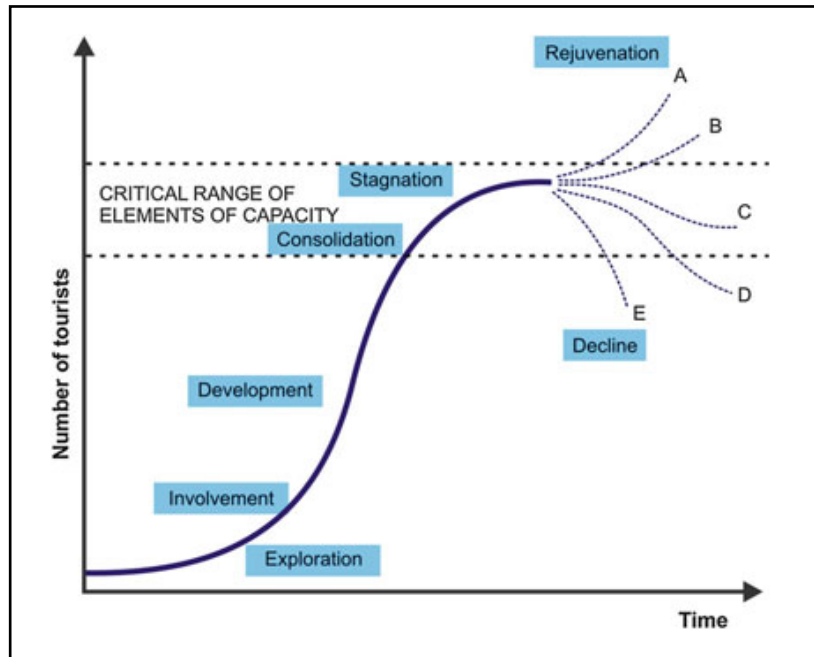
It is apparent under the light of the above-mentioned issues that coastal areas and marinas host the activities that have a profound economic impact that is usually multiplied when combined with other touristic, cultural and economic activities at the destination. It exposes, however, a major danger to the environment that has to be protected: for this, new research is led to the development of construction techniques and policies for quality assurance and also spatial arrangements, to ensure that coastal zones and marinas are not entirely occupied by tourist activities, thus allowing tourism to fit harmoniously into the overall function of the destination (Papageorgiou, 2016).

Sustainable coastal tourism development is also necessary for a destination to cope with the decline to be experienced: Butler first suggested that a coastal tourism destination has three distinct phases, exploitation, development and conservation, and from this stage on, reorganization, standstill or decline may occur (Butler, 1980). It is, therefore, apparent that authorities of a certain destination should closely monitor the situation and develop relevant strategies to cope with the decline, which sometimes may occur rapidly (Agarwal, 2002; Butler, 2011).

### 4. The Need for a New Sustainable Coastal Tourism Development Model

Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process requiring thorough monitoring of its impacts for which a pertinent body needs to develop all the necessary preventive, repressive and/or corrective actions on a case-by-case basis. It is, therefore, necessary to adopt rules and apply best practices to protect sustainable tourism development, economic prosperity and the ecological balance of coastal tourism areas, by preserving the natural beauty, local culture and the way of life and the life quality of the inhabitants of the destinations. Protection measures in our opinion should include;

- the selection and siting of coastal projects (by proper urban and spatial planning), by studying the environmental impacts of the construction and operation of these projects,
- the adaption and update of the institutional framework to the current circumstances and,
- integrated management of coastal structures through a single supervisory body.



**Figure 1.** The life circle of a destination, according to Butler (Thiel-Ellul & Navarro-Jurado, 2016).

This last dimension is particularly important since development policy must combine, control, adapt and finance (notably through the European Regional Development Fund) all the above-mentioned activities. In our opinion, the body must be independent (although controlled by the government), involve all the organizations, associations, municipalities and chambers that are relevant to the touristic development of the region and be responsible for the wider coastal region.

EU funding opportunities derive from the 2014-2020 financial framework and other funding tools and can help finance business plans to meet current challenges in coastal tourism as well as investing in innovations (EC, xx; EU, 2016):

- European “Structural and Investment Funds” can finance sustainable investments in tourism, entrepreneurship, the competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, energy efficiency, employment and labor mobility and the promotion of good practices, international networks and clustering.
- The “Horizon 2020” program is a financial tool for the EU’s research and innovation strategy, with “Blue Growth” being one of the focusing areas.
- The COSME program aims at enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, increasing tourism demand, diversifying supply and products and improving the quality, sustainability, accessibility, skills and capabilities of tourism industry personnel.
- The “Creative Europe” program supports synergies between cultural and nature tourism, including coastal and marine heritage.
- The “Erasmus +” program promotes employability and innovative forms of professional education and training.
- The “LIFE +” program can co-finance innovative projects that affect coastal and marine tourism and resource efficiency.
- The “7th EU Environment Action Program” is also linked to coastal and maritime tourism, while the European Investment Bank also provides funding for SMEs to invest in tourism and regional convergence.

All these should be implemented during the development

of a coastal tourism Strategic Planning Process of a certain destination, where a board of experts should firstly identify the objectives and define the evaluation methods to achieve them. Research and academic institutions play an important role for this by studying and analyzing the various aspects of the tourism sector, while international and intergovernmental organizations, such as UNWTO, UNEP, OAS, CTO, ASEAN and others develop guidelines for practical implementation.

## 5. Planning for the Future

The adoption of the policies for the development of coastal areas has been an important issue for the United Nations for more than 25 years. In 1992, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro reached an integrated action plan known as Agenda 21 (Agenda 21, 1992) that has been approved by more than 178 governments, including Greece. These governments committed for the integrated management and sustainable development of the coastal areas and the marine environment under their national jurisdiction. This means that governments need to (UNEP, 2009):

- develop an integrated policy and implement decision-making processes involving all stakeholders, while promoting compatibility and balance between tourism development and protection of the environment,
- identify existing and future use of the infrastructure, the human and natural resources of the coastal areas, as well as the possible positive and negative interactions between them,
- apply preventive and precautionary measures when designing and implementing projects,
- provide relevant information and consultation opportunities for individuals, investment groups, associations and organizations concerned, as well as the opportunity to participate in programming and decision-making.

These policies should be compatible with the UNWTO’s view for sustainable tourism development (UNWTO, 2004) and also balance the environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of tourism by;

- optimally using environmental resources and,
- achieving sustainable, long-term economic outcomes and balanced distribution of social and economic benefits (including stable jobs, opportunities to improve income, social services and poverty alleviation) to all parties involved.

Strategic planning to achieve sustainable coastal tourism development should, therefore, adopt the key principles of Agenda 21 (Agenda 21, 1992; UNEP, 2005; UNEP, 2003a), which are:

- The concept of integrated local development,
- The visualization of alternative future scenarios,
- The use of indicators to assess sustainability and local life quality,
- The establishment of partnerships with the private sector,
- The participation of the citizens to the project,
- The adoption of short, medium and long term action programs.

UNEP proposes a methodological framework to establish the process of strategic planning for sustainable tourism development in coastal areas, based on five guiding sets of principles (UNEP, 2005; UNEP, 2003a) which are:

- Strategic Planning Approach
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management,
- UNEP/UNWTO twelve Sustainable Tourism Aims,
- Tourism Carrying Capacity Assessment,
- Stakeholder Involvement.

Strategic planning must consider all tourism resources, organizations, markets and programs within a destination and also consider all economic, environmental, social and institutional aspects of tourism development. Strategic planning starts with a strong commitment of the state and other stakeholders to sustainable tourism development followed by the adoption of a clear vision statement; then authorities must analyze the current situation, create a framework for stakeholder involvement and define a feasible development strategy by formulating a strategic action plan that is to be implemented and monitored. This monitoring and constant evaluation must lead to planning the review and (possibly) revision.

Governments are the key players in tourism development strategic planning and implementation, as they possess all legal and regulatory power in transportation, water distribution, energy consumption, waste management and land and sea use. Governments are also the principal financial sources for infrastructure development and urban planning and regulate and control the legality of private investments. As tourism is a major source of revenue for the national economy, governments nowadays tend to adopt integrated management forms of coastal areas such as the various destination management organizations.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management is a long-term planning activity applied to a certain coastal area; it involves many stakeholders, both state and private and is based on multiple short-term programs that form a major tourism development strategic plan. Strategic Planning is a sine-qua-non process to achieve sustainable tourism development in a certain destination, aiming at (EC, 2013; UNEP, 2005; UNEP, 2003a; Williams, 2010):

- Economic Viability,
- The prosperity of the Locals,
- Quality in Employment,
- Social Equity,
- Visitor Fulfilment and safety,

- Local Controlled planning and decision-making,
- Community Well-being,
- Cultural Richness,
- Physical Integrity,
- Biological Diversity,
- Environmental Purity and
- Resource Efficiency.

The tourism carrying capacity is of paramount importance, especially in overdeveloped areas, where the possibility of decline is highly possible. The tourism carrying capacity of a certain destination must also adopt three basic policies (physical-ecological-environmental, socio-demographic and economic-political) and be able to provide a wide knowledge of the destination, followed by an initial evaluation phase (identifying the possible modes of management and acceptable levels of impact for the destination) and a further strategic phase where optimum capacity is defined and sustainable tourism development strategy is formulated.

To achieve these goals, one needs to engage stakeholders in the strategic planning process by motivating qualified people to involve in the planning process and future activities. Involving people is challenging and time-consuming but makes a huge difference to the development of successful projects, plans and tourism products as working with relevant stakeholders is a key issue at all stages and conflicts are always present. Typical conflicts occur a. when there is over access to the coastline or public coastal resources are used by the public due to the private ownership or rent of land and coastal infrastructure, b. when incompatible activities take place in the same area (i.e. fish farming and marinas), c. when there are problems about preserving versus draining wetlands for residential development (especially the case of protected areas that are generally extremely fragile and vulnerable to anthropogenic activities in general) d. when water-consuming activities (i.e. golf courses) that affect farming are common and e. when safety measures are taken for possible terrorist actions. Conflicts occur between the local authorities and several national/international stakeholders, private companies, the coastal population, the tourists. To resolve these disputes, apart from legal procedures that should be used only when all other techniques have failed, several negotiation techniques have been proposed by international organizations (FAO, 1998; UNEP, 2009; Williams, 2010). In general, two organizations may be formed to help destination development in our opinion: a coastal tourism development bureau and a destination management organization.

A coastal tourism development bureau, adopting the successful model of the Convention and Visitors Bureaus that nowadays operate worldwide, can combine the efforts of local and regional authorities, the private sector and local and regional stakeholders and prove to be flexible and effective in resolving conflicts and developing tourism in the destination.

A destination management organization has a wider impact than the previous and is responsible for the coordination and integration of the destination mix elements, as well as the destination marketing (Morrison 2013a). Although more difficult to be organized than the bureaus, destination management organizations provide coordinated management of all the elements that make up a destination, such as attractions, access, marketing, human resources, infrastructure and image. They are typically participating in governance structures that are led by local authorities, involve all local and regional tourism stakeholders (UNWTO, 2007) and may be formed in many different organizational sizes and types, such as government or quasi-governmental departments, according to local practices and governmental

systems (Morrison, 2013b). The most efficient forms are local tourism boards, councils, public-private partnerships and development organizations (Sotiriadis & Shen, 2017).

Both forms of organizations must ensure that in cases of dispute, all interested parties will sit at the same table and talk, communicate openly and reach a consensus with the majority of stakeholders (UNEP, 2009): this is necessary, as the greatest challenge that coastal managers will face in the future will be tourism development in the context of integrated coastal zone management in order to maintain sustainability (Cicin-Sain et al, 2008). Another important role for these organizations will be the continuous analysis of the status of the destination and the identification of the actions required, as suggested in Butler's model. Indeed, the main scope is nowadays to support the viability and further development of a coastal tourism destination through branding, intelligent marketing, quality services, specialization, time expansion, infrastructure improvement and durability rather than just the increase of the number of visitors (Lew, 2017; Morrison 2013a; Morrison 2013b; Petrosillo et al., 2007).

## 6. Conclusions

Sustainable tourism development of a certain coastal area requires the involvement of all stakeholders, as well as a strong commitment of the state to ensure broad participation and consensus among stakeholders. Sustainability in tourism is a continuous process that requires thorough impact monitoring and adoption of all necessary measures to prevent, suppress and/or correct all the emerging problems on a case-by-case and day-by-day basis. Tourism planning, therefore, should be thorough, flexible, adaptive and transparent and should take into account (Burbridge, 1999; Morrison 2013a; Morrison 2013b; Papageorgiou, 2016; Tarasionak, 2014; UNOSD, 2013; Williams, 2010; WWF, 2019b; WWF 2019c; WWF2019d)

- the ecological "footprint" of the destination,
- the tourism carrying capacity of the destination,
- the environmental impact assessment of tourism development,
- the integrated coastal zone management principles that should be adopted for the specific area,
- novel and effective marketing approaches,
- the management of a variety of crises and
- a "step-by-step" strategic planning process

For this, the tourism industry must develop new infrastructure and novel tourism products and policies that may (EC, 2014):

- maintain the unique character and, therefore, the attractiveness of the destination,
- restrict tourist flows by keeping the number of tourists within the capacity of the destination,
- adopt innovative activities to help develop new, attractive destinations (i.e. the accessibility to coastal and marine archaeology, the promotion of maritime heritage, underwater tourism or the marine gastronomy) and,
- promote interconnection with other alternative forms of tourism that exist or can be developed in the coastal area.

For many years in Greece, as in several other countries, tourism development was based on the "sun and sea" model, creating overcrowded coastal tourism destinations. This attracted many other profitable facilities in the surrounding areas, such as golf clubs and marinas, leading to environmental disasters. Existing destinations should be maintained and upgraded qualitatively: this means that activities leading to

over-saturation and depletion of resources should not be funded through state or EU development programs, and this means that both state permits and funding must be limited

- a. to innovative activities that promote quality service and extension of the tourist season in existing destinations or,
- b. to the undeveloped areas that have resources suitable for coastal tourism development that is environmentally friendly and respects the character of the destination.

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