


# Factors for (Un) Sustainable Tourism Development

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**Abstract:** The issue of sustainable tourism development is discussed in numerous academic publications and official documents. Nevertheless practical implications of this concept are very rare in tourist destinations in Bulgaria. Sustainable tourism development can be shortly described as a development where the resulting economic and social changes lead to a decrease in the need for environmental protection. Quite a few publications try to identify the factors for destinations' sustainable tourism development. The present research is an attempt to view sustainability as a result of various impacts tourism exerts on the destinations. It can be accepted that positive tourism impacts enhance sustainable tourism development while negative ones can be blamed for the unsustainability of tourist destinations. In their turn tourism impacts are subject to numerous regional and local factors making their monitoring and evaluation extremely difficult but nevertheless indispensable. The present study focuses on three main factors for tourism impacts in destinations in Bulgaria. The three factors investigated are: level of tourism development, stage of tourism development life cycle and prevailing tourism type. But how do we measure tourism impacts and how do we compare them? The impacts in those destinations are evaluated by the local population. This is a way in which all impacts can be compared since they are measured by one and the same indicator – the values they receive from the local population. 5 000 questionnaires are distributed and 4 397 are processed. One of the most interesting findings shows that the least sustainability can be expected in highly seasonal destinations no matter of the level or the stage of their tourism development. It was found out that all three investigated factors are of great importance for the differentiation of local residents' attitude towards tourism, for their perception of tourism impacts and for overall tourism sustainability in general.

**Key words:** Tourism, sustainability, development, factor, evaluation, average value

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

More than 20 years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro the issue of sustainable tourism development as part of the overall sustainable development is being discussed in numerous academic and practical oriented publications [1]. This research is facilitated by the great number of tourism impact investigations and the need for their management. The importance of tourism impacts increased significantly lately in the context of tourism policy and tourism planning and of the widespread sustainable tourism development concept. The equity of economic, social and ecologic tourism aspects is stressed upon. The satisfaction of public needs should be placed in conformity with the limited resources as well as with the equality of present and future generations' rights. Sustainable tourism development should be such a development where the economic and social changes related to it lead to a decrease in the need for environmental protection.

More specifically sustainable tourism development is described as a development where there is:

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1. Integrity of economic development and environment protection goals. From tourism point of view this means the utilisation of tourist resources in such a way so that it would simultaneously bring benefits for the local population as well as satisfaction to the tourists without causing serious damage of the natural and socio-cultural environment;

2. Fair distribution of the wealth created by tourism product sales and also of the costs for the tourist resources preservation in various regions and countries both among them and among the generations;

3. Binding quantitative growth with the environment's quality improvement which is in the mutual interest of the local population and of the tourists looking for attractive and unpolluted vacation environment.

On the one hand sustainable tourism is attempting to have a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate future employment for local people. Its aim is to ensure that development brings a positive experience for local people, tourism companies and tourists. On the other hand tourism impacts are the effects caused voluntarily or unwittingly by the development and practicing of various tourism activities thus affecting all types of environment – natural, economic, social and cultural. According to their manifestation field Mathieson and Wall [2] classified impacts into 3 categories: social, economic and physical (environmental).

For a long time various institutions and organizations worldwide have been trying to develop indicator systems for the evaluation of tourism impacts. Quite well known and widely used are the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria developed in 2007-2008 [3]. They are 34 divided into 4 groups as follows:

- Demonstration of effective sustainable management – 7 indicators;
- Enhancement of the social and economic benefits for the local population and decrease of the negative impacts – 8 indicators;
- Enhancement of the cultural heritage benefits and decrease of the negative impacts – 4 indicators;
- Enhancement of the natural environment benefits and decrease of the negative impacts – 15 indicators.

Despite all implementation efforts these criteria have one grave methodological problem - the indicators for each group are incomparable to each other since they are being measured in different units. The volume of tourism income cannot be compared to the numbers of destroyed plants and trees or to the numbers of crimes in the destination. It is difficult to determine which of them is more important and prevails over the others. There is no general measure for all types of tourism impacts. The present study makes an attempt to introduce as such a measure the values given to various tourism impacts by the local population.

Another aspect of the issue of connecting tourism impacts to destination sustainability are the key factors that influence tourism impacts manifestation. Ryan (1991) [4] enumerated many factors for sustainable tourism development. As it turns out in many cases an important factor for sustainability of the destination is its seasonality. Research shows that in destinations with all-year-round tourism sustainability is much higher than in heavily seasonal destinations. Other factors can be the number and the type of tourists, the volume and the structure of tourist spendings, the degree and the stage of tourism development, the differences (economic and social) between the tourist destination and the tourists generating regions. The physical dimensions of the tourist destination and the relative share of domestic tourism entrepreneurs also play an important role for the nature of tourism impacts in the destination. Local tourism policies and management, the homogeneity of the local society and economics and the speed and intensity of tourism development are also important factors for tourism impacts and the resulting tourism sustainability [4]. An interesting approach to the study of sustainability would be a simultaneous research of these three intertwining aspects of tourism development – tourism impacts, factors for them and sustainability itself. The present study aims at focusing on this issue taking as an example tourism development in several Bulgarian destinations.

With the growing number of tourist trips in Bulgaria the problems related to tourism impacts and sustainability are becoming more and more evident. Adequate answers to those issues should be based on systematic and detailed research. Unfortunately with some exceptions [5-9] this issue has not yet been discussed in detail in Bulgarian academic publications.

It is assumed that factors influencing the manifestation and evaluation of tourism impacts are also factors for tourist destinations' sustainable tourism development. In this way this paper is an attempt to identify some general factors for tourism impacts in Bulgaria as perceived and evaluated in a local residents' perspective. Their importance for the overall sustainable tourism development is further revealed and analysed.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years many books and articles related to tourism impacts research, sustainable tourism development and residents' perceptions of both were published, for example in the last 15 years: Andereck and Nyaupane (2011) [10], Aref (2010) [11], Assenova and Vodenska (2012) [8], Brida et al. (2011) [12], Chen and Chen (2010) [13], Choi and Murray (2010) [14], Diedrich and Garcia-Buades (2009) [15], Kim et al. (2013) [16], Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012) [17], Vareiro et al. (2013) [18], Vargas-Sanchez et al. (2011) [19], Yu et al. (2011) [20], McGranahan (2011) [21], Dibra (2015) [22], Rodríguez and Espino (2016) [23], Cvelbar and Dwyer (2013) [24], Muresan et al. (2019) [25], Ulus and Hatipoglu (2016) [26], Tsung and Fen-HauhJan (2019) [27], Cruz Ruiz et al. (2019) [28], Cruz Ruiz et al. (2020) [29], Mathew and Sreejesh (2017) [30], Cevirgen et al. (2012) [31], Cottrell et al. (2007) [32], Rasoolimanesh and Jaafar (2017) [33], Zamani-Farahani (2016) [34], Cucculelli and Goffi (2016) [35], Long and Kayat (2011) [36], Fong and Lo (2015) [37], McLoughlin et al. (2018) [38], Bakhat et al. (2010) [39], Gavinho (2016) [40], Aragon-Correa et al. (2015) [41], Barrutia and Echebarria (2015) [42], Cengiz (2012) [43], Scaccia and De Urioste-Stone (2016) [44], Jugurnath et al. (2017) [45], etc.

Thematically all those publications can be differentiated in the following themes: residents' perceptions, tourism sustainability, tourism impacts and sustainability factors. The main areas of investigation are outlined as follows:

- The major issue in most publications reviewed is the residents' perceptions and their attitude towards tourism -25 articles [10-20,25,27-29,31-34,36,37,40,42-45].

It is generally recognized that the inclusion of residents to the process of sustainable development and their involvement in the decision-making mechanisms represent a focal point in sustainable tourism development [31]. It should be kept in mind though that local residents are not fully aware or nor have much knowledge about the concept of sustainability and its principles, yet they still show positive attitude towards them [31].

- Some of the studied publications investigate various tourism impacts in general [9,11,12,30,36,39].
- Other publications discuss the necessity of their measuring and monitoring [8,20]. Some articles investigate residents' perception of the impacts tourism has on their destinations [11,36], on their quality of life, and various relationships between those perceptions, the local economy and the support for tourism in the community [10,16]. Others investigate and analyse the importance and reliability of residents' perceptions of tourism impacts in general [13,19] and for tourism planning and management [43]. Another main research topic is sustainability of tourism in its various manifestations and meanings - 20 articles [5-6,8,14-15,20,22,27,28,30-33,35,37,38,41,43-45]. In some of them attempts are made to connect residents' attitudes to sustainable tourism development [14,20,28,31,32,43-45]. Many authors tackle the issue of sustainability as one of the most perspective ways of tourism development both for the community's benefit and for the perspective of tourism businesses [22,29,41]. As Barrutia & Echebarria [42] explicitly state tourism destinations are the singularly interesting areas for studying sustainability issues.
- Another specific research topic is the role various factors play for residents' perceptions and destination tourism sustainability. There are some publications researching sustainability assessment factors [21], factors influencing businesses to adopt sustainable tourism practices [22], factors in achieving the sustainability of a tourism destination [23], etc. The importance of economic, environmental and social factors to sustainable operations [24] is also revealed. As Muresan et al. [25] point out "Understanding the implications of tourism development from the residents' point of view helps to increase knowledge about the factors affecting the long-term, sustainable success of tourism destinations". Other authors seek the possibility for tourism sustainability in human-related factors [26]. Community attachment and economic dependence are shown to have significant effects on positive tourism impact [13]. Other authors focus on the connections between the demographic variables gender, age, instruction level and salary and the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impressions of sustainable tourism [33,45].
- Some authors investigate the destination's life cycle as a factor as well - Tsung & Fen [27] speak about economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability. The three vary significantly in the consolidation, development, and involvement stages of community-based tourism development. They also point out that residents' perceptions differ across the developmental stages. So managers should consider the development opportunities and adopt appropriate strategies across different development stages. Diedrich & Garcia-Buades [15] also use the concept of a tourist area cycle of evolution to prove that local perceptions of tourism impacts may be used as indicators of destination decline. Kim et al. [16] underline the role of both the stage and the level of tourism development in

the community to investigate residents' perceptions of tourism impact (economic, social, cultural and environmental).

- All researchers tried to use various techniques for their investigations and did their best to achieve reliable and significant results. All research on residents' perceptions is based on questionnaire surveys but as a major critique to all studied publications it has to be pointed out that the number of respondents in most of them is quite low (in the researched publications they vary from 43 [21] to 1230 [28]) - [13,14,16,18,27,29,30-34]. Despite the low respondent numbers authors go to certain lengths applying sophisticated quantitative techniques and methodology while the same results can be very easily obtained by using much simpler methods such as average values, correlation coefficients and even the descriptive method [28].
- An interesting approach can be seen in Cucculelli & Goffi [35] who introduce a set of sustainability indicators in order to examine the role of sustainability as crucial determinant of the competitiveness of a tourist destination. Most of the studies are conducted in well developed tourist destinations – Italy [12,35], Portugal [18], Spain [28], Slovenia [24], Ireland [38], Morocco [40], Balearic Islands [42], Turkey [31,43], Mauritius [45], Poland [29], Bulgaria [5-7,9]. Some publications are dealing with residents' perceptions and tourism impacts in new or emerging tourism destinations – Iran [11,34], China [32,37], Namibia [21], Vietnam [36], India [46-48], Zimbabwe [49], Nepal [50-52], Malaysia [53-55], Australia [56], New Zealand [57]. Despite the different geographic and economic context findings are very similar and contribute to the general body of knowledge of the subject matter.

Results show in general that favorable attitudes are found to be linked with tourism socio-cultural impacts, while environmental and economic matters are found to be the least favorable in terms of the perceived impacts of tourism [11]. Recognition of the positive economic impacts of tourism by residents is revealed. Also, the social and cultural impacts are recognized to be positive, but at a lower degree [12].

Choi & Murray [14] state that long-term planning, full community participation and environmental sustainability within tourism, are critically related to support for tourism and to the positive and negative impacts of tourism. According to Vareiro et al. [18] the early stage in a destination's life cycle has a major reflex in the devaluation by most residents of the negative impacts of tourism development.

### 3. METHODS AND DATA

The main research assumption in this research is the introduction of a general measure for all types of tourism impacts – economic, social and environmental. This measure is their evaluation by local residents. Impacts are evaluated with the help of a 5-stage Lickert Scale so that they can be compared in their intensity of manifestation.

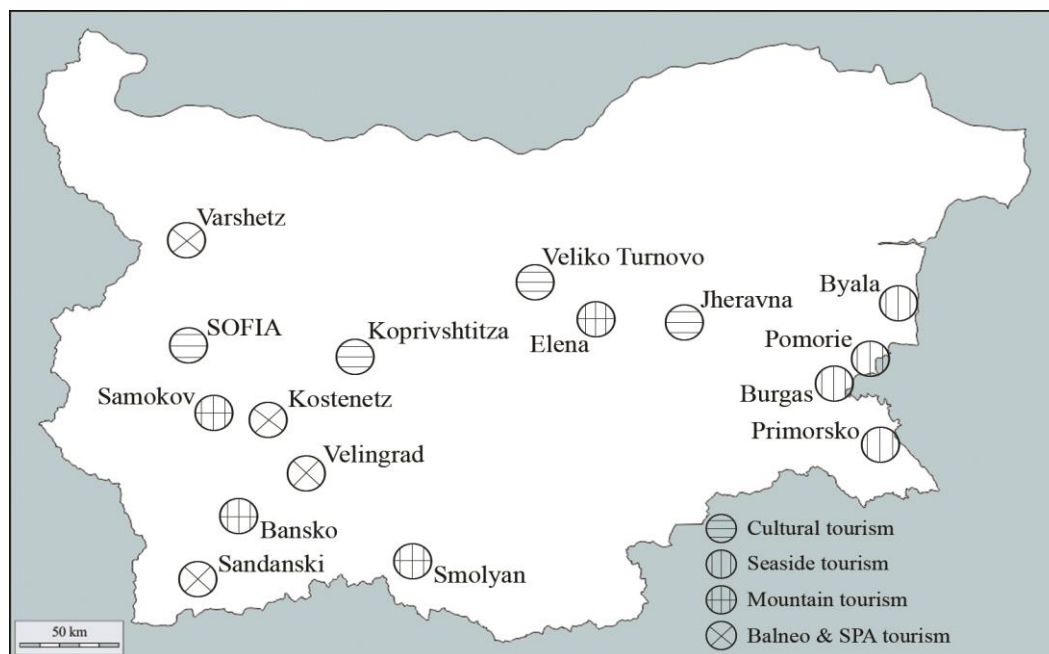
Factors for tourism impacts evaluation by local population are investigated through a field survey in 16 tourist destinations in Bulgaria. Destinations are chosen in a way as to include both territories with a well developed tourism industry and a steady tourist flow and destinations at the start of their tourism development. At the same time they represent the four main tourism types in Bulgaria – seaside, mountain, spa and cultural tourism (four destinations for each tourism type). Within each group of 4 destinations two are with very well developed tourism and two are at the beginning of their tourism development. These characteristics are specified using the methodology proposed by Butler [58] and developed in more detail by Cooper [59].

The following destinations are chosen – seaside: Burgas and Primorsko with well developed tourism and Pomorie and Byala with medium to low tourism development; mountain: Samokov and Smolyan with the two biggest national mountain resorts Borovets and Pamporovo in them, and Bansko and Elena with a medium to low tourism development; cultural tourism destinations: Sofia and Veliko Turnovo with well developed tourism and Koprivshitsa and Jheravna with medium to low tourism development; balneo and SPA destinations: the well developed Velingrad and Sandanski destinations and Varshets and Kostenets with a lower tourism development. All destinations are scattered across the country except for the seaside ones which are at the Black Sea coast (Fig.1). The main tourism characteristics of the municipalities where they are situated are given in Table 1.

A written standard anonymous questionnaire with 66 questions is used. The questionnaire language is Bulgarian. The sections of the questionnaire correspond to the variables of the study - the three main types of tourism impacts – economic, social and environmental as determined by Mathieson & Wall [2]. At the beginning of the questionnaire is the section referring to the socio-economic profiles of the respondents. It is placed there so that the respondents would feel comfortable seeing that they can cope with the questions in it. The impacts were illustrated by various statements dispersed across the questionnaire so as to keep respondents on the alert and not let them slacken and lose attention. Respondents were asked to evaluate them using the 5-stage Lickert Scale. The duration of data collection

was approximately one year and a half. The questionnaire was used before by Vodenska [9] who discussed the issue of its validity and reliability.

Evaluations of the impacts of tourism are analysed within separate destinations and destination types. This is done with a view to their better and detailed clarification. It helped also the definition of the key factors and a more specific and targeted formulation of the problems facing sustainable tourism development in Bulgaria.



**Figure 1.** Researched tourism destinations in Bulgaria

**Table 1.** Main tourism indicators of the 16 investigated destinations/municipalities (2018)

Tourism type	Municipalities	Beds (No)	Nights (No)		Visitors (No)	
			Total	International	Total	International
Seaside tourism	Burgas	3 824	469 556	100 658	301 395	77 951
	Primorsko	8 384	566 762	331 310	50 882	9 197
	Pomorie	2 478	99 925	17 528	10 077	1 346
	Byala	1 626	40 919	626	4 133	275
Mountain tourism	Samokov	4 309	572 433	400 247	203 230	51 117
	Smolyan	4 932	520 277	102 132	49 628	12 117
	Bansko	2 105	15 972	6 017	9 169	7 109
	Elena	280	6 214	140	5 553	70
Cultural tourism	Sofia	10 379	1 238 218	690 331	522 044	270 439
	Veliko Turnovo	2 774	139 962	31 168	105 853	43 040
	Koprivshitz	439	12 083	4 196	7 725	3 142
	Jheravna	433	11 074	3 125	5 623	2 075
Balneo and SPA tourism	Velingrad	1 389	80 415	3 514	26 242	548
	Sandanski	2 323	146 640	33 854	53 497	7 758
	Varshets	492	25 911	1 310	6 266	252
	Kostenets	405	10 534	1 068	5 312	249

(Source: National Statistical Institute, 2019)

Two sample types are used – a single stage areal sample and a simple random stochastic sample. The scale types used are: ordinal rank scale, 5-stage Lickert Scale, nominal scale, interval scale, the scale of Gutmann. The average values of local residents’ evaluations of tourism impacts are used. In the analysis of the results a value of a 0.5 standard deviation is accepted. It has to be pointed out that in all cases the

standard deviation is below 0.5 which shows a great consistency and concordance in the respondents' replies.

For further and quicker orientation in the impacts evaluation Vodenska [9] introduced three zones of the impact assessment implemented in the present paper as well:

- a green zone where average values of the positive evaluations are above 3.50 and of negative ones – below 2.50 (the lowest value being 1 and the highest - 5). The green zone means that tourism impacts are mostly positive and the level of sustainability is quite good;
- a yellow zone with positive and negative average values between 2.50 and 3.50. In this case the overall tourism impacts are quite controversial and after more detailed research they have to be regulated in order to pass into the green zone. Tourism sustainability is under question;
- a red zone with average positive impact values below 2.50 and average negative impact values above 3.50. Impacts are generally evaluated as negative and they require immediate regulative actions. Tourism sustainability is very low or nonexistent.

The number of distributed questionnaires is 5 000 in the 16 destinations the return rate being quite high- 87.9%. 4 397 representatives of the local population answered the questionnaire. The study covered all age groups over 16 years - people with varying educational background, field of activity and impact of tourism on their income. The respondents' profile is given in Table 2:

Limitations to the present research are to be expected but not proven in two directions: first, the wish of local residents to give a good overall picture of their destination reporting a more favourable tourism development in them, and second, the novelty of the survey topic and the insufficiency of informed knowledge for some of the respondents (see also [31]).

The present paper looks into the nature of three important factors for tourism impacts and the degree of tourism sustainability evaluation as perceived by tourist destinations' local population:

- Prevailing tourism type – seasonal versus perennial tourism;
- Level of tourism development (measured by the density of beds and overnights per local population and per area);
- Stage of tourism development life cycle – according to Butler [58] and determined by the methodology of Cooper [59].

These are the so called external or independent factors pertaining to the destination which cannot and are not influenced by the local population's characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, etc.

**Table 2.** Profile of the respondents

Age (%)	<b>Below 24</b>	<b>24 - 34</b>	<b>35 - 49</b>	<b>50 - 64</b>	<b>Above 65</b>
	26.9	27.1	29.4	13.7	2.7
Gender	<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>		
	40.4		59.6		
Duration of living in the destination (%)	<b>Below 1 year</b>	<b>1-5 years</b>	<b>6-10 years</b>	<b>11-20 years</b>	<b>More than 20 years</b>
	2.9	6.3	8.2	25.5	57.1
Education (%)	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Secondary special</b>	<b>Higher</b>
	0.9	12.6	26.9	24.6	34.2
Profession (%)	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Retired</b>	
	44.5	16.9	34.6	4.0	
Occupation in the tourism sector (%)	<b>Yes - main occupation</b>		<b>Yes - additional occupation</b>		<b>None</b>
	25.4		28.1		47.8
Family member in the tourism sector (%)	<b>Yes</b>			<b>None</b>	
	41			59	

(Source: author's calculations)

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Among all impacts and across all destinations the highest positive values were given for the social tourism impacts followed by the environmental impacts. Their average values fall into the green zone – 3.92 and 3.63 respectively. Quite surprisingly the economic impacts got the lowest values being at the upper part of the yellow zone (3.46). This may be explained by unjustified expectations of the local population, leakages from the local economic system and the presence of many unlocal tourism business.

The same picture can be observed by the negative tourism impacts evaluation – the economic impacts are again in the yellow zone (average value 3.22). The other two impact types are in the green zone, their average values being below 2.50, the lowest value for the social negative impacts being 2.39.

The greatest difference between positive and negative evaluations is observed by social impacts and the smallest one – by economic impacts.

The role of the main independent destination factors for the values received and for the sustainability of tourism development in various tourism destinations is further analysed.

##### 4.1. Prevailing tourism type

There is a very pronounced dependence of tourism impacts evaluation in various destinations on existing tourism seasonality in them. The highest average values for positive impacts are observed in destinations with prevailing perennial tourism types - cultural (3.92) and spa (3.79) tourism. In winter ski-tourism destinations this value falls to 3.65 (so far all values are in the green zone). The lowest one is observed in seaside destinations - 3.37 (upper part of the yellow zone). This difference of about 0.55 between the highest and the lowest average value indicates that tourism seasonality plays a significant role in local residents' perception and evaluation of tourism impacts.

On the other hand the highest mean value for negative tourism impacts is observed in seaside destinations – 2.51 (the lowest part of the yellow zone, almost in the red zone). The lowest one is received in destinations where cultural tourism is prevailing – 1.87 (green zone). The difference between these two values is 0.64 which again indicates a considerable differentiation among the destinations and a greater discomfort of seaside destinations' population.

Due to the high values of negative impacts evaluation it can be assumed that the more seasonal the tourism type in the destination the less sustainability can be expected in it. This can be easily explained by the yearly irregularity of tourism impacts in them – economic and social benefits are experienced only during high tourist seasons in seaside and mountain destinations. At the same time in SPA and cultural tourism ones they are more evenly distributed throughout the whole year. On the other hand it has to be mentioned that seasonality plays a positive role for environmental tourism impacts since outside the high tourist season natural components have the opportunity to regenerate and recreate in case they are not entirely and fully damaged or destroyed (e.g. vegetation, air, water).

##### 4.2. Level of tourism development

The analysis of the dependence of impact evaluations on the level of tourism development in the destinations is done using correlation coefficients between the positive and negative values of the three impact types on the one hand, and some indicators for tourism development in them – No of beds, visitors and nights spent, percentage of international visitors and nights, incomes, density of beds and nights spent, etc. on the other hand.

The level of tourism development is of medium importance for tourism impacts evaluation in various destinations – correlation coefficients have low and medium values. The highest average values for positive impacts are in the green zone and are observed in destinations with medium (3.56) and lowest (3.52) development level of tourism. At the highest tourism development level this value falls to 3.42 and is already in the upper part of the yellow zone. On the other hand the highest average value (3.02) for negative tourism impacts is observed in most developed destinations, while the lowest one (2.53) is received in the least developed destinations. Both values are in the yellow zone and the difference between them being 0.49 indicates also a significant differentiation among the destinations and greater discomfort of the population in destinations with a higher level of tourism development. The lowest negative values of tourism impacts are to be observed in destinations with the lowest possible level of tourism development.

These findings indicate that the higher the degree of tourism development in the destination the higher the negative values of the impact assessment. This is an important prerequisite for a lower sustainability level in such destinations. This assumption can be easily explained by the pressure of negative tourism impacts in them – economic and social benefits to be received are negligible compared to overpopulation, noise, traffic jams, lack of social and economic accessibility for the local population to certain places and services, uneven distribution of economic benefits, etc.

#### 4.3. Stage of the destination’s tourism development life cycle

There is also a strongly pronounced dependence of tourism impacts evaluation in various destinations on their stage in the tourism life cycle. The highest average values for positive impacts are observed in destinations at the early beginning of their life cycle (3.76 – green zone). The lowest value (3.12 – yellow zone) is observed for the social impacts in destinations in the last stage of tourism development - stagnation. This difference about 0.64 indicates that the stage of tourism development plays a more important role in local residents’ perception and evaluation of tourism impacts than the type of tourism or the development level in the destination.

On the other hand the highest average value for negative tourism impacts is observed in stagnated destinations – 2.96 (yellow zone), while the lowest one is received in destinations at the initial stage of development – 2.03 (green zone). The difference between these two values is 0.93 which indicates a much greater differentiation among destinations and greater discomfort of local population at a higher stage of tourism development. These results are in full conformity with Butler’s model for the local residents’ attitude towards tourism and tourists at various stages of tourism development [58]. The stage of tourism development of a destination is the best indicator for the positive and negative tourism impacts to be found in it.

The above values indicate that the higher the stage of tourism development in the destination the less sustainability can be expected. This can be easily explained by the continued manifestation of negative tourism impacts in them.

The results are visualized in more detail in the following two tables – Table 3 and Table 4:

**Table 3.** Average evaluations by type of impacts and type of destinations

Subgroups	Economic Impacts		Environmental Impacts		Social Impacts	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
<b>Prevailing Tourism Type</b>						
Summer seaside tourism	3.40	3.62	3.56	2.71	3.88	2.51
Balneo and SPA tourism	3.56	3.08	3.79	2.36	4.02	2.34
Cultural tourism	3.36	3.02	3.70	2.20	3.92	2.30
Mountain tourism	3.50	3.15	3.48	2.49	3.85	2.39
<b>Level of Tourism Development</b>						
High	3.55	3.51	3.52	2.69	3.90	2.60
Medium	3.48	3.21	3.71	2.39	3.98	2.41
Low	3.39	3.24	3.54	2.61	3.79	2.40
Very low	3.31	2.71	3.61	1.93	3.97	1.91
<b>Stage of Tourism Development</b>						
Introduction	3.31	2.71	3.61	1.93	3.97	1.91
Slow growth	3.50	3.11	3.79	2.23	4.03	2.35
Rapid growth	3.48	3.41	3.50	2.78	3.79	2.66
Consolidation	3.45	3.42	3.65	2.43	4.07	2.38
Stagnation	3.50	3.58	3.11	3.40	3.33	2.51



**Table 4.** Tourism impact zones by destination type

Subgroups	Economic Impacts		Environmental Impacts		Social Impacts	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
<b>Prevailing Tourism Type</b>						
Summer seaside tourism	Yellow	<b>Red!!!</b>	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Balneo and SPA tourism	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
Cultural tourism	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
Mountain tourism	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
<b>Level of Tourism Development</b>						
High	Green	<b>Red!!!</b>	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Medium	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
Low	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
Very low	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
<b>Stage of Tourism Development</b>						
Introduction	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
Slow growth	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
Rapid growth	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Consolidation	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
Stagnation	Yellow	<b>Red!!!</b>	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow

(Source: author's compilation)

## 5. DISCUSSION

Analysing the role of the three factors for the nature of tourism impacts and their evaluation the following generalization of the revealed findings can be made:

- For all three factors only some average values for negative economic impacts are in the red zone – in the one-seasonal summer seaside destinations, in destinations with high development level and for destinations at the stagnation development stage (Table 3). This means that the level of sustainability in Bulgarian tourist destinations is quite good or good (Table 4);
- The stage of the destination's tourism development life cycle plays the most important role for local residents' evaluations of economic, social and environmental impacts and hence influences most strongly the level of tourism sustainability in the destination;
- The level of the destination's tourism development does not generally influence local residents' evaluations but is an important factor for the sustainability of tourism development;
- The prevailing tourism type in the destination is of medium importance in forming local residents' tourism impacts evaluations. In general positive impact values are more evenly distributed among the four groups of destinations. The highest values are to be found in the balneo & SPA destinations. Negative values are more differentiated, the highest negative values given in destinations with only one season (seaside tourism) and the lowest ones in destinations with prevailing perennial tourism;
- The most important finding of the present study is that the greatest influence for tourism impacts' evaluation in Bulgaria is manifested by the seasonality of the prevailing tourism type. This can be explained by the fact that excessive concentration of tourists and various tourism activities in a relatively short period of time causes a significant spatial and temporal concentration of predominantly negative tourism impacts in destinations with prevailing summer seaside recreational and winter ski-sports tourism. Perennial tourism types – cultural and SPA tourism impacts are more evenly distributed in time and space and do not demonstrate any extreme values.
- The higher level of destination's tourism development is characterized by more pronounced local population's perception of both positive and negative social tourism impacts;
- The stage of the destination's tourism development life cycle is the best indicator for negative but not of positive impacts perception.

Findings of the present research underpin results of previous studies discussed in the Literature Reviews section to a great extent.

An important contribution of the present research is that a method has been tested to compare the role and intensity of the three different types of tourism impacts – economic, social and environmental. While it is impossible to compare those using specific indicators for each group, it was proven that they can be easily compared by a common measure – the local population’s evaluation using one and the same measurement scale for all tourism impacts.

Another important conclusion is that tourism sustainability in a destination has to be divided into: a) economic sustainability, b) social sustainability and c) environmental sustainability (see also [27]). Hence, all destinations with average values of the corresponding impacts being in the green zone should be considered sustainable; those in the red zone are already unsustainable and those in the yellow zone are on the border of sustainability or their sustainability is endangered. Future efforts of tourism destination managers and the tourist industry should be directed to maintaining the sustainability where it is in place and to improving it in destinations and impact areas where it is endangered (Table 5).

Four future research directions can be outlined:

- Further research of negative economic impacts in order to reveal the reason for their high evaluation by the local population;
- Further research of various tourism impacts in various destinations in order to confirm or discard the findings of this investigation. The possibility of applying local population’s impacts evaluation as a tool for general determination of impacts intensity and direction has to be confirmed;
- Further research in order to identify additional factors for the manifestation and evaluation of tourism impacts in the destinations;
- Further research in order to confirm the relationships between: a) tourism impacts and tourism sustainability and b) tourism impact factors and tourism sustainability.

**Table 5.** Destination tourism sustainability by tourism impacts evaluation and factors

	<b>Economic Sustainability</b>	<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>	<b>Social Sustainability</b>
<b>Prevailing Tourism Type</b>			
Summer seaside tourism	<b>Very endangered</b>	Endangered	Endangered
Balneo and SPA tourism	Endangered	Good	Good
Cultural tourism	Endangered	Good	Good
Mountain tourism	Endangered	Endangered	Good
<b>Level of Tourism Development</b>			
High	<b>Very endangered</b>	Endangered	Endangered
Medium	Endangered	Good	Good
Low	Endangered	Endangered	Good
Very low	Endangered	Good	Good
<b>Stage of Tourism Development</b>			
Introduction	Endangered	Good	Good
Slow growth	Endangered	Good	Good
Rapid growth	Endangered	Endangered	Endangered
Consolidation	Endangered	Good	Good
Stagnation	<b>Very endangered</b>	Endangered	Endangered

(Source: author’s vision)

The general problem outlined in the present research lies in the fact that tourism in Bulgaria exerts not only positive but also negative impacts on the environment – economic, physical and social. Possible strategies for solving the more general issue of tourism sustainability in tourism destinations should be

directed toward the regulation of existing negative impacts. Economic sustainability being the most endangered should be regulated by some economic instruments, e.g. higher payment to tourism employed personnel, more local population employed in tourism, not allowing new outside businesses set foot in the destination thus causing substantial financial leakages, etc. Physical negative impacts (environmental sustainability) should be dealt with in two directions – 1) recultivate existing damaged territories by various regulatory instruments, e. g. ordinances and 2) limitation of new territories being included in tourism businesses (e.g. no new construction permits by local authorities). Social sustainability can be reached by integrating local population and local businesses in the tourism industry. Local people should have their say in the tourism development of destinations and they should be engaged in tourism management preferably at prestigious positions.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Studying and forecasting of tourism impacts are vital for tourism policy, sustainable tourism development and regional economy. One of the ways for better investigation of diverse tourism impacts, their identification, management and forecast is through the application of modern methods for processing and analyzing large massifs of spatial data.

The present study has a strong theoretical and methodological input to the body of knowledge of destinations' tourism sustainability and some of its factors, tourism impacts and residents' perceptions. The difference the present study makes in the scientific literature is the implementation of a simple approach used so far only to investigate residents' perceptions of tourism impacts in certain destinations. The important contribution of the present research is that a method has been tested to compare the role and intensity of the three different types of tourism impacts – economic, social and environmental. While it is impossible to compare them using specific indicators for each group, it was proven that they can be easily compared implementing a common measure – the local population's evaluation using one and the same measurement scale for all tourism impacts.

This approach provides completeness to the impact study is based on primary information and allows the construction of an overall picture of the impact manifestations at various spatial levels and the comparison among various impact groups. It helps also identify areas or impacts that require more in-depth and detailed study with the implementation of more sophisticated and specific methods. Furthermore the approach used allows researchers to determine the level of sustainability in various tourism destinations and to direct the attention of the tourism industry and the tourism policy makers to such a development so that the sustainability can be achieved and preserved. Future efforts of tourism destination managers and the tourist industry should be directed to maintaining the sustainability where it is in place and to improving it in destinations and impact areas where it is endangered. The method used to determine various levels of economic, social and environmental sustainability in destinations is a significant contribution to regional and local tourism practice and management as well.

The aim of the conducted investigation was to determine the significance of various factors for tourism impacts in Bulgaria through the research and analysis of their evaluation by local residents. This was done with a view to future sustainable tourism development in the country. It has been found out that the investigated factors can be considered also to be of great importance for the tourism sustainability in tourism destinations.

Another important finding of the study lies in the fact that seasonality in the destination always plays a negative role for its sustainability no matter how well developed or well managed the destination is. The evaluation of various impacts can serve as a baseline from which the future measurement and management of changes occurring as a result of tourism development can be performed. The establishment of such a baseline, as well as the approbation of the proposed methodology will enable the development of future tourism sustainability providing guidance for in-depth and detailed studies of specific tourism impacts. It is an important contribution of the study in the managerial aspect as well. It will draw the attention of planning and managing organisations to the regulation of certain desired or undesired tourism impacts.

It can be assumed that an important role for tourism sustainability is played by the investigated factors. So in order to be more sustainable destinations and their management have to pay special attention to them and try to regulate them. Seasonality being a major factor has to be reduced by the implementation of various managerial instruments and by making Bulgaria a 4-season destination – a strategic goal of the latest Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria [60].

The conducted survey reveals the important role of local residents' opinion for the general and the detailed perception of tourism impacts at a local level. It was found out that the investigated factors are of great importance for 1) the formation and the differentiation of local residents' attitude towards tourism and tourists, 2) the perception of tourism impacts and 3) overall tourism sustainability in general. The aim

of the research is fully achieved with the help of a quite simplified methodology allowing for 1) local residents' evaluation of various tourism impacts as well as for 2) the determination of the sustainability level in the researched destinations.

In general sustainability of Bulgarian tourism can be reached by decreasing the negative tourism impacts on the environment. There are not many successful examples in the tourism practice across the world and the conditions in each case are quite diverse. So possible strategies for tourism sustainability in Bulgaria can be summarized as follows:

1. Slow down tourism development. Do not build new tourism super- and infrastructure. Concentrate on loyal instead of attracting more tourists.

2. Keep local population happy with the destination's tourism development by asking and listening to their opinion, by employing it in tourism industry and letting them participate in tourism management and the decision-making process,

3. Try to prolong the high tourist season by introducing new tourism products, organizing various types of events, attracting new tourism segments.

4. Diversify tourism products in such a way as to lower the physical and psychological pressure of tourists and tourism industry on local economy, land and population.

5. Introduce and implement long-term tourism planning with a view to its sustainability in the future.

It has to be mentioned though that with the existence of a private and highly fragmented tourism industry in Bulgaria it would be very difficult for any tourism management at a destination or a higher level to introduce these strategies across the country.

Future research plans should include more empirical research in order to confirm the established relationships among factors for tourism impacts evaluation, among tourism impacts themselves and the sustainability of tourism destinations with various tourism types, levels and stages of tourism development.

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