SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR OF LOCAL AND FOREIGN TOURISTS IN LITHUANIA

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the consumption areas causing significant changes in the social and natural environments. Not always, these changes have positive outcomes. In order to avoid tourism sector's negative effects, it is necessary to pay more attention not only to positive changes of this industry, but also to assess citizens' (tourists') knowledge and behaviour regarding sustainable tourism. Tourists are those making final decision and acting in one or the other way.

The aim of this study is to examine and analyse local residents' and foreign tourists' attitude to sustainable tourism and their travelling and resting habits. In total 422 respondents have participated in the survey (212 Lithuanian and 210 foreign tourists).

The survey results showed that 80% of the Lithuanian and 94% of foreign respondents have heard the term "sustainable tourism". Environmental protection was the main feature attributed to the sustainable tourism by the respondents. The foreign tourists, in comparison to the Lithuanian, were more often aware about sustainable tourism ($\chi2=30.93$, $p<0.001$). Foreign tourist more often were sorting waste ($\chi2=93.254$, $p<0.001$), were more likely to save energy and water ($\chi2=38.851$, $p<0.001$) while traveling and having rest. Higher income, higher education, elder age, and knowledge of sustainable tourism determined significantly higher respondents' consideration of sustainability criteria and more environmental-friendly behaviour while travelling. Hence, raising awareness on sustainable tourism and financial support of such travel forms are the most important for promotion and development of sustainable tourism.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, perceptions, behaviour, tourists, factors, Lithuania.

1. Introduction

Globally, tourism is considered one of the most profitable types of business, therefore, each country encourage tourism development, develops and implements tourism policies, and allocates funds. However, direction of global capitalism tends to expand, rather than shape tourism related consumption (Patterson et al., 2007).

With the rapid development of the tourism sector, tourism caused environmental problems become major tourism research objectives (Huiqin et al., 2011). Now it is generally recognized that tourism development can significantly affect the local environment - tourism can cause direct changes in land cover, land, water and energy in use, increase biotic exchanges (including diseases), the disturbance of wild species and perceptions on environment of local communities. Regions and countries developing tourism cause a significant impact on natural resources, consumption attitudes, social security systems, pollution (Becken et al., 2002).

Hence, the tourism sector must change its direction of development: not only rapidly develop and create value added, but also to become a responsible one for society and the natural environment. Here, the important role is assign to sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is interpreted as the right balance between tourism related economic growth, environmental protection and tourists, together with the satisfaction of local residents' needs (Hunter, 2002). In general, sustainability principles include environmental, economic and social - cultural aspects of tourism development (Castellani et al., 2012). According to Hall (1998) this comprises social

justice (benefit to local community, employment, income, quality of life, public participation, and respect to the social and cultural values, personal development), economic efficiency (viability of tourism in the visited area, viability of the companies, meeting of the demand) and environmental preservation (biodiversity conservation, rational use of the natural resources, preservation of the natural resources for the future generations, local activities preservation).

Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in different tourism environments, including mass tourism and other tourism segments of different niches. Sustainable tourism development requires all relevant stakeholders' conscious participation, with ensured strong political leadership. This is a continuous process that requires constant monitoring of impacts, as well compulsory preventive and (or) remedial actions (Richards et al., 2008). Despite, progress in sustainable tourism, implementation continues to be a problematic one (Farmaki et al., 2014). In promoting sustainable tourism, each tourist (or potential tourist) play very important role for tourism as tourist choose one or another form of tourism and thus shapes supply. It is important how every consumer perceive tourism and practically expresses his/her perception thru choices and behaviour. This largely determines sustainable tourism.

Research purpose is to investigate the tourist's attitudes to sustainable tourism and their travel behaviour.

2. Methodology

For the wider understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism in practical application and full implementation, it is very important to explore the preferences and behaviour of potential consumers - tourists. This would make it easier to understand the expectations of consumers when choosing a responsible tourism, and thus to understand what factors are relevant to them. Tourists (local and foreign) were surveyed in January – April, 2013. The authors, based on the literature review, prepared a questionnaire, which was distributed in hard copy and electronically – www.apklausa.lt internet page for Lithuanians and in www.pollmill.com for foreigners in English. Questionnaire in hard copy for local and visiting tourists were presented in three different locations: Kaunas tourism information centre (Freedom av. 36, Kaunas), Kaunas International Airport (Karmelava, LT-54460, Kaunas distr.), the hotel Park Inn Kaunas (K. Donelaicio. 27, Kaunas). Questionnaire included questions about sustainable tourism knowledge, goals and preferences, travel habits and behaviour and socio-economic questions describing respondents. We admit that the surveying period might have some influence on the results.

In total 422 respondents have participated in the survey (212 Lithuanian and 210 foreign tourists). Sample size is sufficient to have the reliability of results with the accuracy of 5% at the 95% confidence interval. Among local tourists female constituted 51.9%, among foreign tourist - 54.3% of surveyed respondents. More than 94% of local tourists were from Kaunas region. Foreign tourists mostly were from Europe: Germany – 33.3%, Russia – 21%, Finland - 16.7%, Belorussia -11%, the rest from other countries, including one respondent from the USA. The analysis of the socio-economic factors that determine respondents' knowledge, preferences of sustainable tourism, travel habits, and behaviour was based on and Kendall τ_b or Contingency (c) coefficient, depending on the type of data. Chi-square test was used for assessment of the differences between local and foreign tourists. IBM SPSS 17.0 software package was used for data processing and displaying.

3. Results

The survey results showed that 80% of the Lithuanian and 94% of foreign respondents have heard the term "sustainable tourism". The foreign tourists, in comparison to the Lithuanians, were more often aware about sustainable tourism ($\chi2=30.93$, $p<0.001$). Higher incomes, education positively influenced both local and foreign tourist knowledge about sustainable development (Table 1).

Table 1: Relationship of knowledge of sustainable tourism with the individual socio-economic factors

| Factor	Local tourists		Foreign tourists	
	Kendall тᵦ or Contingency (c) coefficient	p	Kendall тᵦ or Contingency (c) coefficient	p
Gender	0,105	0,501	0,013	0,998
Marital status	0,192	0,522	0,128	0,320
Incomes	**0,307**	**<0,001**	**0,240**	**<0,001**
Age	0,103	0,075	**0,309**	**<0,001**
Education	**0,459**	**<0,001**	**0,185**	**0,009**
Children under 16	**0,196**	**0,002**	**−0,341**	**<0,001**

Environmental protection was the main feature attributed to the sustainable tourism by the respondents. 87% foreign and 77% local tourists attributed ecotourism to sustainable tourism. Respondents also ranked the each of tourism objectives according to their importance (Figure 1). The most important goal of the tourism local and foreign tourist identified to be promotion of tourist interest on the history and culture of the visited area. Foreigners noted this goal as important more often than Lithuanians (4.5 and 4.1) ($\chi 2 = 22.059$, p <0.001). The second place of importance for both groups of respondents was protection and preservation of environment and resources (local - 4.0, foreign - 4.1). However, local tourists valued more profit generation ($\chi 2 = 18.345$, p = 0.001), job creation and employment growth ($\chi 2 = 13.307$, p = 0.010).
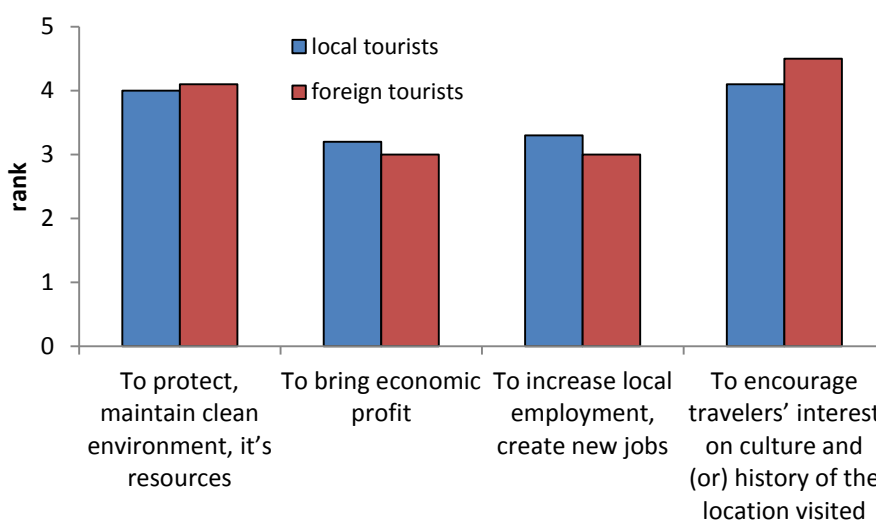
Figure 1: Ranking of tourism objectives (averages, very important – 5, unimportant – 1)

Analysing travelling habits, it was estimated that foreign tourist travel much more often (Figure 2). More than one third of Lithuanian citizens travel one two times a year and only 10% of foreign citizens have the same frequency of travels. Most of foreign respondents indicated to travel 3-4 times (47.1%) or 5 and more times a year (43.3%).

With regard to the duration of the tour, it should be noted that both local and foreign tourist choose travels generally lasting 3-7 days. However, foreign respondents tent to travel on longer trips more often ($\chi 2=24.446$, p<0.001). If only 18.9% of local tourist were on 7 days or longer trips, among foreign tourist this share accounted to 35.7%. This might be influence by the fact that Lithuanian citizens more often tend to choose local trips rather than abroad ($\chi 2=129.526$, p<0.001). Solely local trips tend to choose about 52% of Lithuanian tourist and only 5.7% of foreign ones.
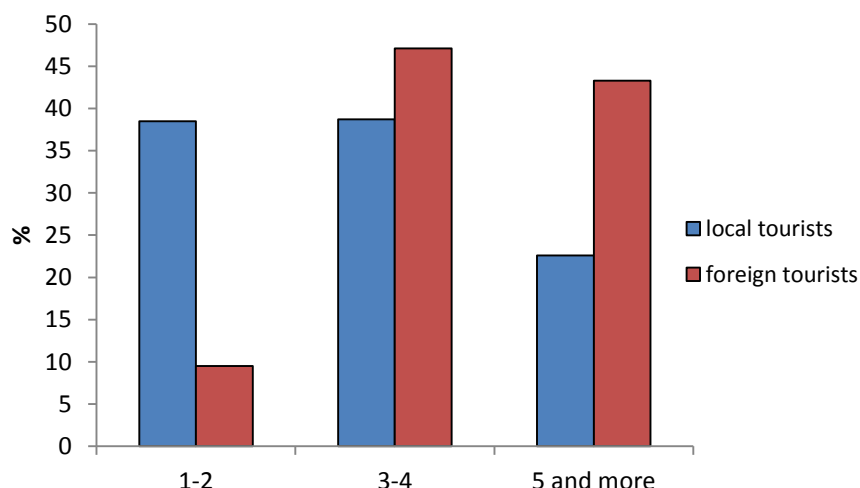
Figure 2: Frequency of traveling (times per year)

Foreign tourists more often were sorting waste ($\chi 2$=93.254, p<0.001), were more likely to save energy and water ($\chi 2$=38.851, p<0.001) while traveling and having rest. They also more seldom used disposable products ($\chi 2$=47.317, p<0.001). Meanwhile local tourists are more likely to engage in participation in local events, attractions, workshops. Analysing factors for waste sorting while traveling (Table 2), it was determined that waste sorting correlated with incomes, age, education, and knowledge in the case of local tourist. For foreign tourist this behaviour was additionally related to marital status and number of children.

Table 2: The relationship between sorting waste and individual factors

Factor	Local tourists		Foreign tourists	
	Kendall τ_b or Contingency (c) coefficient	p	Kendall τ_b or Contingency (c) coefficient	p
Gender	0,108	0,648	0,126	0,492
Marital status	0,172	0,166	**0,273**	**0,002**
Incomes	**0,435**	**<0,001**	0,379	**<0,001**
Age	**0,143**	**0,007**	0,460	**<0,001**
Education	**0,403**	**<0,001**	0,309	**<0,001**
Children under 16	0,055	0,061	**−0,371**	**<0,001**
Knowledge of sustainable tourism	**0,399**	**<0,001**	0,380	**<0,001**

4. Conclusions

Study reveals local and foreign tourist perception towards sustainable tourism. 80% local and 94% of foreign tourists had heard about sustainable tourism. The higher their knowledge about sustainable tourism was related to higher incomes and higher education. Foreigners' knowledge also correlated with the age and, unlike the Lithuanian case, with fewer children under 16 years.

Local and foreign tourists identified promotion of tourist interest on the history and culture of the visited area, protection and preservation of environment and resources to be the most important goals of the tourism. In general, environmentally friendly and sustainable behaviour of respondents correlated with significantly higher income, older age, higher education and increased knowledge about sustainable tourism. Hence, information provision and awareness raising remains one of the pillars for promoting sustainable tourism practices.

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