

INTRODUCTION OF A GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL IN TOURISM – OPPORTUNITIES AND TRENDS

Snezhinka Konstantinova

Faculty of Economics, University of Food Technologies – Plovdiv, Bulgaria, sks_ko@abv.bg

Abstract: Green entrepreneurship in global tourism is of strategic importance for economic development, as it is an important tool for change, innovation and generating growth. The tourism industry is a sector of the economy in which entrepreneurship has a valuable contribution through the diversification of tourism products, goods and services. Diversification is needed to meet the increased demand for new tourist experiences and the increased opportunities for sustainable tourism in the new millennium. The so-called “green entrepreneurs” offer their products or services through environmental processes or clean technologies, such as ecotourism. The aim of this study is to define green entrepreneurship and analyse the opportunities, prospects and trends for introducing a new green entrepreneurial model in ecotourism. The study shows that eco-enterprises that are created and developed in the global economic reality must be managed mainly through the following three groups of factors: economic, social and environmental. All these factors have a positive impact on the performance of the eco-enterprise, contribute to reducing costs, improving quality and increasing the value of the enterprise. Tourism is related to the protection of the environment and the social responsibility of business on a global scale. Green entrepreneurship is closely linked to sectors that are interested in introducing different types of eco-innovation, such as reducing or preventing negative environmental impacts in order to achieve returns and lasting competitive advantages. Innovations in ecotourism can be applied in the following areas of the “green economy”: 1) protection and effective management of ecosystems; 2) reduction of air pollution and harmful emissions; 3) sustainable use of water resources; 4) energy efficiency; 5) waste management system; 6) development of sustainable and highly productive agriculture; 7) production of organic food, etc.

Keywords: green entrepreneurship, tourism, innovation, model, trends

1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of green entrepreneurship proves its economic feasibility and vital necessity. Development of green business causes significant environmental changes, increases competitiveness of manufactured and offered products, goods and services. The analysis shows that green entrepreneurship offers different business opportunities in Bulgaria: green construction; green automotive industry; creation and development of eco-hotels; eco-consulting; eco-marketing; organic farming; delivery of eco-products; production of eco-packaging; ecotourism.

2. DEFINITION OF “GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP” AND “ECOTURISM”

Definition of green eco-entrepreneurship can be presented in the following historical chronology:

- In 1971, Harvard Business Review runs an article¹ saying that the “ecology movement” could provide business opportunities rather than being a “drain” on economic activity;
- Early 1990’s more nuanced examination of ecopreneurialism emerges², with the term being used more widely^{2,3,4};
- Small but growing of literature – speciality now the “issues” is recognised in the mainstream.

Terms “green entrepreneurship” or “eco-entrepreneurship” can be defined in two perspectives. First with the prospect of process of business or manufacturing process and the second process is related to products, goods and services and their implementation. Entrepreneurs can enter an open “green” business sector by providing environmentally friendly products and services. Usually green entrepreneurs consider both aspects in their business models, creating additional decent employment through use of greener processes, while reducing overall impact on environment due to fact that people or companies use the final product or service. Alternatively, green entrepreneurs

¹ Quinn, J.B. (1971) *Next Big Industry: Environmental Improvement*, Harvard Business Review, Vol. 49, No5, September/October 1971, 120-131.

² Bennett, S.J. (1991) *Ecopreneuring & the complete guide to small business opportunities from the environmental revolution* Wiley, New York.

³ Berle, G. (1991) *The green entrepreneur & business opportunities that can save the earth and make you money*. Liberty Hall Press, Blue Ridge Summit Pennsylvania.

⁴ Blue, J. (1990) *Ecopreneuring: managing for result*. Scott Foresman, London.

can provide their products or services through an environmental process or through clean technologies – such as ecotourism.

Ecotourism is now defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” – The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)⁵. Education is meant to be inclusive of both staff and guests.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF ECOTOURISM

In essence, ecotourism is an alternative type of tourism that is developing rapidly, most often on a small scale and impact with lasting consequences – environmental protection, discipline of tourists, promoting the development of local crafts and cultural traditions.

Green entrepreneurship has two components:

- Innovations to create new environmental products and services.
- Leadership for environmental protection.

Combining the two components generates entrepreneurs for the benefit of society⁶. Some of the most important features of ecotourism are:

- 4.1 Generating a new business idea.
- 4.2 Taking risk with the new business venture.
- 4.3 Design, construction and operation of low impact facilities.
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- 4.5 Introduction of eco-innovation.
- 4.6 Political, social and environmental commitment of the business.

4. PRINCIPLES OF ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is an alternative type of tourism for uniting the protection of the environment, the communities of the local population and ensuring sustainable travel. This requires the following principles to be adopted:

- Travel to a natural destination in nearby and remote areas;
- Providing positive and memorable experiences for visitors and hosts to increase sensitivity to the political, environmental and social climate of host countries. Benefits include improved security and new opportunities to enhance the tourist experience;
- Reducing the impact of physical, social, behavioural and psychological impacts and damage;
- Creating environmental culture and awareness;
- Realization of direct financial benefits for environmental protection
- It is believed that national parks and protected areas will survive only if happy people live in their periphery, i.e. the local community must participate and receive income and other tangible benefits – drinking water, roads, education, health care, etc.;
- Building environmental and cultural awareness, respect and empathy;
- Acceptance and respect for the local culture;
- Protection of human rights – according to the World Tourism Organization⁷, tourism contributes to international understanding, peace, prosperity and universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

5. INTRODUCTION OF A GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL IN TOURISM

The vision of green entrepreneurship is focused on the future and the change it brings. Green entrepreneurs are focused on expecting new business changes for a more sustainable economy and focused on the changing business models that lead to change. By its nature, green entrepreneurship addresses key social and environmental issues.

Green entrepreneurs are the engine for reducing unemployment, creating new jobs, providing employment and achieving growth. Green entrepreneurship provides new opportunities and projects for sustainability. Provokes interests in innovative business solutions for the creation and introduction of a greener economic model – a green entrepreneurial model in tourism – *Figure 1*:

⁵ <https://ecotourism.org/news/ties-announces-ecotourism-principles-revision/>

⁶ Jain, T.K. (2018) *Towards the theory of green entrepreneurship*. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

⁷ <https://www.unwto.org/>

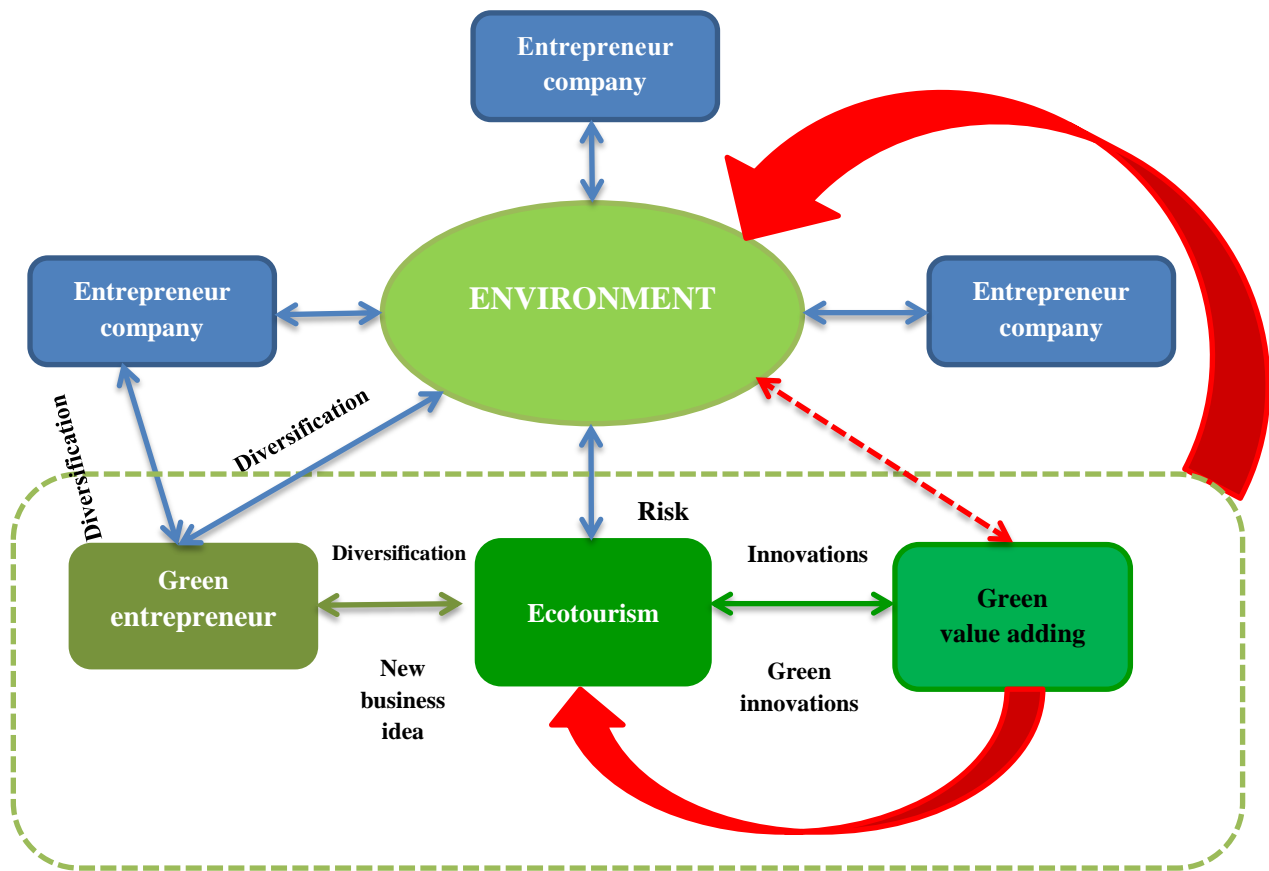


Figure 1. Green entrepreneurial model in ecotourism.

The presented new model for introduction in tourism and ecotourism includes:

1. Entrepreneurial companies in the tourism industry.
2. Environment.
3. Generating a new business idea.
4. Taking risk with the new business venture.
5. Design, construction and operation of low impact facilities.
6. Political, social and environmental commitment of the business.
7. Introduction of green innovations.
8. Diversification⁸.
9. Green added value.

6. TRENDS IN ECOTURISM

New trends are giving positive signals to the growing awareness of ecotourism to create less impact on travel. There are several key trends that will shape the tourism industry on a global and regional scale:

- Increases the number of Asian tourists – by 2030 30% of international tourists will come from Asian countries;
- Digitalisation will become even more important with the development of technologies and the emergence of a new generation of passengers who have knowledge of modern digital;
- The position of the shared economy;
- Responsible tourism – with the growing shortage of resources, the rate of climate change and the rapid extinction of many species, the population and the impact of the climate. With the increase in the number of tourists around the world, different strategies for combating irresponsibility are emerging. These include

⁸ Konstantinova, S. (2013) *Diversification in tourism*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304581927>

restrictions on the number of visitors and restrictions on access to typical facilities for certain conditions. In addition, many tourism and hotel companies have already committed to developing technologies to support the sustainability of tourism;

- Personalized trips – modern tourists evaluate the individual experience based on personal preferences and previous trips;
- Tourists will enjoy unique cultural experiences and will travel alone. The analysis shows that 50% of tourists' worldwide travel by themselves, at least once a year, and this trend is expected to continue⁹.

The trends from global world tourism are quickly transferred and transformed to ecotourism. Research shows that ecotourism dominates the world of travel. There is a change in the values and approaches among tourists that contribute to sustainability in tourism. The sharp rise in eco-consciousness among travellers worldwide is expected to create interesting trends for ecotourism over the next decade, very different from what we have seen in the past.

1. *Observed permanent changes in vehicle choice preferences* – there is a decline in airline bookings in favour of train bookings. This trend continues despite voluntary changes in travel regimes. Some countries are considering the introduction of an eco-tax on flights and are seriously considering taxing aviation fuel.
2. *Off-season travel and avoiding "crowds"* – are associated with greater chances for reservations out of season. They are the best way to relax. With the drastic drop in prices in the off-season, tourists can organize very good budget holidays.
3. *Growth in ecological travel choices* – green hotels and chalets report an increase in reservations.
4. *More preferences for unique experiences* – the trip is no longer a visit to iconic places, but more experience of things that are unique to a particular place. Travellers take fewer trips. Tourists prefer less known destinations for more unique experiences that create less impact on the environment.
5. *The era of "micro adventures" is coming* – people prefer to visit more destinations instead of investing too much time and money in one destination adventure. From an environmental point of view, this is useful as it creates less stress on natural resources and less 'carbon footprint'.
6. *Control over disposable plastics* – the growing use of disposable plastics disrupts sustainability in ecotourism. Taking this position into account, tourism eco-organizations choose reusable materials in catering and accommodation establishments. Travellers also follow in their footsteps and quickly join innovations. Increasingly, they are moving to sustainable alternatives to travel, packaging and shopping. Multifunctional water bottles, cups, napkins and paper towels are increasingly used as mandatory travel accessories.
7. *Travels outside the status quo – excursions to unknown destinations* are increasing. It is an amazing experience to discover an unknown place, to explore the local culture and natural beauty. You can be on "one hand away" from your attractive adventure trip eco-conscious travellers.
8. *Focus on zero waste* – one of the most significant trends of ecotourism is to focus on zero waste. In addition to single-use plastic waste, food waste is also a serious waste problem on the planet. Hotels and restaurants take initiatives in composting, intelligent supply chain management, adopting the concept from farm to fork, encouraging tourists to choose and arrange food and more.
9. *Green transports for mobility* – cycling, transport sharing or the choice of other emission-free travel options are increasing. Renting a bus or charter bus means fewer cars on the road. Travel and tourism contribute to huge carbon emissions.
10. *Support and empowerment of women* – tourists prefer to buy local goods and souvenirs created and sold by women. Many tour operators have specially designed travel packages to support women's empowerment. Reservations for accommodation and restaurants owned by women are increasing. This support also affects sustainability in tourism.
11. *Influence of social problems on the choice of destination* is a different trend in the development of ecotourism. There is a growing concern among tourists about destinations in terms of their social, environmental and cultural aspects and how their visit will affect them. Consider social issues as a top priority when choosing a destination.
12. *Safaris and nature reserves are at the top of the list* – safaris and nature reserves open more camps and temporary accommodation, which allows this experience to be more accessible to tourists. Aware of the standards for the conservation of local flora and fauna, most of them work with local residents and communities to ensure all the positive impacts of tourism.
13. *Avoiding animal walks* – visits to safaris and nature reserves are growing trends in ecotourism in 2020. The same applies to the use of animals for entertainment, as in zoos.

⁹ <https://www.economic.bg/bg/a/view/badeshteto-na-turizma-tendentsiite-koito-tryabva-da-znaete-104684>

14. *Preferences for ecological accommodation – green accommodation or eco-accommodation* find more participants among eco-conscious travellers, even if it is at a higher price. Their initiatives include the use of biodegradable products, stay without plastic, solar energy, water management, recycling facilities and environmentally friendly transport.
15. *Natural menus* – a green trend that has been growing in the last few years is the use of environmentally friendly menus. Not only has the environmental awareness of travellers, but also wellness awareness made them focus on this sustainable opportunity. Organic farm products, domestic fresh products used in meals, plant-based meat and, above all, the promotion of zero food waste are common trends in ecotourism.
16. *Restoration of green* – sustainable tourism will lead to greater recovery and environmental protection. This trend is everywhere. The tourism business is involved in the restoration of landscapes and animal species that have been destroyed or expelled.
17. *Green marketing labels* – tourism market stakeholders place green products and green certificates on the market to attract eco-conscious tourists. Some destinations require specific environmental credentials for tourists, hoteliers and restaurants, or by implementing zero plastic initiatives, promoting organic farming, choosing solar energy and other recycling methods.
18. *Other activities to reduce the impact on the environment.*

7. CONCLUSION

According to the forecasts for the development of the concept of green entrepreneurship, it is expected to expand significantly in the next few years with the support of highly competitive business projects offering eco-innovation. Green entrepreneurship in ecotourism must be managed in three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. All these factors have a positive impact on the marketing of the ecotourism product, reducing costs and quality improvement, as well as increasing the value of the travel company. The idea of green entrepreneurship and eco-innovation can be an opportunity for growth in the tourism sector. Green entrepreneurship is about improving people's well-being and social equality, as well as reducing risks to the environment and environmental renewal.

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