



University Goce Delchev – Shtip
Faculty of tourism and business logistics -
Gevgelia

Proceedings
First International Scientific Conference
ISCTBL

CHALLENGES OF TOURISM AND BUSINESS LOGISTICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Gevgelia, 24-25 October 2017 & Shtip, December 2017



University "Goce Delcev" – Shtip, R. Macedonia
Faculty of tourism and business logistics – Gevgelija

ISCTBL

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON
TOURISM AND BUSINESS LOGISTICS – GEVGELIJA



Proceedings
First International Scientific Conference
CHALLENGES OF TOURISM AND BUSINESS
LOGISTICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY »ISCTBL 2017«
Gevgelija, October 24-25, 2017



"St. Kliment Ohridski" University – Bitola



Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Ohrid, Macedonia



University of Kragujevac
Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism

Vrnjačka Banja



Gevgelija- Shtip, December 2017

Publisher:

Faculty of Tourism and Business logistics, Gevgelija
University "Goce Delcev" Shtip, Macedonia
Krstе Misirkov 10-A, 2000 Shtip; tel.: +389 32 550 000; Fax: +389 32 390 700
Tel.:+389 32 550 351 ; +389 32 550 350
E-mail: <http://ftbl.ugd.edu.mk/> www.ugd.edu.mk

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Number of copies

100

Printed by:

2 August Shtip

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација
Национална и универзитетска библиотека "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје
338.48(062)

INTERNATIONAL scientific conference "Challenges of tourism and business logistics in the 21st century, ISCTBL (1 ; 2017 ; Gevgelija)

Proceedings / First international scientific conference "Challenges of tourism and business logistics in th 21st century, ISCTBL, 2017, Gevgelija, Macedonia, October 24-25, 2017. - Shtip : University "Goce Delcev" - Shtip, Faculty of tourism and business logistics - Gevgelija, Shtip 2017. - 340 стр. ; 25 см

ФУСНОТИ КОН ТЕКСТОТ

ISBN 978-608-244-465-9

а) Туризам - Собири
COBISS.MK-ID 104519178

ORGANIZER OF THE CONFERENCE AND PUBLISHER
UNIVERSITY "GOCE DELČEV" – SHTIP, REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
FACULTY OF TOURISM AND BUSINESS LOGISTICS - GEVGELIA

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PREFACE

The Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics in Gevgelija, at the Goce Delcev University - Stip, hosted the First International Scientific Conference, "Challenges of Tourism and Business Logistics in the 21st Century".

The conference was held on 24 and 25 October 2017 in Gevgelija with an optional visit to Dojran - Dojran Lake.

32 works of 60 authors from Serbia, Latvia, Turkey, Poland, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Macedonia were presented at the Conference.

The purpose of the Conference is exchange of ideas and experiences of the participants coming from Macedonia and abroad, and establishment of cooperation for further development of tourism and business logistics in Macedonia and beyond.

The results of the Conference are visible through publication in a collection of papers, which is presented to a wider scientific audience and the public.

In this way, we want to promote the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics, to promote Gevgelija and Dojran as the most visited settlements in the south-eastern part of Macedonia.

Gevgelija - Stip,
December 2017

Editor
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SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM: ECOLABEL AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS AT HOTELS IN TURKEY

Nazmiye Erdogan¹

Abstract

Ecolabel and certification programs are widespread tools for policy and marketing in tourism sectors. The aim of this paper is to provide a background and offer insights of the use of ecolabels and certifications within the tourism sector. Secondly, it explores the status of national and international tourism ecolabels in Turkey. Then a brief discussion is presented about definitions about sustainability in tourism. The status of the ecolabels in Turkey was discussed by using the written materials that include published research, governmental and legal documents. The result shows that there is a need for ecolabel and certification programs in tourism accommodations in Turkey and all over the world too. Tourism, especially hotel managers should realize that they cannot sustain their business without necessary acknowledgement to environmental issues. Sustainability is the responsibility of all those involved in tourism.

Key Words: Sustainable tourism, ecolabel, certification, hotels, Turkey.

JEL classification: Q56, Q560, Q580, L83, P28

Introduction

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. Its rapid expansion has, however, had detrimental environmental impacts in many regions. Mass tourism as the dominant form of tourism practice has for decades caused environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts (Erdoğan & Tosun, 2009). Ecolabel and certification programs are believed to have the potential to decrease adverse environmental and social impacts of tourism. Ecolabels provide some benefits for the tourist industry, and more generally for society, in terms of image, competitiveness, and quality (Duglio & Beltramo, 2016; Dabeva, 2013; Radwan et al., 2012) to mitigate the negative effects of tourism. These adverse impacts are mostly linked with the construction and management of infrastructures such as roads and

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airports, and of tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses, and marinas.

Environmental protection and performance initiatives have been gaining increasing importance by the hotel managers all over the world, because of the question of ecological and economic sustainability of the industry. It is now generally accepted that tourism is potentially harmful to the environment and needs to comply with sustainability criteria to maintain tourist destinations (Becken & Simmons, 2002; Erdogan & Baris, 2007).

In establishing a close connection with environment and development, the World Commission of Environment and Development has declared that sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This notion of sustainability has grown in acceptance by governments, NGOs and many environmentalists since the 1992 Rio Conference on the environment. The proponents of sustainability state that natural and tourism resources should be used in such a way that the future generations will also be able to benefit from these resources. This has come to be generally supported and promoted by national, regional, and international organizations, as well as by legal provisions and agreements. Also, government and tourism agencies, complemented latterly by the initiatives of various professional bodies, have been turning their attention to aspects of the environmental performance of tourism enterprises (Leslie, 2007). Tourism can play a significant role in sustainable development. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) wish to encourage all countries to make sure that their policies and actions for its development and management fully embrace the principles of sustainability. Various international conventions and declarations have put forward principles and guidelines for sustainable tourism and the importance of tourism and its sustainability was underlined at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. The UNWTO has given the full definition of sustainable tourism presented, emphasizing the need to make all tourism sustainable. Expressed basically, sustainable tourism can be said to be: ‘Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, and the environment and host communities’ (UNWTO, 2017). Despite this interest, there remains a degree of uncertainty over the scope and priorities for making tourism more sustainable and only partial appreciation of how to put this into practice. Sustainable tourism is not a discrete or special form of tourism. Rather, all forms of tourism should strive to be more sustainable (Legrand et. al., 2016).

This paper introduces the general concept of sustainability and sustainable tourism. Definition of sustainable tourism is discussed. It continues with a brief discussion about ecolabel and certification programs in hotel industry. Then the status of the tourism ecolabels in Turkey is discussed by using the written materials that include published research, governmental and legal documents.

Ecolabel and Certification Programs

In the tourism sector, some companies have an environmental management system and have established foundations or other mechanisms for supporting social

and environmental projects in the communities in which they operate. Voluntary initiatives such as eco-labels and certification schemes, prizes and awards, environmental management systems, codes of conduct, self-commitments and self-declarations play an increasing role in regulating tourism operations (UNWTO, 2017; Warnken et al., 2005; Sasidharan et al., 2002). Ecolabels have also been used to encourage the development of less-damaging, more environmentally friendly hotels as well as potential tools to educate and influence customer behavior. Ecolabeling, started in Europe in 1985 with the Blue Flag Award, granted by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe (FEE), for beaches and marinas where environmental protection is a high priority (UNWTO, 2002). Many of the standards focus on accommodation, and in particular on hotels, but there are also very specific standards covering, for example, beaches, marinas, travel agency, tour operators, tour guides, protected areas (Roe et al., 2003). Also, a numbers of environmental assessment methods have been introduced to evaluate the environmental performance of hotels. Many more programs have achieved the following at a global level: Green Globe, Green Growth 2050, Rainforest Alliance, Travelife Sustainability System, Green Key, Green Key Global, and Green Tourism Active. The programs at a regional level includethe following; EU Ecolabel or Eco Flower, Certification for Sustainable Tourism for hotels–Costa Rica, Ecotourism Ireland Certification Programme, European Ecotourism Labeling Standard, Fair Trade Tourism–South Africa, GREAT Green Deal Certification Program–Central America, Green Star Hotel Certificate–Egypt, Japan Environmentally Sustainable Accommodations International Standard (Teng et al., 2012). Various environmental assessment methods have been introduced to evaluate the environmental performance of hotels such as Green Globe, ECOTEL, Green Leaf (Canada), Green Key (Denmark), the EU Ecolabel in Europe, Energy Star (the United States), ISO 14000 and so on. The proportion of individual accommodations that participate in ecolabeling (certification) is only between 1 and 10 per cent of the total of enterprises in countries where labelling exists. Furthermore, there is an increasing evidence that tourists and the tourism industry are prepared to provide voluntary support for environmental conservation and the well-being of local communities in destinations. The number of environmentally aware consumers continuously increases. This creates the need for environmentally friendly products and services. Tourists start to seek and would gladly pay more for a “green tourism” or “eco-friendly tourism” (Petrevska & Cingoski, 2016). Hotel managers should re-arrange their priorities to meet guests’ requests in respect to their environmental needs.

GreenHotelWorld published a report on the proportion of hotels with ‘green’ certification in July 2015. Based on a study, 6.2 % of 130,000 hotels were certified worldwide. With over 140 certification labels globally the concentration by continent is as follows: North America 10.1%, Europe 6.1%, Africa 3.7%, South America, 2.7%, Oceania 4.8% , Asia 0.9% (Greenhotelier, 2017). The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria for hotels were created to develop a mutual understanding of sustainable tourism. GSTC has developed criteria that provide a baseline standard for certification. The GSTC Criteria are organized around four main themes: effective sustainability planning, maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community, enhancing cultural heritage, and reducing negative impacts to the environment (GSTC, 2017). Currently, there is no universally accepted Green Hotel

Standard. According to the US Green Building Council a ‘Green’ or ‘Sustainable’ Hotel will: use 26% less energy, emit 33% Carbon Dioxide, use 30% less indoor water, send 50%-75% less solid waste to landfills and incinerators. Green hotels can also encourage the use of alternative transportation (walking, mass transit, low-emission, fuel-efficient or alternative fuel vehicles).

Tourism Ecolabel and Certification Programs in Turkey

Accommodation sector in Turkey is only recently being investigated from an environmental perspective. In recognizing the need for improving the environmental performance of the sector generally the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism started an environmental sensitivity campaign in 1992 to encourage tourism enterprises to contribute to environmental protection and conservation in their daily practices. There are 3 national ecolabels which have been given in Turkey. Pine Award, Green Star, White Star. The number of the hotels which have been awarded is 404 hotels. There are 3 international ecolabels which have been introduced in Turkey. Greening Hotels, Green globe and Green Key. The key features of each scheme are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Tourism Ecolabels and Certification at Hotels in Turkey

Ecolabel	Pine Award	Green Star	White Star	Greening Hotels	Green Globe	Green Key
Status	Voluntary	Vol.	Vol	Vol.	Vol.	Vol.
Focus Area	Accomod.	Accomod.	Accomod.	Accomod.	All	All
Initiation Date	1993 - 2008	2009-	2009-	2009-	1994	1994
Certified Member	Not used anymore	404	Not used anymore	53	6	87

Source: Green Key, 2017, <http://www.greenkey.global/our-programme/>, Green Globe, 2017, <http://greenglobe.com/green-globe-certification/>

International ecolabel

International ecolabels are Greenings Hotels, Green Key, Green Globe and Blue Flag.

Blue Flag: Blue Flag is an exclusive ecolabel given to beaches and marinas having reached to a standard stated in the criteria. It is an international program currently being implemented in 49 countries around the world. Blue Flag program coordinated by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). Blue Flag beach criteria; environmental education and information, water quality, environmental management, safety and services. Blue Flag is a common award in Turkey. It is very

important for accommodations which are mostly located the Mediterranean and Egean seashore. There are 454 beaches, 22 marinas with Blue Flag in Turkey. Turkey is on the 3th place among 49 countries (Blue Flag, 2017).

Greening Hotels: Greening Hotels project is going on with the cooperation of TUROB, Bureau Veritas and the Sustainability Academy. The Sustainability Academy, which is responsible for carrying out the certification process of the facilities, aims to increase the awareness of the tourism sector about sustainability and the motivation of the accommodation facilities to be sensitive to the environment. Audits are made objectively by one of the world's biggest accreditation firms; Bureau Veritas which also pursued the project at world water forum. There are 53 hotels which have Greening Hotel award in Turkey (Greening Hotels, 2017).

Green Globe: The Green Globe certification is a structured assessment of the sustainability performance of travel and tourism businesses and their supply chain partners. Businesses can monitor improvements and document achievements leading to certification of their enterprises' sustainable operation and management. The Green Globe Standard includes 44 core criteria supported by over 380 compliance indicators divided into four main sections: sustainable management, environment, social/economic, and cultural heritage. There are 6 hotels which were awarded Green Globe in Turkey. With members in over 90 countries worldwide, Green Globe represents a truly international membership upholding the highest standards of Sustainability (Green Globe, 2017).

Green Key: The Green Key award is a leading standard of excellence in the field of environmental responsibility and sustainable operation within the tourism industry. Green Key has 13 criteria; environmental management, guest information, staff involvement, water savings, cleaning and washing, waste, energy savings, food, indoor climate, administration, green activities and social responsibility and cooperation. Green Key is a voluntary ecolabel awarded to more than 2,700 hotels and other establishments in 56 countries. Green Key has recently begun to be awarded hotels in Turkey. This is due to the effective and professional work of our National Operator, (TURÇEV) Foundation for Environmental Education in Turkey (TURÇEV, 2017). There are only 87 hotels that have Green Key in Turkey (Green Key, 2017).

National Ecolabels

Turkey will continue to implement projects to preserve the environment and its cultural identity. Adoption of environmental standards and ecolabeling are important opportunities to remain competitive. Unfortunately, only a few companies understand that adopting environmental standards can increase competitiveness in Turkey. In terms of rewarding sensitive businesses, an investigation carried out on the hospitality industry to evaluate the effects of environment on tourism reveals that relevant campaigns started in 1992: Pine Award which was the first national ecolabel scheme, but it is not in effect now. Green Star and White Star were started in 2009. Pine Award is National Governmental Institutions Ecolabel. In recognizing the need for improving the environmental performance of the sector generally the Ministry of

Culture and Tourism of Turkish Republic (MCTR) started environmental sensitivity campaign in 1992 to encourage tourism enterprises to contribute to environmental protection and conservation in their daily practices. However, Pine Award is not used anymore in Turkey. Green Star: Green Star is an 'Environmental label' given to environment friendly accommodations. It is initiated by Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The Green Star certificate was introduced in 2009 by the MCTR. The certificate will be given to eco-friendly hotels based on their environmentally conscious practices. The green stars have 122 criteria based in 10 essential subjects. General management, training, arrangements in the bedrooms, environmental compliance of the establishment, landscaping arrangements, ecological architecture, energy, water, detergents, disinfectants and hazardous chemical substances and waste. The hotels should have an environment policy and a private eco-manager, or be audited by a specialist firm. They should also pay attention to water and energy usage, and training of employees to raise their environmental awareness. The number of the hotels in Turkey which have it is 404. All of them are four and five star hotels (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2017).

White Star: White Star started in 2009 by Turkish Hoteliers Federation (TUROFED) with the slogan of "Livable Environment Project". The main aims of this project were to reduce damage to environment and natural resources by decreasing the amount of water, electrical energy, chemicals and solid waste used in tourist facilities. However, White Star is not used anymore in Turkey.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The number of tourism licensed accommodation in Turkey is 4670, whereas the number of Green Star ecolabeled accommodation is 404. The low number of hotels with Greening Hotels (53 hotels) and Green Star (404 hotels) indicate the low interest in the industry and government. There are 3 international awards and ecolabels which were introduced in Turkey. The number of the hotels which were awarded is 146. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism is planning to set obligatory rules for the new accommodations. It seems that government and all the concerned parties should pay more attention to the prevailing environmental issues beyond setting some legal regulations.

To help address these issues, tourism sector/establishments should:

- Introduce measures to promote greater energy conservation and energy efficiency;
- Improve the evaluation and control of the environmental impact of small and medium-sized enterprises;
- Adopt tourism and environment indicators to evaluate their performance in carrying out action plans;
- Ensure that environmental concerns are fully integrated in tourism development strategies;
- Actively support the national strategic action plan which aims for progress towards sustainable development in the promotion and delivery of tourism products and services;

There is still need for ecolabel schemes in tourism accommodations. Hotels should be designed as green building. If the hotel is planned as a green building at the beginning, it increases the construction cost 5-10 % the saving 50-70 %. Tourism managers should realize that they cannot sustain their business without necessary acknowledgement to environmental issues. To achieve the goals and challenges set for the travel and tourism industry as it continues to grow throughout the coming decades, strong and co-operative partnership between government departments, national tourism authorities, international and national trade associations, trade unions and the travel and tourism private sector is required. Sustainability is the responsibility of all those involved in tourism. The sustainability of tourism is an issue of equal importance in both developed and developing countries. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process.

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