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Climate change impacts and implications for tourism in protected areas²

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ABSTRACT

Tourism, as a distinct field of activity, is strongly linked to climate change: in a positive way – by providing the necessary resources and factors to reduce the action of climate change through the use of alternative energy technologies with low environmental impact, and the controlled development of tourist flows – and a negative one – through energy consumption, visitors transportation, the quantities of waste.

Among the solutions mentioned, the present research has focused on protected areas since the argument was less debated in the scientific literature, but also in business practice. As the main service providers regarding ecosystems and biological resources, protected areas meet the requirements to preserve species worldwide and are vulnerable to climate change.

Tourism in protected may become a tourist travel motive more prominent in the future as the natural environment and the species from protected areas are threatened by climate change. Therefore, the paper explains different climate change impacts and implications for tourism in protected areas. The research field proposed aimed to assess the direct and indirect impact of climatic changes for tourism in protected areas. The objectives were related to: determine the level of importance of different changes in the structure of the major components of tourism in protected area under the direct climate change impact; indicate the importance level of changes in natural characteristics of environments which could influence negative tourism by reducing the perceived attractiveness of a protected area, under indirect climate change impact; highlight the importance level of modifications, induced by indirect climate change impact, in socio-economic environment of local communities in protected areas which could affect tourism. Based on the research findings proposals for an appropriate strategy in the field of climate change mitigation was elaborated. This work was supported by the project “Excellence academic routes in the doctoral and postdoctoral research – READ” co-funded from the European Social Fund through the Development of Human Resources Operational Programme 2007-2013, contract no. POSDRU/159/1.5/S/137926.

Keywords: *tourism; protected areas; climate change; impact*

Conclusions

According to the research, length and quality of tourism seasons is the most important change in the structure of the major components of tourism in protected area under the direct climate change impact. Biodiversity loss is the most important change in natural characteristics of environments which could influence negative tourism by reducing the perceived attractiveness of a protected area, under indirect climate change impact. Also, economic decline represents the most important modification, induced by indirect climate change impact, in socio-economic environment of local communities in protected areas which could affect tourism. Based on these research findings, increased costs for transportation and less access to some destinations could represent proposals in elaborating a climate change mitigation strategy.

¹ <http://www.iises.net/proceedings/14th-international-academic-conference-malta/table-of-content>

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