



MANAGING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN LITHUANIA: DREAM OR REALITY?

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Abstract. This paper analyzes theoretical conception of sustainable development and different points of view to it. Principles of sustainable development, forms of sustainability are discussed. Sustainable concept's influence on tourism is analyzed. Sustainable tourism is discussed as region's opportunity to create infrastructure of tourism where natural resources would be kept and market, similar to competition in tourism market, would be created at the same time. Sustainable tourism concept and principles, that highlight peculiarities of sustainable tourism conception as compared to general sustainable conception, are presented and applied to the case of Lithuania.

Keywords: sustainable development, tourism system, sustainable tourism development, Lithuania.

1. Introduction

The development of international tourism is influenced by the general process of world globalization. Tourism, promoting active euro integration process, is one of the most important priorities in Lithuania. Lithuania is in the area of intersection of trans-regional contacts (East–West and North–South) and in the spread of transitional routes, which allow developing tourism.

Tourism business is not only economically beneficial process. The system of tourism oriented towards a mass development also has some negative influence on the environment. There are mass tourist centres due to tourist localities and concentration of separate organizations. This is not always beneficial for local people of the region because life in tourist regions becomes standardized, which might cause decline of cultural level.

Now, since Lithuania has an opportunity to use structural funds of the European Union to develop tourism, it is necessary to establish a system, which would help planners of tourism infrastructure, architects, and specialists of landscape protect region peculiarities and cultural identity. What is more, the system should help reserve peculiarities of Lithuanian

landscape and to avoid exclusion from other regions, in this way losing competition superiority similar to other tourist regions. According to the conception of tourism development, tourism means must be planned and controlled in order to be economically beneficial and to promote the development of tourism.

Sustainable development is considered to be the development which meets the needs of the present time and allows the coming generations to meet theirs. Traditionally, the concept of sustainable development includes economical, environmental, and social aspects of development, or economical, ecological, and social dimensions of sustainability. The aim of sustainable development is not to create more economical benefits but to provide better living conditions for the members of the society.

Sustainable development is a possibility for a region to create the infrastructure of tourism, where natural resource base would be kept and the market for the future generations similar to the competition would be created.

Looking at the conception of the sustainable development from the practical and scientific point of view in different economic branches, it can be stated that all today's discussions about environment and development of economy in this aspect are not over yet. It is important to see how sustainable conception, its principles and subtleties can be included and developed in the context of tourism infrastructure, and what potential influence they might have in order to achieve harmony in economical, social, and ethical levels as well as in tourism.

A scientific problem is discussed in the paper; it is very important to see the circumstances and the factors which influence formation and development of the sustainable development. It is important to give criteria which allow applying sustainable tourism on tourism market. A question, what principles of sustainable tourism conception are important and which of them are problematic, when applying the conception of sustainable development in Lithuanian tourism business, arises because of too little literature on sustainability in tourism infrastructure.

Aim of the research is to reveal the essence of sustainable conception, the principles and application for tourism, and to discuss the assumptions of competitive and sustainable development of tourism in Lithuanian tourism business.

Tasks for the research:

- to highlight the main principles of sustainable tourism development and their influence on the system of tourism;
- to discuss the possibilities of applying sustainable tourism development in Lithuanian tourism sector.

Object of the research is the conception of sustainable development.

Aim of the research is the conception of sustainable tourism in Lithuania.

Methods of research: analysis of systemic scientific literature, general and logical analysis, methods of comparison and generalization.

2. The concept of tourism

In Lithuania, like in other post-communist countries, the principles of sustainable development began to be applied only few years ago. In fact, the reason is that it is “in fashion” in the

whole world. Quality and real purpose most often were not applied for strategic planning. Now the importance of sustainable development is rather clear and the principles are being applied. However, there are a lot of obscurities in the process.

Preserving what is valuable, beautiful, necessary for us and future generations, it is important to integrate that “fashion” into the spheres, which would not be unique and valuable, if the concept of sustainable development is not applied. Therefore, it is important to evaluate objectively and develop sustainability in tourism services.

The concept of tourism in Lithuania was changing over time. So far, there is no one opinion of what tourism is (Table 1). The word “tourism” itself means travelling from one place to another and coming back to the first one.

Tourism is one of the most perspective and dynamic businesses in the world. It includes about 8 % of overall investment, creates about 400 million work places, it is 7 % of the world’s general national product, and 6 of tax return.

Lithuania, after rapid tourism development, joined tourism markets in Europe and the whole world in the years of independence. Tourism is rather a new business in Lithuania. Essential changes began in 1991; therefore, there are a lot of limitations and problems. Practice of tourism agencies is not fully developed on the markets of incoming and local tourism.

Lithuania’s geographic and geopolitical situation is special and important for international relationships. Lithuania is in the centre of Europe, on the way to the East and West Europe. There is a straight way from Germany to Russia. “Via Baltica Road” going through Lithuania joins Scandinavian countries with Poland, Germany, and other countries of the Middle Europe. This situation of Lithuania is very convenient for developing international relationships, as well as tourism.

Lithuania’s nature and climate are beneficial for recreational tourism. Space and time are necessary for most holiday makers. Tourist journeys, especially on holidays, are a part of this. Tourism is *a form of recreational business, when holidaymakers leave their home and visit other countries, find out their historical and cultural values, landscape, have rest in*

Table 1. Defining tourism

Source	Description
The law of tourism of the Republic of Lithuania (The law on tourism... 2002)	Tourism is purposive actions of people, connected to travelling and temporal being outside permanent place of living not longer than a year, if these actions are not studies or paid job in a visited area.
Vainiene 2001 (Vainienė 2001)	Tourism is a trip, an excursion, etc., that is a leisure journey, one of the main ways of active holidays, which is popular in many countries.
Pender and Sharpley (Pender, Sharpley 2005)	Tourism is actions of people, connected to travelling and temporal being outside permanent place of living, if these actions are not studies or paid job in a visited area not longer than a year.
World tourism marketing strategy (World tourism marketing... 2003)	Tourism is all kinds of journeys, excursions, when a person leaves his/her work and living place for longer than day and night and less than 12 months, and the aim of the journey is not paid work.

Source: compiled by the author.

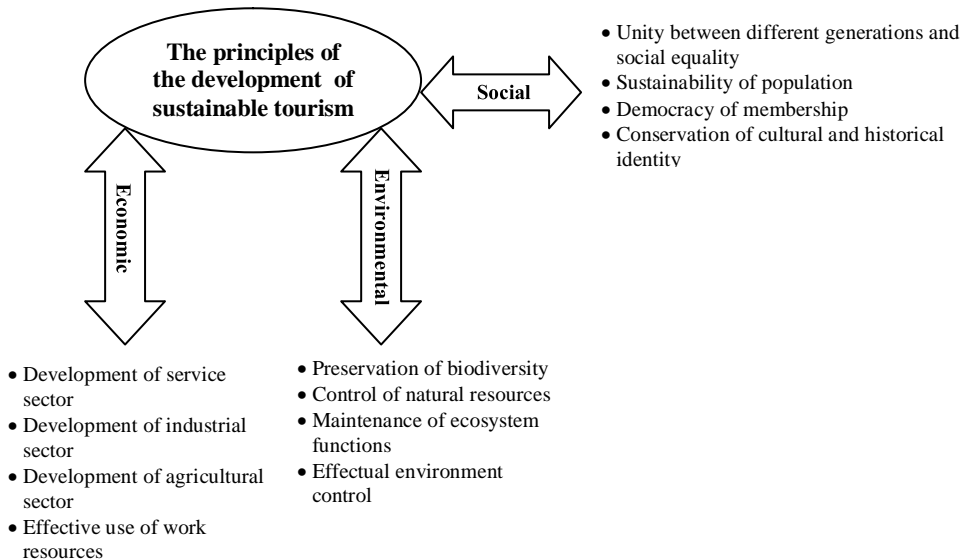
resorts, take sports and other ways to spend their time, to strengthen their health. Lithuania has natural resources necessary for recreational tourism; that is good climate, lakes, rivers, forests, parks. Recreational natural resources are not equally distributed in the territory of Lithuania. The most important recreational resource is coast of the Baltic Sea, which is 99 kilometre long. The weather, sand, sea-banks are very beneficial for the coast. It is good for swimming, sunbathing, and water sports.

Thus, the development of different segments of tourism structure influences the attraction of tourists in the region. Income, which can be used for developing tourism in a region, depends on the region and number of tourists. Different branches of economy are influenced by the speed of tourism development and high income, the development of which influences tourism. Tourism is very important in the economy of most countries in the world. Thus, it increases income, creates new workplaces, and promotes development of towns.

3. Principles of sustainable tourism development

The principles of sustainable tourism system support sustainable tourism system and effectiveness of the model (Fig. 1). There are two different concepts of sustainable tourism development, but each of them shows the balance of traditional tourism and the needs of future tourists; resources necessary for tourism, such as natural, cultural, and others, are reserved for future generations but they are beneficial for today’s society.

According to Holden (Holden 2001), two aspects differentiate sustainable tourism development from traditional tourism:



Source: proposed by the author (based on Harris 2000).

Fig. 1. Principles of sustainable tourism development

- Sustainable development does not have negative effect on environment and cultural heritage;
- Sustainable development must assure that bigger part of economic benefit stays in local tourism.

In the context of sustainable tourism development, it is emphasized that the right use of natural resources helps to develop tourism product of higher quality. Distinctive environment of the region, unique landscape, culture of the region or climate attract most tourists. Therefore, McKercher (1993) and Hassan (2000) emphasize that whatever environment of the region is, it must be cherished, changed and reserved for future generations. If the main principles of sustainable development and the right politics are not applied, tourism might damage the environment.

The concept of *sustainable tourism development* includes four main principles, which are connected to the principles of sustainable development (Table 2). The essence of sustainable tourism development is reserving natural and man-made resources, provide tourism product of the highest quality and to integrate it into local region. The focus is on planning and control of tourism actions, in order to control tourism resources and to improve the existing product of region tourism. Tourism development has a direct influence on natural and

Table 2. Principles of sustainable development vs. sustainable tourism development

Principles of sustainable development	Principles of sustainable tourism development
1. To understand environment limits. Damaging and irretrievable effects on the surrounding environment and natural resources has a big danger for mankind. Therefore, it is necessary to set out the limits of usage of natural resources.	1. Ecological sustainability: development must be combined to objective to reserve the main ecological systems, variety and unique of landscape and natural resources.
2. To develop open and supportive system of economy. Sustainable development needs global system of economy, which promotes economic growth. Conditions, which assure the effective use of resources and development of business in all countries in the world, are necessary.	2. Economic sustainability: development must be effective and beneficial economically, and all resources must be controlled in order to preserve them for the future generations.
3. To fight against poverty and social inequality. Sustainable development requires solving the problem of poverty. It is necessary to help the developing countries to fight against poverty and social inequality.	3. Local sustainability: development must be beneficial for local societies and must guarantee economical benefit for local regions.
4. To assure welfare of the people. Welfare of the people is the main aim of sustainable development, people deserve to live in healthy and productive harmony with nature.	4. Cultural sustainability: development must promote control in a person's life, it must be combined with local culture and cultural values; besides, it must help to reserve and strengthen cultural identity.

Source: compiled by the author from (McKercher 1993; Meadow 1998; Mowforth, Munt 1998; Casagrandi, Rinaldi 2002; Weaver, Opperman 2000).

man-made environment. Tourism actions are connected with different actions; therefore, there might be negative consequences for the environment. Most of them are associated with formation of tourism infrastructure, for example, development of connection network, building of hotels, restaurants, or camps. Progressing actions of tourism might destroy natural resources. On the other hand, actions of tourism which are planned, applied and controlled properly have a positive effect. Issues of nature should be integrated into plans of tourism development. Mowforth and Munt (1998) state that tourism development must be progressing because it is easier to control influence on nature through a longer period of time; if there are problems, it is possible to change the development of actions for tourism, forms of tourism and infrastructure.

It is important to realize the problems so that tourists and people providing tourism services would not be neutral and would keep to certain norms of behaviour, rules of actions, would obey certain limitations of actions.

4. Turning Lithuanian sustainable tourism development into reality

The development of tourism infrastructure is not competitive enough superiority of Lithuania as tourist region. It is necessary to discuss the issues of region individuality, control of cultural identity; the most important is to avoid losing unique Lithuanian landscape and exclusion from other regions. It is important to realize that tourism development is possible only when all levels of the structure of organization is sustainable and relations are coordinated. Realization and coordination of development should be based on the priorities of the program of national tourism development.

As theoretical principles of sustainable tourism development, system and general model are discussed, the possibilities of sustainable tourism development in Lithuania can be theoretically defined.

Tourism and strategy planning in levels are necessary for tourism development in Lithuania. Preparation and realization of tourism strategy are very important for Lithuania to compete on international tourism market. Planning of tourism and general tourism strategy must be on national, regional and institutional levels.

Strategy planning on national level is the basis of the strategy of tourism. This strategy shows guidelines for planning strategies of other levels. In this level attention must be paid to structural plans of Lithuanian region development, international and European Union's standards of tourism and legal documents of tourism. Regional strategies of tourism include strategic plans of development of different towns, districts, and regions, regional tourism programs and other documents prepared by municipalities or local government. Strategies of tourism service development on institutional level are based on the strategies of this level.

Europe as a huge tourist region is unique in its differentiation of tourism objects and products, cultural and historical individuality of each country. Tourism development in Lithuania is not as good as in other European countries. The Seimas (Parliament) in Lithuania made decisions about the programs of national tourism development; the aim is to evaluate tendencies of tourism development in the country and to decide on the priorities of tourism development in Lithuania and investment in tourism on the basis of strategic

documents in national, regional and other sectors (Government... 2003)¹.

Different long-term and short-term marketing strategies of tourism have been applied on tourism market but the results are different from what was expected.

A review of strategies of Lithuanian tourism should begin at an earlier period. Lithuanian government decided on the program of national tourism development from 2003 to 2006 (The State Department... 2004)² where development of tourism strategy, aims, tasks, and results are presented. This document shows the limitations of the strategy creation and helps to avoid them creating a modern and clear strategy of tourism based on sustainable development.

Strategy of tourism development up to 2015 was prepared by the Institute of research of Lithuanian regions. This long-term strategy helps to evaluate future plans, to prepare and apply it. However, it is important to notice that not all principles of the strategy satisfy the today's situation in tourism in Lithuania.

The State Department of Tourism of Lithuania also offered strategies of tourism. A contract of general strategy of marketing from 2005 to 2009 (The State Department... 2007)³ offered later information and point of view to the aims of the strategy and stages of formation. Earlier tourism is important for economy in Lithuania and perspectives of its development (Žabaliūnas 2005).

It is also important to overview general document of programs that gives information on negative aspects and potentials, which can be used in developing tourism in Lithuania (The State Department... 2004b).

A lot of information about creation of strategies of tourism in Lithuania and different research is offered by research "The plan of marketing means for tourism in Lithuania for the year 2004 (2005)", made by the Department of National Tourism in 2003 and 2004. Such researches evaluate the main tourism markets and means applied for them. This research also gives the data about the effectiveness of marketing means on tourism markets.

The European Commission's report on "Lithuania's marketing strategies and preparation of plans and marketing of national system of tourism information" in 2004 also gives a lot of information (European Community Commission... 2005). This document illustrates an important research when four seminars were organized in Palanga, Druskininkai, Vilnius, and Kaunas, in which representatives of Lithuanian tourism business and people responsible for the decisions discussed the following issues in groups: priorities of marketing formulated for the National Department of Tourism; the priorities of product of tourism in Lithuania and market development; image and identity of Lithuania as a country of international tourism.

¹ Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The Decision on ratification of the National Development of Tourism, 2003-2006, No. 1637, issued on 18/12/2003 [interactive], [referred on 02/10/2006]. Available from Internet: <http://www.lrv.lt/teises_aktai/files/2003/12/1975.doc>.

² The State Department of Tourism of Lithuania. Agreement No AM/451-LOT10, issued in May 2004 [interactive], [referred on 15/08/2007]. Available from Internet: <<http://www.tourism.lt/nsv/LMSLT.doc>>.

³ The State Department of Tourism of Lithuania. General Programming Document [referred on 01/08/2007]. Available from Internet: <<http://www.tourism.lt/lt/dokumentai/BPDturizm.doc>>.

It is worth to pay attention to the report of the Commission of European Associations, which analyzes means and situation of tourism in the countries of European Union. This helps to objectively evaluate potentials and possibilities of tourism markets in foreign countries (Quebec... 2007).

The review strategies and different means of tourism in Lithuania helps to evaluate consistently marketing means of tourism market in Lithuania, objects that are discussed, to identify priorities and to highlight potentials, which could be used for developing the infrastructure and formulate strategy of sustainable tourism.

In order to evaluate the present situation of tourism in Lithuania and strategies that are applied, it is important to overview the experience of other countries, assumptions of success applying their strategies of tourism, their aims and results, which were effective in realization of these strategies. A lot of research has been done in Lithuania; however, there is no information about comparative analysis of the tourism strategies with other countries. This is a stimulus for results, which would evaluate the possibilities to apply modern strategies of tourism in Lithuania.

For the particularity of the research it is necessary to refer to the experience of other countries, to have a comparative analysis of tourism strategies, and to point out similarities and differences. While choosing the countries and their tourism strategies, attention must be paid to geographic features, economic situation and other criteria similar to Lithuania's. Tourism development plan in Quebec, Canada, pays a lot of attention to nature, control of unique cultural heritage, and tourist areas that are special in the region (Quebec... 2007). Scotland, like Lithuania, also has high potential of nature. According to the results of tourism strategy in Scotland, strategies of tourism development were successful; this allowed developing tourism successfully (Scotland Tourism... 2007).

Ireland has been a good example for Lithuania for a long time. Population, area, nature, religion, history of Ireland are similar to Lithuania. It is noticed that tourism strategies in Ireland paid attention to industrial heritage as an object of cultural tourism; that is, old industrial companies which are no longer in use can help to know cultural heritage and to stimulate cultural tourism. Ireland has a rich heritage of gardens and landscape. A lot of gardens and parks are from the 18th, 19th, and the beginning of the 20th century (Cultural Tourism... 2007).

It is necessary to overview an example of World Tourism Strategy, which could be applied to our tourism; this document emphasizes tourism business, creates different means and gives priorities to potentials of nature and development of tourism infrastructure, and controls reservation of unique nature (World Tourism Marketing... 2003; Tourism Marketing Strategy... 2001).

When positive and negative aspects of strategies of tourism development in Lithuania are evaluated, experience of other countries in application of tourism strategies are discussed, it is possible to offer to form a new strategy of tourism development based on the principles of sustainable development. The exceptional principles of sustainable tourism development, which are important in managing tourism in Lithuania, must be considered in application of the concept of sustainability in tourism in Lithuania. Some authors think that principles of sustainable tourism in Lithuania, given in Table 3 and Fig. 2, are the most important and

Table 3. Principles of sustainable tourism development relevant for the development of tourism in Lithuania

Ecological sustainability: tourism development must be combined with the objective to preserve the main ecological systems, variety and uniqueness of landscape and natural resources.

Economic sustainability: tourism development must be effective and beneficial economically, and all resources must be controlled in order to preserve them for future generations.

Local sustainability: tourism development must be beneficial for local societies and must guarantee economical benefit for local regions.

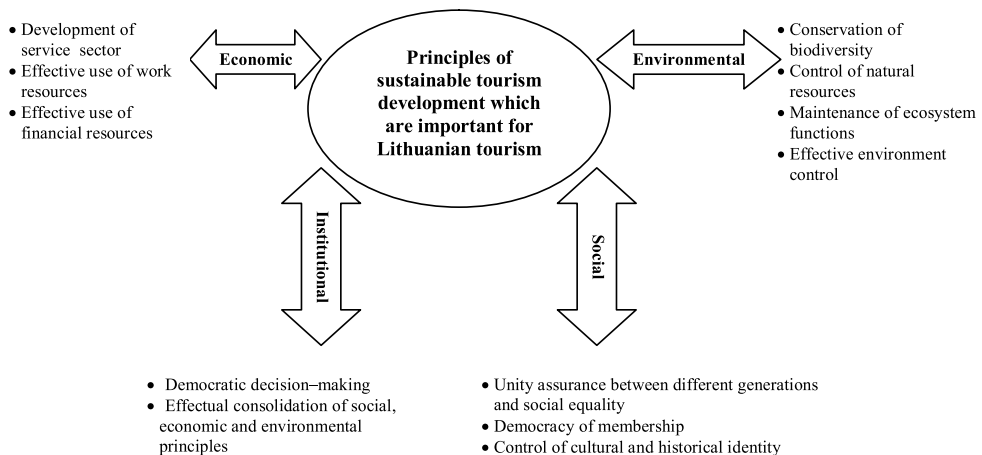
Cultural sustainability: tourism development must promote control in a person's life, it must be combined with local culture and cultural values; besides, it must help preserve and strengthen cultural identity.

Source: proposed by the author.

influential for establishing the system of sustainable tourism for present days and future generations. As we see the examples of other countries, these principles are very important. However, there are difficulties in application of some principles, for example, in distribution of resources, investments. This is caused by lack of experience in distributing investment according to the priorities, also independence of people and their life style.

In order to be successful in sustainable tourism development on tourism market in Lithuania, it is necessary to evaluate the following stages:

1. Tourism should be understood as positive activity, proposing benefits for local society, area itself, and tourists.
2. Natural resources, influential for developing tourism, should be preserved and included into the plans of long-term development.
3. Relationship between tourism and environment must preserve a long-term vitality between surrounding environment and ecosystems.



Source: proposed by the author.

Fig. 2. Main principles of managing sustainable tourism in Lithuania

4. Tourism practice and development must pay attention to nature and its features. Today's world is very dynamic and changes are inevitable; however, adaptation should not break the principles of sustainable tourism development. The development of tourism must not have any negative influence on natural resources.
5. Members of tourism, local government and environment control must obey these principles and work together in order to apply them in practice.

When research and comparative analysis are made, Lithuania can be provided with offers about a successful creation of sustainable tourism development applying the main principles of tourism development, experience of other countries, and priorities that are pointed out, and considering the main long-term strategies of tourism in Lithuania as the basis.

In this way natural, cultural and historical potentials can be reserved for the future generations and effectiveness of tourism development can be improved in different aspects.

5. Conclusions

1. Sustainable development, as miscellaneous and universal phenomenon, might have a lot of different forms. Strength, speed, level and field are the parameters of the sustainable development and define the form of it. The use of strategic means, aims, orientation of resources also depend on the form of it. The focus of sustainable development should be on management of the development processes from the lowest forms of sustainable development and weak sustainability to its highest forms and strong development trying to get the highest speed.

2. Sustainable development includes and assures cooperation of public institutions, private sector, non-profit organizations and different public groups, systematically evaluates and controls competitive actions in a tourist region. Very important objects, such as tourism infrastructure, tourists, investors, government, influence the system of sustainable development.

3. Actions of tourism in a tourist region should be based on the principles of sustainable development; these are ecological, cultural, economic, and local sustainability. These principles emphasize the control of resources in the way that economic, social and ecological needs would be supplied, cultural unity, main ecological processes and individuality of landscape would be reserved. The principles of sustainable tourism development, the influence of the relationship between elements of the tourism system on the environment, competitive actions of tourist region help form the strategy of sustainable tourism development, the realization of which would produce a competitive system of tourism.

4. A lot of elements, included into creation and reservation of regions proper tourism development, combine the system of tourism. The variety of these elements requires new methods, which would help competitive regions. These elements help to evaluate the importance of relationship between sustainable tourism and tourism competitiveness, when tourism development pays attention to the needs, as well as to the possibilities and restrictions.

5. It is important for establishing the strategies of sustainable development to use "Agenda 21", a detailed measurement (public program of actions), which was accepted at the conference UNCED in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, for the application of sustainable development for evaluating economic, social, ecological, territorial, political and institutional aspects.

6. When subtleties of the conception of sustainable development and the principles of development are overviewed and analyzed and the effectiveness of strategies of tourism of other countries are evaluated, Lithuania can be offered to apply the cooperated strategy of sustainable tourism, which would control and reserve today's natural, historical, cultural potentials in the country and to use superiorities over other countries. Only in this way Lithuania can be unique to itself and tourists from other countries; however a lot of attention should be paid to the problematic principles of sustainable development, which include the distribution of resources and investment, higher control of person's life, applying them for the strategy of sustainable tourism in Lithuania.

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DARNAUS TURIZMO VALDYMAS LIETUVOJE: SVAJONĖ AR REALYBĖ?

D. Grundey

Santrauka

Straipsnyje konceptualizuojama tvariosios plėtros pritaikymo darniam turizmui esmė. Diskutuojami tvariosios plėtros principai ir tvarumo formos, aptariama, kaip jie galėtų būti taikomi turizmo sektoriui. Siekiant nubrėžti tvaraus turizmo gaires, pateikiama tvaraus turizmo sąvokų įvairovė, įvertinama situacija regioniniu lygiu, peržvelgiama gamtos išteklių ir turizmo infrastruktūros dermė. Straipsnyje minimi Airijos, Škotijos ir Kanados tvaraus turizmo plėtojimo pavyzdžiai, pateikiamos jų strategijų bei programų įžvalgos. Jos vėliau įvertinamos Europos Sąjungos parengto ekologinio tvaraus turizmo kontekste. Straipsnio tikslas pasiekiamas, taikant pasiūlytus tvaraus turizmo principus ir formas Lietuvos atvejui – tai rekomendaciniai samprotavimai, kurie vėliau bus grindžiami empiriniais tyrimais ir publikuojami atskiru straipsniu.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: tvarioji plėtra, turizmo sistema, darnaus turizmo vystymas, Lietuva.

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