

TRAVELERS' ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CITY OF BATUMI AND THE CITY'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Anzor Devadze, Paata Chaganava, Irakli Kordzaia, Rostom Beridze,
Tsira Tsetskhladze

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, GEORGIA

devadze.anzor@bsu.edu.ge
chaganava.paata@bsu.edu.ge
kordzaia.irakli@bsu.edu.ge
beridze.rostom@bsu.edu.ge
tsetskhladze.tsira@bsu.edu.ge

Abstract

The tourism destination is always the point of intercrossed interests. The case of seaside resort city of Batumi reveals the Society's aspiration to be sustainable and the local government's intention to cope with ecological and social risks along with tourism industry actions oriented primarily on (as short run as possible) highest profits. The interest conflicts could be overcome by the orientation on the responsible traveler segment. The research presents the relationship between the level of environmental responsibility of the travelers and the level of environmental-friendly actions of the locals, industry and local government. The modern tourism history of the city reveals the changes in the behavior of the citizens, developments in the strategies of the tourism industry actors and the modernization of measures the local government implements. It appears that these changes rely on the changes in the level of responsibility of the city's visitors. Several directions to modernize city's advertisement campaign on the responsible traveler have elaborated.

Keywords: sustainability, responsibility, traveler, city, tourism industry

I. Introduction

The tourism destination could be presented as a set of the relationships between 4 main actors: Traveler, industry, locals and government. It also could be described as a set of dilemmas of sustainable development (see Table 1 below):

Table 1: Actors and dilemmas of the sustainable development of the city

Elements of Sustainability			
Tourism Actor	Economic	Social	Environmental
Traveler	Seeks Outstanding Experience	Interacts with locals	Additional load on Environment
Industry	Seeks for profit	Employs and pays	Additional load on Environment
Locals	Seek for vacancies and salaries	Tries to adapt	Seeks for quality of life
Government	Seeks for economic growth	Tries to balance	Tries to regulate

Mohan [3] Used Case study to reveal tourism potential to strengthen the sustainable development in Tobago. One of the recommendations of the research was the action of policymakers as catalysts of the change. It is Quite interesting work because it reveals that the

sustainable development goals could be achieved if the stakeholders have the interest to participate in.

Panasiuk [4] discussed the case of sustainable development of the cities under the influence of rising tourist flows. The work is very interesting because it reveals the problems that could be created by overtourism and sets the principles for sustainable urban tourism development policy.

Much interesting work of Lee, Hunter and Chung [2] suggests the idea of smart tourism city – the concept that could overcome one of the dilemmas of tourists-locals conflict. The authors give the solution for one of the issues of sustainability, outline the importance of Information communication technologies and the role of the government in implementation of smart tourism city concept.

Another interesting concept for the city sustainable development that tries to solve conflict between city's economic development goals and necessity to maintain the quality of life for locals is presented in the work of Riffat, Povel and Aydin [6]. The researchers reveal key schemas and solutions for future cities those trying to elaborate the principles the future cities should follow to maintain the harmony between economic and environmental goals.

Day, Morrison and Coca-Stefaniak [1] call for rethinking the approaches to sustainability to cope with challenges that modern world sets for tourism development, especially in the big cities those are characterized by higher level of urbanization and host the higher level of tourist flows. They suggest that interdisciplinary approaches to city development problems could solve the dilemmas of sustainable development.

Pavlic, Portolan and Butorac [5] investigate the importance of principles of sustainability to develop the urban tourism. They use the case of Dubrovnik to reveal the necessity of sustainable approaches to the city's tourism development. The study gives the several recommendations for city tourism policy makers to implement the principles of sustainability.

Tierney, Hunt and Latkova [7] use factor analysis to identify the travelers' attitude to green practices of tourism industry. The authors trace the relationship between requests of travelers and sustainable management decisions in the tourism industry.

The presented research aims to reveal the ways the travelers' environmental responsibility defines the decisions made by tourism stakeholders in the destination. The research uses the case study of city of Batumi – seaside resort located in the south-west of Georgia on the east coast of the black sea. The city's tourism history could be counted since 1881 when the seaside boulevard idea was formed and the city started to implement it. Modern tourism history of the city starts the couple of decades ago as it recovers its popularity at old market segments and gains more and more travelers from new market segments. Today the city of Batumi is the dynamic, developing seaside resort, striving for becoming the tourist city for all seasons, with higher rates of tourist flows and high rates of tourism-related investment. All the dilemmas listed above could be easily observed in the city's performance through the stakeholder analysis.

The research was conducted in two steps: 1) the theoretical framework was created to reveal the ways the travelers' attitude to environmental-friendly behavior and practice influence on the decisions in the city's tourism field; 2) The case of the city of Batumi was discussed following the schema elaborated at previous step; 3) the key conclusions were made.

II. Travelers' environmental responsibility as a key determinant of destination sustainable development

The key idea of development the sustainable tourism destination is that the main incentive, main factor that stimulates the environment-friendly actions and decisions trough the stakeholders of the tourism industry, is the traveler. Similar to the traditional free market signal system, where the consumer sets the requirements for the goods and services, gives signals to the

product market and entrepreneurs and those give the signals to resource markets and resource holders, the traveler sets the conditions for environmental-friendly actions, gives signals to the locals, tourism industry and government to change their actions and decisions (see Fig. 1 below).

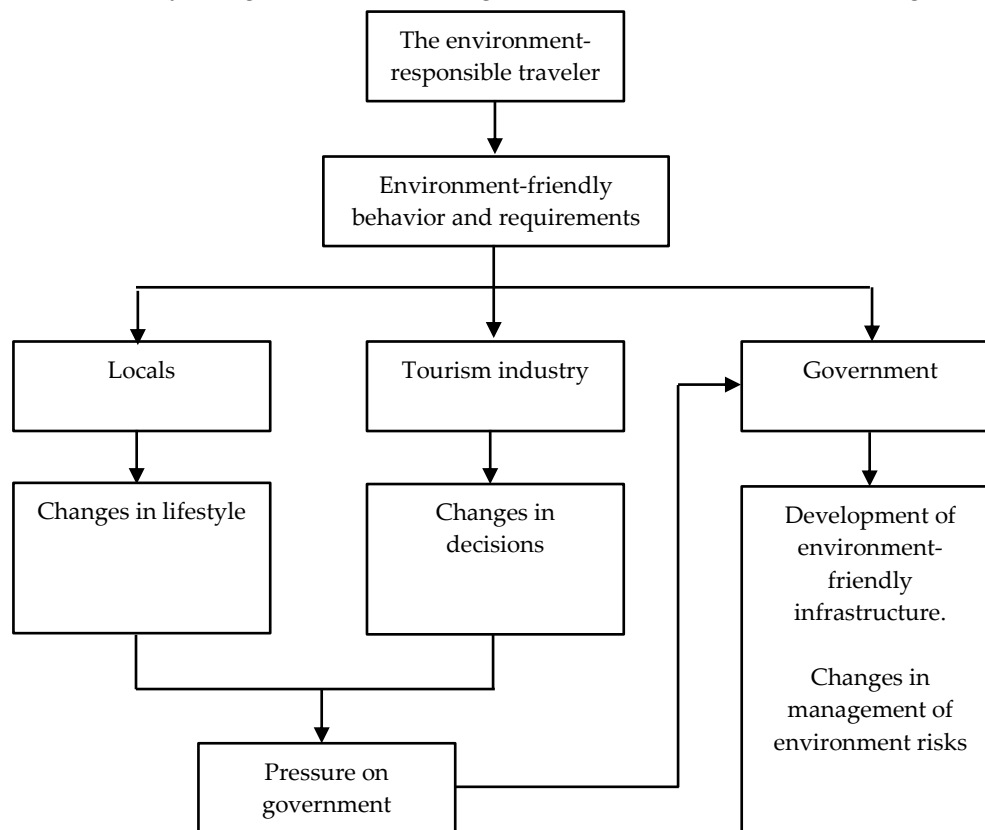


Figure 1: *Traveler as an incentive for environment-friendly actions and decisions*

The modern traveler could be characterized as a person who looks for original experience. Mostly the term “original experience” is associated with the sustainability principles: it implies the respect of local culture, tradition and lifestyle and intends such a behavior that doesn’t harm nature. More of that, the modern traveler not only reveals environment-friendly action, it requires it from the others – the traveler makes his/her choices during travel according to the requirements of sustainability. It means, that the destinations those do not meet these requirements will lose their competitive advantages and will be defeated in the long-run period. The modern traveler directs the ways the destinations should be developed in a sustainable manner.

The tourism industry is in the direct relation with the traveler and tries to adapt to the requirements of modern traveler. The adaptation process takes the several forms: implementing the sustainable decisions for waste management, energy and water consumption; pay more attention to the green areas; changing approaches to the construction plan exterior and interior decisions; investing in more sustainable-friendly technologies.

The changes in the behavior of locals are the result of intercultural communication. The intercultural influence is the most latent process that could be revealed (if ever) after the years of interaction, but it is most important one because its influence covers the minds of the population and leads to the changed behavior and creates the context in which all the sustainable-friendly private and public decisions will be perceived as a normal for particular society.

The local government is affected by the traveler in two ways: directly and indirectly. The direct pressure takes the form of raised tourist flows those create the problems with transport infrastructure, utilities, safety, environment, attractions etc. The indirect pressure comes from the

locals and the industry trying to urge government to change its tourism policy strategies to meet the new challenges set by modern traveler. In a response the government modernizes all the spheres of city's life – revises city development plans to allow tourism and other superstructure objects to grow; develops the transport infrastructure; modernizes city municipal transport; introduces new systems in a waste, water and electricity supply management; tries to introduce alternative energy projects etc. Another change for the local government is related to the management of the environmental risks as the tourism develops the local safety system conditions, resources and performance are continuously improving to meet and operatively cope with environment crisis issues and problems. Government allocates more financial, human and material resources into the monitoring of environment conditions raising the readiness of the city for different environment crisis situations.

III. The case of the city of Batumi – the travelers changing the city

The city of Batumi hosts the beach tourism travelers from neighbor countries and it was the first and traditional segment of market for the city, but new tourism history of the city reveals the rising importance of cultural tourism during whole year represented by the visitors from both neighbor and Europe-origination, plus important segment of Israeli and Arab-originated travelers. They define the type of influence on the city's tourism stakeholders (see the Figure 2 below):

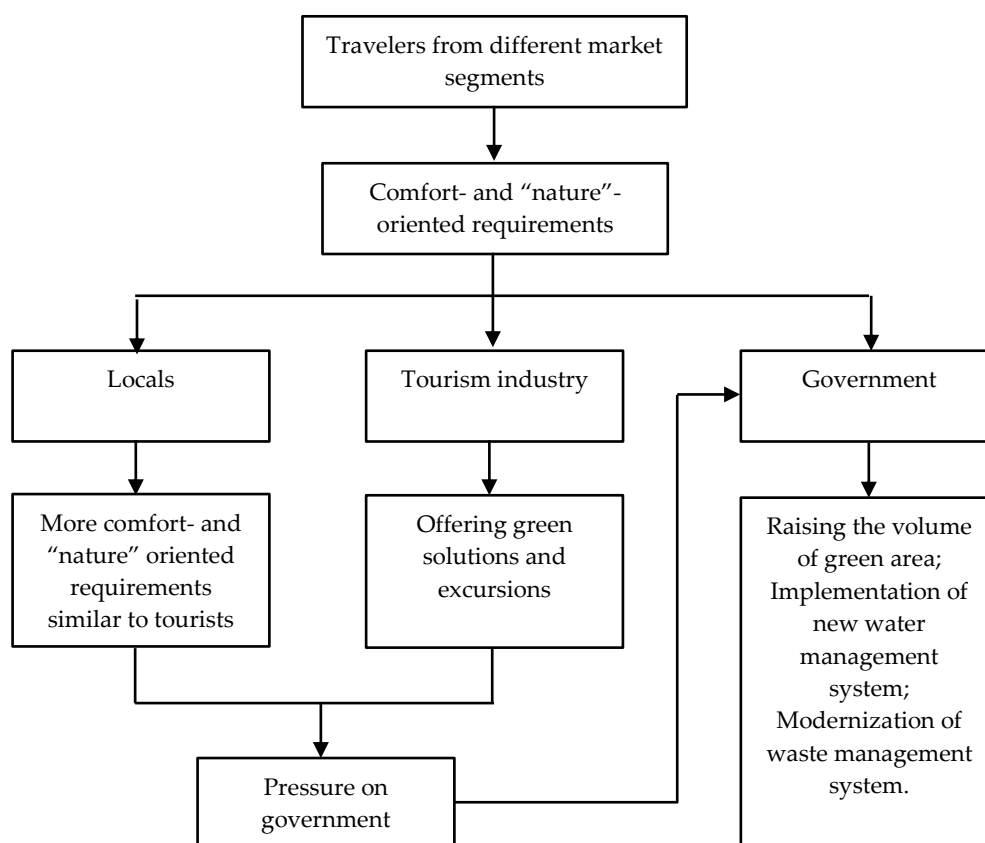


Figure 2: *Tourism stakeholders' adaptation to the Traveler in the city of Batumi*

The modern tourists visiting Batumi are more oriented on the comfort and nature. They look for comfortable, clean apartments near the sea and spend the evenings walking the boulevard and parks; they visit city's Botanical Garden and nearby natural attractions (national parks and villages); They are much familiarized with the city's natural and cultural attractions and enjoy

every moment visiting the city. They are aware about local culture and nature and expose it in the communication with the locals and industry.

The industry reacted in a several ways. Huge development firms started the huge construction projects to ensure the sufficient quantity of rooms for rising number of the travelers. The construction boom is continuing now. But the content of such a boom is changing – decades ago the development firms did not play much attention to the sustainability issues – the faster and cheaper the project will be implemented the higher the profit will be gained. But today many development firms start to offer the original projects and the sustainable solutions play one of the important roles in such an offer. The other form of adaptation comes from the small tour-operators, mostly represented by small companies or the individual entrepreneurs those offering the number of nature-type excursions to the visitors. The dozens of such a tour-operators invading the places where the tourists flow making their offers.

The city's government adaptation process is also worth to mention. First of all, the government extends the boulevard. It is the key competitive advantage of the city and as the boulevard stretches its length the new investment and tourists rising flows follow it. Second, the government raises its investment in the safety of the seaside – it implements the beaches protecting measures, improves the quality and rises the quantity of the resources to rise the readiness of the safety system to effectively cope with crisis situations (storms, soil washing etc.). Third, It implements new water management and waste management systems in the city; Fourth, it rises the green area in the city by the construction of new parks.

The reaction of the locals is quite interesting. Similar to the tourists, the locals are more tend to the comfort and nature. It is quite typical for locals to reshape their yards in a green manner, to use less private transport, to “escape” in the villages etc. Couple of decades are not enough to change the locals' attitude and the above-mentioned changes could be discussed as the negative reaction on the rising tourist flow, attempt to rise the distance from tourists, but the fact is that, positively or negatively, tourists stimulate the locals to be more sustainable.

IV. Conclusions

In a modern Urbanized world, the issue of the sustainability of the cities, especially under the rising tourist flow, is the most important question for the city development sphere. Most researches in the field recommend the government actions but pay less attention on the changes in the travelers' minds that could be the solution for all the sustainable goal dilemmas the cities face today.

The environment-responsible traveler affects on all the stakeholders of the tourism in the city – locals, industry and government. More of that, the local government is under the double pressure – it is affected by the traveler and is affected by the locals and industry those previously affected by the traveler also.

The modern tourism history of the city of Batumi reveals the changes the changed-mind travelers stimulate: The industry starts to offer more green solutions in construction projects and more green excursions; local government modernizes the waste and water management systems, raises the volume of green area in the city and improves the readiness to natural crisis; the locals also start to behave more sustainable.

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