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## РОЛЬ ІНСТИТУЦІЙНОГО ТА НЕУРЯДОВОГО ВПЛИВУ НА СТАЛІЙ РОЗВИТОК ТУРИЗМУ НА ПРИКЛАДІ МАЛЬДІВ

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## ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL IMPACT ON TOURISM SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CASE OF MALDIVES

**Objective.** *The objective of the article is identification of all relevant stakeholders and investigation of their role in providing long-term sustainability of tourism in the Maldives.*

**Methods.** *Theoretical and methodological basis of the research is formed by general regulations and statistics data of tourism development in the region. The following general scientific and special approaches and methods of research are used in the research process: scientific observation of economical, socio-cultural and environmental aspects of tourism development in the region, analysis and generalization of the activity of relevant stakeholders aiming to provide sustainable tourism in the region.*

**Results.** *In this article the sustainable tourism in the Maldives is investigated through its economical, socio-cultural and environmental aspects of tourism development in the region. Research identifies the potential stakeholders and main guarantors who are involved in providing long-term sustainability of tourism in the destination at the public and private sectors represented by government authorities, different establishments (resorts, hotels and guest houses) as well as local non-government organizations. During research it was examined the participation of all relevant stakeholders aiming to guarantee long-term sustainability in the region in terms of socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders and optimal use of environmental resources.*

**Key words:** *tourism, aspects of tourism development, long-term sustainability, stakeholders of sustainable tourism, tourism establishments, UNWTO.*

**Problem statement.** Defining the relevant stakeholders that are fully engaged in long-term sustainable tourism is difficult as not all of them fully fulfill the measures for providing sustainable tourism in the region that are closely connecting with economic, socio-cultural and environment aspects of tourism development. According to these aims relevant stakeholders should provide the basis for tourism policy that embraces sustainability, implementing not only specific tourism policies but also policies relating more broadly to sustainable development and the environment.

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**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The aspects of tourism development and sustainable tourism issues in the Maldives are violated in the works of a number of foreign scientists and numerous government and international regulations. For instance, Kundur S. K. and Murthy, K. [9] investigated the environmental impacts of tourism and management in the Maldives inferring that due to the careful government management the present form of tourism development has not generated any serious environmental impacts for the region. Moreover, annually World Travel and Tourism Council defining the economic contribution and economic impacts of the tourism development to the Maldives [24].

UNWTO conceptually defined the sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices applying for policy makers and relevant stakeholders aiming to make tourism more sustainable [22]. Shakeela Aishath, Ruhanen Lisa, Breakey Noreen [20] researched and analyzed whether the tourism in the Maldives is successfully sustainable proving that it is not as «successful» or «sustainable» as it is often claimed to be.

Economical, socio-cultural and environmental aspects of tourism development in the Maldives. Development of tourism in the Maldives started in the early 1970s when an Italian tour organizer came across Maldives while looking for new destinations in untouched tropical places. When tourism officially began in 1972 only 1,000 tourists arrived that year and only two resorts were opened [19, p. 10]. By 2017, number of tourist arrivals had grown to 1 389 542 and total number of accommodation establishments have grown to 736. The amount of registered beds has increased at a steady rate as well. By the end of 2017 there were 41,255 beds in the industry for comparison with 280 beds in 1972 [13]. That includes resorts, hotels, guest houses and safari vessels [5].

Tourism is the main sector of the Maldivian economy that accumulates essential part of total revenue of Central government budget of the Maldives and being the main generator of the foreign currency. In 2016 tourism contributed 22.7 % of GDP, 46.2 % to government revenue and approximately 70 % of the country's foreign currency. For comparison, the largest sectors in Maldivian economy and key employers, such as Wholesale/retail trade and Fisheries, contributed only 9,2 % and 3,6 % to the country's GDP during the same period [5].

In 2017 travel and tourism investment was MVR3,456.2 million comprising 29.6 % of total investment (USD224.9 millions). Moreover, being key employer and main provider of jobs for locals and expats travel and tourism industry directly supported 34,500 jobs (16.0 % of total employment) providing the total contribution of travel and tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry in the level of 37.4 % of total employment (80,500 jobs) [23, p. 1].

No doubt, the contribution of tourism sector in rapid economic growth of the country helped the Maldives to achieve a certain level of development to graduate from a Least Developed Country to that of a Developing Country status as of the 1st of January 2011 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011) [12].

While impact of travel and tourism industry to the Maldivian economy is considered to be successful making this industry as a key guarantor of economic growth of the country, there are considerable disparities regarding development of tourism and its positive influence at socio-cultural and ecological environment of the region. According to the country's Department for National Planning 3.011 couples got divorced in 2012. That works out at around 7.2 annual divorces per 1,000 inhabitants [20]. At the same time no research has been conducted to understand the effect of locals working away from their families, however, that fact that the large number of males working outside their resident island, usually in resorts or industries supporting tourism plays not the last role in high divorce rate. As a result, the Maldives has one of the highest rates of female-headed households in the world, at the level of 47 % [1, p. 2]. Moreover, the high divorce rates bear complex direct and in-

direct consequences on children and youth including vulnerability to sexual abuse, juvenile delinquency and substance abuse [4]. Although the tourism industry does create employment, locals are not fully engaged in the tourism industry. For instance, in 2011 a total figure of resort employment 25,908 included 13,195 expatriate employees. At the same time, the number of expats involved in supervisor and management positions in the Maldivian resorts were prevalent representing 51 % in comparison with locals 49 % [18, p. 18].

According to the common tourist's perception the Maldives is an attractive destination for vacation due to its pristine and natural tropical beauty unspoiled by human settlement, unsurpassed marine environment and abundant sea life. At the same time, it is revealed that continuous flow of tourists to this tropical paradise brings side affects to the local environment causing problems with pollution in its various forms, solid waste disposal as well as coral breakage and deliberate removal by tourists.

Pollution in its various forms threatens the environment and human wellbeing in Republic of Maldives. As stated Minister of State for Environment and Energy, Mr. Abdullahi Majeed at the Third United Nations Environment Assembly held in Nairobi, Kenya from 5–6 December 2017 in addition to the numerous environmental problems, pollution also has very real impacts on the health and wellbeing of people and that in the Maldives alone, an estimated 48 deaths are caused by air pollution related complications each year. For Republic of Maldives it is a significant and an alarming figure given the size of its relatively small population [11].

Solid waste disposal is one of the most obvious results of tourist establishments operation and one of the environmental problems the Maldives facing nowadays. An estimated 860 metric tons per day (mtpd) or 312,075 metric tons per year of solid waste is discarded in the Maldives. About 21 % is attributed to tourism with the balance divided among urban areas (65 %) and island communities (35 %). An estimated 134 mtpd of solid waste is generated by the 101 resorts in the Maldives; whereas, the safari vessels (157 boats) discarded an average of 8. 0 mtpd [14, p. 8]. The waste production in Maldives reveals the fact that tourism industry generates 7. 2 kg per guest per day of solid waste whereas locals in Male and atolls generate around 2. 8 kg and 0. 66 kg per capita per day accordingly [9, p. 46].

Marine biodiversity of resort islands facing the reef damage casing by scuba divers, snorkelers and bathers walking out across the reef flat. A study at Kurumba Village has assessed the effects of snorkelers on the reef crest at depths up to about 1. 5 m. Results indicated breakage of 18 percent of all *Arcopora* corals/month by snorkelers. However, the greatest impact on reefs in the Maldives has originated from coral mining for construction purposes including tourism demands [9, p. 48].

Summarized Results. According to UNWTO sustainable tourism refers to tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities [21, p. 11–12]. In every tourist destination development of sustainable tourism requires the mutual participation of all stakeholders at the public and private sectors as well as local non-government organizations.

In the Maldives the key stakeholder that is interested in promoting long-term sustainable tourism practices in the region is represented by government and its authorities making constant monitoring of impacts of tourism development and introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. One of the measures of providing economic benefits from tourism industry to the host country and its local community is setting different tourism taxes. In 2010 the government set Goods and Service Tax from the tourism sector (T-GST) at a rate of 3. 5 %, from 1st January 2012 it was increased to 6 % and from 1st January 2013 it was again increased to 8 %. From 1st November 2014, the rate was

further increased to 12 % remaining at the same level in 2017 and 2018 years [16, p. 20]. Taking into consideration the increasing number of tourism arrivals every year revenue from T-GST increased from MVR1,553. 6 millions in 2012 to MVR 4,137. 7 millions in 2017 and is estimated to increase to MVR4,311. 3 millions in 2018 [5].

From November 1, 2015 government introduced as well Green Tax at the level of 6USD per guest/per night receiving revenue in country's budget MVR36. 7 millions in 2015 to MVR683. 0 millions in 2017 accordingly. As result in 2017 T-GST and Green Tax contributed totally MVR 4870,7 millions and 24 % of total government revenue [5].

At the same time to improve socio-cultural impacts of tourism development to the local community and regulate the situation with employment the Maldivian government has recently revised the quota system from 50:50 to 55:45 between locals and foreigners employed in tourism industry as a way to encourage less disparity. In addition, the government has increased the ratio of bed to employees from (1:1. 2) to (1:1. 5) aiming to raise the willingness of locals to work in the tourism sector and involve more local women in the industry [18, p. 18].

To minimize the prevalent number of expats involved in supervisor and management positions in the Maldivian resorts and provide educational background for locals in 2013 in Male started to operate new hotel school managed by faculty of Hospitality and Tourism under Maldivian National University. In 2005 associated with a loan agreement with Asian Development Bank was initiated training program aiming to increase the skilled workforce in all the industries in the Maldives including tourism sector. Formal training programs of technical, vocational education and training started in 2008. At the end of 2010, a total of 3,884 persons were trained however numbers trained in tourism-related fields were not clearly identified. In 2011 the government launched the «8,500 placements» program in the frames of which 3,800 semi-skilled traineeships were conducted by the end of 2013. Most placements were connected directly or indirectly with the tourism industry [9, p. 183].

The measures of the Maldivian government authorities for evaluating and mitigating negative impacts of tourism development on ecological environment of the region needed to be addressed as well. From the 20th day of July 2006 came into force «Regulation on the Protection and Conservation of Environment in the Tourism Industry» implemented by the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture. The regulation concentrates in protection of the environment as well as encouragement and facilitating practices of sustainable development in the tourism industry. Solid waste management is one component of the regulation. Among the requirements of the waste management section of the regulation is separation of discarded wastes; the use of incinerators, compactors and bottle crushers in all touristic resorts where waste burning can only to be done; prohibition of open burning; proper waste collection and storage in safari boats until such waste can be taken to a designated place for waste management; allowing food waste disposal of in the sea in the absence of a designated area for waste disposal in a region; prohibition of plastics combustion due to concern about toxic emissions [17, p. 5–6].

In 2014, the Ministry of Environment and Energy created the Waste Management Department to ensure the proper implementation of mentioned before regulations. It sets standards for the waste management, issuance of permissions in relation to waste management, transportation of waste, information reporting as well as penalizing for non-compliance [22, p. 1].

In the frames of «The Maldives Tourism Adaptation Project» (2011–2015) that was run by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program coral reef and biodiversity protection was identified as potential areas for investment to strengthen climate resilience and adaptation in the tourism sector. It states that government and



non-government protection and conservation the biodiversity of the Maldivian reefs are often associated with the establishment of Marine Protected Areas. Sustainable practices of coral reefs and biodiversity protection concentrate in two main directions: Coral reef protection (increasing the number of Marine Protected Areas, regulating of waste management influencing on the coral reef habitats, enforcing existing regulations for Marine Protected Areas and house reefs) and Artificial coral reefs or Coral reef restoration (creating new, artificial coral reefs or restore existing, natural coral reefs to enhance the experience of tourists) [15].

Today more and more hotels and resorts becoming main custodians and protectors of Maldives national environment, meanwhile, providing long-term sustainable tourism practices as key stakeholders of sustainable tourism in the region.

In 2011 was implemented Reef Recharge and Marine Conservation project by «Taj Exotica Resort & Spa» and «Ocean Dive Maldives». Reef Recharge aimed to increase coral coverage near the resort and encourage healthy coral growth on the local reefs through coral propagation. Coral fragments were attached to specially made frames and planted near the Ocean Pavilion. So far is already observed the increasing in the fish and invertebrate diversity on the site. Tourists can get involved in the project as well by sponsoring a coral frame and building their own coral reef [15].

«Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu» resort helping to protect environment and its inhabitants by providing a nesting site for endangered species such as green sea turtles. Since 2016 this Maldivian resort being a home to the first turtle rescue centre in partnership with the Olive Ridley Project that looking after entangled turtles, providing them with required treatments and rehabilitate them. Since their establishment in 2013, the Olive Ridley Project has been working with dedicated individuals who are keen to support the project by removing ghost nets that have been abandoned or lost in the ocean, continuing to entangle vulnerable marine animals. Moreover, «Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu» taking care about environment and providing measures for minimizing waste and environmental pollution by banning plastic bags and bottles in the resort with recyclable materials used instead [3].

«Soneva Fushi» resort sustainable philosophy diminishing negative tourism footprints into environment providing sustainable initiatives. For instance, its first solar power plant increasing today its renewable energy capacity. The design plans are carefully thought out to create open ventilated spaces, reducing the need for air conditioning. Moreover, in terms of water sustainability «Soneva Fushi» was the first resort to produce its own drinking water in reusable glass bottles. Over the last 10 years, more than a million single-use plastic or glass water bottles have been avoided completely. Waste management is another area where «Soneva Fushi» truly leads as 70 % of their waste is organic matter which is composted and reused in their world class gardens. Plastic bottles are entirely banned on the island, and glass bottles that cannot be reused are recycled into construction materials and designer glassware at the Maldives' first glass blowing studio [6].

Other famous chain hotel «ANANTARA» eradicated plastic straws at every single property in Asia as of 1 January 2018 at the same time reducing negative environmental impact that plastic has on the ocean as due to the statistic data, globally 300 million tons of plastic are produced on an annual basis and around 8. 8 million tons of it gets dumped into the oceans [2].

Since 2011 «Jumeirah Vittaveli Maldives» implemented Strategic Sustainability Management Plan was aiming to obtain Green Globe certification. The plan encompassed four key areas Environmental, Socio-Cultural, Quality as well as Health and Safety. Due to the Strategic Sustainability Management Plan resort proactively supports the recruitment and development of Maldivian nationals at various managerial level positions across its operational and support functions, protects the historical sites and cultural heritage of the local

environment, buying organic fruits and vegetables from local entrepreneurs (watermelons, local lettuce, leafy greens, papayas, coconuts, bananas), providing freshly caught fish and lobsters to its guests which are delivered to the resort by local fishermen. Moreover, resort using low-energy light bulbs throughout the property in various locations, and outdoor lighting is controlled by a timer. Water usage is monitored and specified aiming to reduce 3 % per person of the annual use. All appliances are set at the most efficient level, to save energy, money and appliances [7]. As a result, due to its operational sustainable hotel practices aiming to improve sustainability efforts as of March 23, 2015 «Jumeirah Vittaveli Maldives» has been awarded the internationally renowned Green Globe Certification (GGC) following a recent sustainability audit [8].

Local non-governmental organizations taking active part in promoting sustainability in the region as well, such as the Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI) which is non-profit organization formed in 1982 for the purpose of promoting tourism in the Maldives. MATI closely collaborates with resorts, hotels, local companies and individuals engaged in travel and tourism related activities, local and foreign travel agents and tour operators, water sports and diving companies, suppliers, airlines, banks and financial institutions. The key value of MATI is ensuring sustainability of the travel and tourism industry by preserving both the environment and culture of the Maldives. The association provides guidance and assistance to its members in planning and implementing sustainable methods for protecting the country's biodiversity and cultural heritage. MATI additionally assists its members in finding new funding opportunities for environment related tourism projects as well as supporting the development of sustainable tourism products by local stakeholders [10].

**Conclusions.** Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant and potential stakeholders at the public and private sectors, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and collaboration. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

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**Мета.** Метою статті є визначення зацікавлених сторін та вивчення їх ролі у забезпеченні довгострокового сталого туризму на Мальдівських островах.

**Методи.** Теоретичні та методологічні основи дослідження було сформовано за загальними нормативними та статистичними даними розвитку туризму в регіоні. В процесі дослідження використано наступні загальнонаукові та спеціальні підходи та методи дослідження: наукове спостереження за економічними, соціально-культурними та екологічними аспектами розвитку туризму в регіоні, аналіз та узагальнення

діяльності відповідних зацікавлених сторін, спрямованих на забезпечення сталого туризму в регіоні.

**Результати.** У цій статті досліджено сталий туризм на Мальдівах з огляду економічних, соціокультурних та екологічних аспектів розвитку туризму в регіоні. Дослідження визначило потенційних зацікавлених сторін та основних гарантів у державному та приватному секторі, залучених до забезпечення довгострокового стійкого туризму на місцях призначення, які представлені урядом, різними туристичними установами (курорти, готелі та гостьові дома), а також місцевими неурядовими організаціями. Під час дослідження було розглянуто участь всіх відповідних зацікавлених сторін, метою яких є забезпечення довгострокової стабільності в регіоні з точки зору соціально-економічних переваг для всіх зацікавлених сторін та оптимального використання екологічних ресурсів.

**Ключові слова:** туризм, розвиток туризму, довгострокова стійкість, зацікавлені сторони в стійкому туризмі, туристичні установи, ЮНВТО.

**Цель.** Цель статьи — выявление заинтересованных сторон и исследование их роли в обеспечении развития долгосрочного устойчивого туризма на Мальдивах.

**Методы.** Теоретико-методологическая база исследования были сформирована на основе общих нормативных и статистических данных развития туризма в регионе. В научно-исследовательском процессе были использованы следующие общие научные и специальные подходы и методы исследования: научное наблюдение экономических, социокультурных и экологических аспектов развития туризма в регионе, анализ и обобщение деятельности соответствующих заинтересованных сторон с целью обеспечения устойчивого туризма в регионе.

**Результаты.** В этой статье был исследован устойчивый туризм на Мальдивах с точки зрения экономических, социально-культурных и экологических аспектов развития туризма в регионе. В ходе исследования были выявлены потенциальные заинтересованные стороны и основные гаранты в государственном и частном секторах, принимающие участие в обеспечении долгосрочного устойчивого туризма в местах назначения, которые представлены государственными органами, различными туристическими учреждениями (курорты, гостиницы и гостевые дома), а также местными неправительственными организациями. В ходе исследования было рассмотрено участие всех соответствующих заинтересованных сторон, направленное на обеспечение долгосрочной устойчивости в регионе с точки зрения социально-экономических выгод для всех заинтересованных сторон и оптимального использования экологических ресурсов.

**Ключевые слова:** туризм, аспекты развития туризма, долгосрочная устойчивость, заинтересованные стороны в устойчивом туризме, туристические учреждения, ЮНВТО

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