

Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management

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Economics and Management of Geotourism

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Preface: The Economics of Geotourism

Over the years, tourism-related activities have rightfully deserved the attention received from academics, policy-makers and practitioners, in particular with regard both to their impact on processes of wealth creation and their contribution to fostering socio-economic development and environmental sustainability. More recently, within the context of the tourism industry, geotourism has been gaining relative importance and, even though the academic literature remains incipient, researchers are already providing major new insights by exploring its local development impact, the entrepreneurial processes involved, and the management and resource allocation challenges that geotourism presents.

Geotourism and other forms of non-conventional tourism can be seen as forms of differentiating from mainstream tourism, leveraging existing endogenous particular conditions of territories and exploiting the consumers' needs to diversify their tourism consumption forms. Although geotourism conditions are not new (usually characterised by their millennial existence), only recently there has been a worldwide concern marketing such potential. Dowling (2011) defines Geotourism as a form of nature tourism centred on the geology and landscape of a territory, inviting visitors—tourists and local residents alike—to geosites aiming to provide educational experiences allied with a pleasurable experience and by deepening understanding and knowledge of geology and other earth sciences, and, simultaneously, raising awareness of the necessity for geodiversity preservation.

Geotourism contributes positively to rural development while expanding the tourism sector as a whole (Dowling and Newsome 2006). Above all, it is a sustainable form of tourism that has the potential to deliver economic and social benefits to the hosting communities. Five key objectives are common to all the activities involved in geotourism: (1) the development of greater awareness and understanding of the significant contributions geotourism can make to the environment, local communities and the economy; (2) the promotion of equity in the geo-development process; (3) sustainable improvements in the quality of life of the host community; (4) delivery of high levels of quality—both experiential and educational—in the visitor experience; and (5) the protection of the quality of the

geological heritage on which the above objectives depend. With its focus on landscape conservation, local economic development and social progress, geotourism operationalises many of the basic principles of sustainability that have already become embedded in broader regional strategies.

All tourism development, including that of geotourism, involves multiple stakeholders, including businesses, government departments and agencies at national and regional levels, as well as community and environmental groups. Due to their direct impact on tourism production and consumption, landscapes indirectly influence opportunities for regional development. Consequently, with regional development and landscape conservation so inextricably intertwined, most accounts of geotourism have foregrounded sustainable rural development as both justification and desired outcome, focusing on the competitive advantages that can be derived from presenting potential visitors with spectacular scenery, geological marvels capable of reconfiguring, exemplifying and projecting territorial identity (Stoffelen and Vanneste 2015). Furthermore, in geotourism development, one of two main approaches tends to predominate: a geological focus on landscape, geological inventories, and conservation and/or a more geographical focus on regional identity, tourism and local entrepreneurship. Thus, from the geological perspective, geotourism is a distinctive subsector in contrast to other tourism niches such as ecotourism and cultural tourism (Dowling and Newsome 2006; Newsome et al. 2012), whereas from the geographical standpoint, it is a global phenomenon in which various types of organisations deploy a series of location-specific products, services and experiences related to the identity of the destination (Bosak et al. 2010).

Geo- or landscape tourism also has the capacity to assist in the regeneration of private rural property, provided they possess significant geological heritage assets (O'Connor 2008). Geopark sites constitute the core of geotourism development because they possess unique geological resources that require protection and conservation so they can be employed for scientific, educational and tourism purposes. As such, geoparks provide the basis for an innovative approach to the conservation of the natural and geological heritage, the expansion of local economic opportunities and rebuilding of local social cohesion and identity.

In line with the emerging nature and status of this theme, and the gaps that still exist in the literature, the aim of the proposed book is to provide insights into the impacts of geotourism in economic and social development processes and to explore to what extent the opportunities and challenges facing geotourism reflect current trends in the tourist industry, as a whole. Our aim is to bring attention to the economics and management of geotourism. This approach is innovative since, to date, the theme has been examined primarily from the natural sciences perspective to the detriment of issues related to local economic and social impact, inter-organizational collaboration, tourist responses and community participation. This book includes contributions from different authors, and seven chapters provide different angles of the economics of geotourism.

The first chapter explores how the literature has explored the topic, mapping the scientific production on the topic over the years. This provides an important context for the empirical chapters that are presented subsequently. This chapter contributes

to understanding how the literature has grouped into different themes and refers to three groups: (1) sustainable geotourism development, (2) geopark network and (3) geosites' tourism value.

The second chapter explores one of the UNESCO geoparks contribution to the development of the territory, providing insights from Portugal. In this chapter, the development of a strategic plan for the territory is explored, emphasising the necessity of organised forms of strategic planning, including the different stakeholders so that the promotion of the territory is achieved. Therefore, this book also advocates the role of geoparks in promoting territorial development.

In addition to promoting territorial development, geoparks also play a central role in territorial branding and attracting public into the region. The third chapter explores how place branding leverages the territories, presenting the case of Geopark Odsherred in Denmark.

However, the attraction of an increased number of visiting brings additional challenges to the territory, namely in terms of its sustainability. In light of such concerns, the management of geoparks needs to be carefully conducted, and structured and systematic forms of management are required. To such extent, Chapter 4 explores the certification procedures of sustainability quality verification taking into account both knowledge management and participatory management. This chapter brings evidence from the Czech Republic's experience in ensuring sustainable management of geoparks through the certification processes as the basis for geoparks quality management. In a different perspective, Chapter 5 also discusses the management of a Portuguese Geopark—Arouca Geopark. However, this chapter brings into discussion the general management of the geopark, describing strategies for the promotion of the territory.

Finally, territorial branding is also explored from the social media perspective. Chapter 6 explores the impact of geotourism on destination brand selection with social media as the moderating variable. In fact, territorial branding, as much as any other industry marketing, has been benefiting from social media, with new forms of approaching existing and potential new customers.

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Contents

Geotourism as Promoter of Sustainability Development: A Systematic Review and Research Agenda	1
Anderson Galvão, Carla Mascarenhas, Carla Marques, and Vítor Braga	
The Estrela UNESCO Global Geopark Territorial Development Strategy: A Holistic Vision for the Twenty-First Century	19
Emanuel de Castro, Fábio Loureiro, Filipe Patrocínio, Hugo Gomes, João Castel-Branco, Lucas Cezar, Magda Fernandes, and Patrícia Azevedo	
Leveraging Landscape: The First Four Years of UNESCO Global Geopark Odsherred	47
Charlotte Werther	
Geopark Certification as an Efficient Form of Sustainable Management of a Geotourism Destination	65
Martina Pásková	
The Management of Arouca Geopark’s Route of Geosites: A Strategic Geologically Based Product in a Geotourism Destination . . .	87
Daniela Rocha and António Duarte	
Geotourism and Destination Brand Selection: Does Social Media Matter?	105
Aidin Salamzadeh, Mehdi Tajpour, Elahe Hosseini, and Yashar Salamzadeh	

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Geotourism as Promoter of Sustainability Development: A Systematic Review and Research Agenda



Anderson Galvão, Carla Mascarenhas, Carla Marques, and Vitor Braga

Abstract This study explored the existing literature on geotourism in order to identify current and potential trends in order to encourage new research. The data were collected only from papers published in academic journals included in the Scopus database as it contributed the most journals with the largest number of publications on geotourism. The 192 articles that served as the basis for the study were found by conducting a search with the keywords ‘geotourism’ AND ‘economy’ OR ‘management’. The results reveal three clusters of papers: (1) sustainable geotourism development, (2) geopark network and (3) geosites’ tourism value. The findings contribute to a better understanding and mapping of the existing literature on geotourism, as well as suggesting new lines of research.

Keywords Geotourism · Local/regional development · Geoparks network · Geosite

1 Introduction

Geotourism is defined as tourism that focuses on using areas’ geology and landscapes to promote sustainable tourism development, that is, a new approach to tourism based on geological environments (Ólafsdóttir and Dowling 2014).

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Geotourism sustains and enhances locations' distinctive character, seeks to recognise and protect natural structures and contributes to local and regional development through specificities emerging from geological features (Dowling and Newsome 2006). Thus, geotourism is sustainable tourism that primarily focuses on experiences of geological characteristics that promote tourists' understanding and appreciation of geosites, foster environmental and cultural conservation and benefit local populations. Geotourism is about creating products that protect geographic heritage, help build communities, communicate and enhance geological heritage and involve a wide range of people (Newsome et al. 2012). In the last decade, this tourism niche has become one of the primary and most significant economic activities at a local, national and international level (Dowling and Newsome 2010; Farsani et al. 2014; Lazzari and Aloia 2014).

Geotourism is a relatively new field of research, with studies covering only about a decade. A fuller understanding is needed of this area of knowledge's progress regarding the distribution of innovative ideas across national and international research communities (Ólafsdóttir and Tverijonaite 2018; Ruban 2015), which requires a systematic literature review grounded in bibliometric analysis of publications on this topic. This type of review can identify which lines of investigation have emerged and what gaps still exist. The present study sought, therefore, to provide a clear, systematic review of this field in order to identify current and potential trends and encourage new research formats and perspectives that could fill the gaps detected.

To achieve the proposed objectives, a systematic approach was applied that included a rigorous protocol, a definition of research phases and literature analysis based on published articles listed in Scopus. More specifically, the 192 articles identified as being related to geotourism were submitted to a bibliometric analysis.

This article is structured as follows. After this introduction, the theoretical framework based on the existing literature is briefly discussed. The third section describes the methodology used. The fourth section presents a bibliometric analysis of the articles found in the selected database and discusses the results of a cluster analysis of the articles. The conclusions and future lines of research are presented in the final section.

2 Literature Review

Geotourism is a niche market within tourism that is still in its initial stage of commercial development in most countries. This quite recent approach to tourism is dedicated to exploring nature and landscapes in ecological and sustainable ways. The most comprehensive definition of geotourism available provides clear evidence of these tactics (Newsome and Dowling 2010):

Geotourism is a form of natural area tourism that specifically focuses on geology and landscape. It promotes tourism to geo-sites and the conservation of geo-diversity and an understanding of earth sciences through appreciation and learning. This is achieved through independent visits to geological features, use of geo-trails and viewpoints, guided tours, geo-activities and patronage of geo-site visitor centres.