

Definition Expression on the Concept of Urban Ecotourism through Theoretical Review of Related Challenges

Hamid Reza Sabbaghi^{1*}, Manouchehr Tabibian²

1. PhD. Candidate, Department of Urban Planning, Qazvin Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qazvin, Iran
2. Professor, University of Tehran, Faculty of Fine Art, Tehran, Iran (tabibian@ut.ac.ir)

Received: May, 2014

Accepted: Nov, 2014

Extended Abstract

Introduction

To explore the basis of ecotourism, we should look for the basis of literature concerning the tourism development and emersion of sustainability though it. Tourism planning has progressed over this period after the WWII, with a detonation of economic and marketing ideas coming to tourism planning. Thus, it is called “Boosterism” which we cannot consider it as a model of planning at all and model of “Mass tourism” with the belief of “the more is the better” was the best idea for its tourism development. Economic approach, with marketing techniques as its tolls is the next step in tourism development. During the 1970s, the results of tourism development proceeded, was an uneven distribution of benefits, and recognition of multitude of negative tourism’s impacts became more evident, so the question of development raised up as “growth paradigm” which referred “cautionary perspective” to this school of thought which this perspective might be considered as the physical/spatial planning tradition. The summary of evolution in the Think/Idea, Model and Tools in Tourism development after WWII are mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1. Evolution in the Think/Idea, Model and Tool in tourism development after World War II

	After WWII and 1960's	1970's	1980's	1990's	After 2000
Type of Idea and Think	• Boosterism	• Paradigm of growth	• Ecology and economic interaction	• Environmental concerns as development indicator	• Sustainable development
Tourism Model	• Mass tourism	• cautionary perspective	• Soft tourism	• Sustainable nature-based tourism • Sustainable tourism	• Sustainable tourism
Development Tool	• Marketing • Development in more tourism construction	• Physical / spatial planning tradition	• considering instead development in weak social areas	• Small scale development in social, cultural and nature oriented	• Education, nature conservation and local/regional market empowerment
Position of ecotourism in this stage	instead of mass tourism in environment, maximum revenue			reducing impact on the social respect, economic and also previous definitions.	

During the 80's decades there are a great discussion between the tourism planning literature and language of marketing to prolong the destination's growth stage. In late 1980, the theorizers described the model of “soft tourism” and considered it as the new development model instead of mass tourism. Also during this period “responsible tourism”, “green tourism”, and “appropriate tourism” introduced as new terms. The concept of

* Corresponding Author:

E-mail: hrsabaghi@gmail.com

sustainable tourism was brought together in the late 1980's by the tourism industry's reaction to the Brundtland report on sustainable development following the WCED in 1987. Some explain that conference report "Our Common Future" as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

All above discussions and critics replaced by the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, that marked the beginning of a worldwide commitment which replaced Sustainable development (as a right in Agenda 21) must be applied in a way that respond to the social and environmental needs of current and future generation. But the problem was it is ignored on the working agenda and three pillars. In Barbados Conference it was for the first time that "sustainable tourism" and "nature based tourism" recognized as the branch of the sustainable development in final dissertation and action plans, and also ecotourism, economic growth and environmental preservation introduced as sustainable tourism development elements in all conference branches.

Discussion and Results

The article, explore the discussion on ecotourism through an expansion of its meaning starts from the Hetzer states about "ecological tourism" and then other theorizers, and then explore discussion about "the concept of ecotourism" through the viewpoints of some critic. They all can be concluded as below items:

- Sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources;
- Impact minimisation, both upon the natural and socio-cultural environment, especially in terms of climate change energy, energy consumption and traditional cultures;
- Empowerment and fully informed participation of local stakeholders, particularly local communities and indigenous peoples;
- Awareness-raising and environmental education of all stakeholders, especially travellers and hosts;
- Lasting economic benefits for all actors.

In comparison of the meaning and concept of ecotourism, we have one important question: why "small scale" and "the exact location-the location where action of ecotourism occurs" is not mentioned in above five elements? By literature review, it is obviously that although there is no great dissension between theorizers but there is not any common agreement on the discussion about that question too. There is a discussion about comparison of the mass tourism and soft tourism and he conclude that mass tourism ought to be useful for preserved areas, so it can be rejected the small scale. Also it can be drawn two polar of extremes for continuum of ecotourism paradigm. One pole is the view that all tourism (including ecotourism) has negative impacts on the nature..Conversely in the other pole, human are viewed as living creatures (as it called fauna) – whose behavior and activities is inevitably "natural" ... so therefore human behavior is "natural". As the human is part of the "natural process" and, as a result, they are literally unable and powerless to act and behave unnaturally. Therefore, no differentiation between ecotourism and other models of tourism in terms of their "naturalness" and thus, all ecotourism is tourism and conversely. This argument shows that there are no common agreements on the scale of ecotourism. So as it concluded in article three items can be considered as the common agreement on the concept of ecotourism:

- Environmental/Biodiversity conservation and reduction of travel and development impacts;
- Local economic empowerment;
- Education through ecological and cultural Travel and experience.

After 1990's decade correlated with the world acceptance on the definitions of ecotourism, the experimental activities tried to implement the concept of ecotourism in the urban area. This pragmatically activity starts with the activities of Green Tourism Association (GTA) in the city of Toronto in 1996. The next important step was the first international Urban Ecotourism Conference hold in in 2004, in its declaration, it respect Urban Ecotourism as an ongoing opportunity to conserve biological and social diversity, create new jobs and improve the quality of life and delivered declaration by these four goal as it deliberately defined by Planeta:

- Restoring and conserving natural and cultural heritage including natural landscapes and biodiversity, and indigenous cultures;
- Maximizing local benefits and engaging the local community as owners, investors, hosts and guides;
- Educating visitors and residents on environmental matters, heritage resources, sustainability;
- Reducing our ecological footprint.

In the article it discussed ideas and implemented project according to the urban ecotourism. All those projects have this hypothesis that urban ecotourism is an applied idea so all of them try to implement their ideas by experiment them in a real urban region. According to all of them, urban ecotourism is an opportunity to conserve our urban areas and make it more sustainable. Some experimental articles is tried to define the dimension of urban ecotourism using fuzzy numbers construction. They tried to introduce an alternative approach, the fuzzy number construction approach, to construct Sustainable Urban Ecotourism Indicators System (SUEIS), which

may contribute to the understanding of urban ecotourism, and to excavate the discrepancies of urban ecotourism and traditional ecotourism. The most important thing is that a relative unanimity is in the urban ecotourism theorists article and case study. Constituents of their principles includes the concept of ecotourism which deployed expressions like these in their work. The concept of urban ecotourism consequence of the experimented and discussion can be draw in a diagram as below:



Fig. 1. Dimension of urban ecotourism

Conclusion

Most of the theorizers believe that urban ecotourism is a Contradiction in term. In this regard there are some practitioners who implemented the ecotourism in an urban region. Conversely, the group believed in urban ecotourism, predicate others as “traditional ecotourism” and try to deduce themselves. In this article by discussion on evolutionary configuring the concept of ecotourism, it tries to consequence that there is no differentiation between two groups. In the other hand, the urban ecotourism is not a new paradigm and according to their pragmatist approaches it depends on the three main concept which those are as same as the ecotourism. While urban ecotourism is a burgeoning subject in the research of ecotourism, more attempts are needed to interpret the contents of urban ecotourism.

Keywords: urban ecotourism, urban planning, sustainable development, tourism planning, urban ecology.