

Abstract

This paper aims to present the position and linkages of sustainable and ecotourism products. Both of these products were subject to a number of discussions over the last ten years, ranging from criticisms over their existence to overwhelming support for their applicability. These days, the debate seems to center around the relationships and linkages between them. In particular, the current state of sustainable tourism is seen as a type of product that all 'green' flavoured tourism products fall into. However, the current state of ecotourism research is dependent on the components, which this concept incorporates, as well as its effectiveness in the sustainable management of the destination. With this in mind, the purpose of this paper is to outline the current position of sustainable tourism, to identify the common themes of ecotourism and to provide a framework where these two types of products co-exist.

*Dr. Dimitrios Diamantis is a Lecturer in Tourism and Hospitality at the Swiss Hotel Association Hotel Management School, Les Roches, Switzerland.
Dr Adele Ladkin is a Senior Lecturer in Tourism at the International Center for Tourism and Hospitality Research, School of Service Industries, Bournemouth University, Poole, Dorset, UK.*

The Links Between Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism: A definitional and operational perspective

**Dimitrios Diamantis
Adele Ladkin**

Introduction

One of the widely-used definitions of sustainable tourism development focuses on 'leading to management of all resources in such a way that we can fulfil economic, social, and aesthetic needs, while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems' (Tourism Canada cited in Murphy, 1994, p. 279). The effective adoption of sustainable development in general, according to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), is to upgrade the quality of life of the local population and the experience which tourists determine should be on the quality element, as well as to support the environmental resources which the tourism system consumes (WTO, 1993). As a result, the sustainable implementation of sustainable development necessitates the duties of the tourism industry, environmental supporters and community or the three 'cycles' to be interrelated (WTO, 1993). The latter should also be based on three main principles of sustainable development (WTO, 1993; Mowforth and Munt, 1998):

- a) Ecological sustainability demonstrates that development is compatible with the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and biological resources;

b) Social and cultural sustainability suggests that development increases people's control over their lives, is compatible with the culture and values of people affected by it, and maintains and strengthens community identity; and

c) Economic sustainability ensures that development is economically efficient and that resources are managed so that they can support future generations.

Next, at the European Community level the Fifth Action Program 'Towards Sustainability' targets five main sectors, one of which is tourism. Very briefly the idea of the Community's program is that of '*shared responsibility*' based on three strategies (EC, 1995):

a) the reporting on the pressures and effects on the environment of tourism practices;

b) the emphasis to the awareness-led campaigns in order to promote an environmentally-friendly use of tourism resources, including the means of transport to and from tourist resorts; and

c) the promotion of the implementation of innovative good practices in the field of sustainable tourism development.

The latter principles have also been recognised in the 'Green Paper on Tourism' (EC, 1995). This paper focused explicitly on the creation of the positive relationship between economy and ecology. Here, the focus is that the attractiveness of tourism destinations or the economic basis of tourism, depends on the conservation and management of natural and cultural resources. The broad strategies capture the themes of (EC, 1995): tourism well-being; protection of

resources; the impulse for the growth and more competitive organisations; and assessment of the costs surrounding the resources usage in terms of tourism.

These initiatives, which are only a sample of an array of frameworks around the globe (Berry & Ladkin, 1997), highlight the extent to which there is awareness among non-government bodies to sustainability issues. The transformation of the issues of sustainability within tourism however, created a situation where most of the approaches became extremely '*tourism-centric*' partially divorced from the main principles of the concept of sustainability (Hunter, 1995a, b; 1997; Collins, 1996). This inevitably affected both the development as well as the operational perspective of sustainability. Here, sustainable tourism is often regarded as part of sustainable tourism development, or used simultaneously by tourism practitioners without any clarification over the similarities or differences between these concepts (Cater, 1995; Wahab, 1997; Goodall & Stabler, 1997; Hunter, 1995a, 1995b; 1997; Godfrey, 1996; Nepal, 1997; Berry and Ladkin, 1997). There is certainly a major difficulty in clarifying if there are two distinct concepts or just one, which encompasses the other. On this point Wall suggested that there is a distinction between these two concepts, as sustainable development enhances the multiple-sector approach to development and sustainable tourism represents a single-sector approach to development (1997). Although the initial difference between these two concepts derives explicitly from the development perspective, other researchers regarded sustainable tourism as a product and have drawn comparisons with mass forms of tourism (Godfrey, 1996; Clarke, 1997).

Sustainable tourism

There are four positions in the sustainable tourism literature deriving from its comparison with mass tourism (Clarke, 1997):

- a) polar opposites concepts;
- b) continuum concepts;
- c) movement position; and
- d) convergence.

The first position illustrates the theme of alternative tourism as the antithesis of the mass tourism development movement, or the notion of 'wrong' versus 'right' (De Kadt, 1990, 1992; Clarke, 1997). The main principle of this position suggests that alternative tourism aims to replace mass tourism (De Kadt, 1990, 1992) as the small scale developments and enterprises involved enable the destination to enjoy high degrees of local participation and control (Ioannides, 1995).

The second position, illustrates the phase of a continuum between sustainable tourism and mass tourism based on the polar opposite position theories (Clarke, 1997). It represents the adjustment of the polar opposite position to the continuum from mass tourism to sustainable tourism, based on the simultaneous utilisation of the destinations resources by the two concepts (Clarke, 1997; De Kadt, 1990, 1992; Butler, 1990). Overall certain limitations arose from whether alternative tourism (Wheeller, 1994; Butler, 1997; Hunter, 1995b):

- overcomes the generation of the antagonistic impacts of tourism;
- overcomes the resource degradation and safeguards the environment;
- attests the balance of power and equity issues;
- signifies the local needs, participation and control;

- contains the focus and capability principle;
- contains a coherent philosophy *per se*,
- addresses the long term resources survival; and
- negative effects as a result of the *in situ* nature of consumption.

The third position illustrates the movement to make mass tourism more sustainable, or the goal to minimise large-scale tourism with more small-scale sustainable tourism (Clarke, 1997). Here, this position suggests those small-scale tourism products or development becomes more objective as the whole concept of sustainable tourism becomes a goal for attainment (Clarke, 1997; McGregor, 1996).

Finally, the fourth position represents the convergence stage, which is when all forms of tourism aim to become sustainable forms of tourism (Clarke, 1997). On this position, there is recognition that sustainable tourism incorporates both large and small-scale interpretations (Clarke, 1997). This position mainly expresses the current search for sustainable tourism, which is based on converting all forms of tourism towards a more sustainable orientated approach.

Currently however, a variety of tourism products have been introduced for achieving sustainability within tourism such as: nature tourism, nature-based, nature-orientated tourism, wilderness tourism, adventure tourism, low-impact tourism, soft tourism, responsible tourism, ethic tourism, green tourism, ecological tourism, and so on. As a result, the concept of sustainable tourism is subject to a major crisis deriving from the lack of focus, scope, and commonly identified principles. The lack of the precise nature or

definition for sustainable tourism is based on the lack of knowledge over the linkages between these different sustainable products. Critically, one of the types of sustainable tourism products, which attracted considerable attention, was the concept of ecotourism.

Ecotourism

The term ecotourism emerged in the late 1980's as a direct result of the world's acknowledgment and reaction to sustainable practices and global ecological practices. In these instances, the natural based element of holiday activities together with the increased awareness to minimise the 'antagonistic' impacts of tourism on the environment

It can be argued that the concept of sustainable tourism is subject to a crisis.

(which is the boundless consumption of environmental resources) contributed to the demand for ecotourism holidays. This demand was also boosted by concrete evidence that consumers had shifted away from mass tourism towards experiences that were more individualistic and enriching. In addition, these experiences were claimed to be associated with a general search for the natural component during holidays (Kusler, 1991a, 1991b; Boo, 1992, 1993; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991a, 1991b; Blamey, 1995a, 1995b; Hvenegaard, 1994; Orams, 1995a, 1995b; Lindberg & McKercher, 1997; Dowling, 1996; Diamantis, 1998a, 1998b). Further, the support of several government bodies in conjunction with the eagerness to achieve sustainable development by any means, and the potential employment opportunities in

natural areas, in addition to the shift towards planning in protected areas all enhanced the profile of the concept (Kusler, 1991a, 1991b; Lindberg & McKercher, 1997; Diamantis, 1998a, 1998b; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1993a, 1993b, 1996).

Its global estimates revealed that in Australia and New Zealand, 32% of visitors search for the scenery, wild plants, and wildlife, as part of their trip (Filion, Foley & Jacquemont, 1994). In Africa, 80% of tourists who visited countries in this continent named wildlife as a primary motivational attribute (Filion *et al.*, 1994). In North America, 69-88% of the European and Japanese travelers considered wildlife and bird watching to be the most important attributes of their visits (Filion *et al.*, 1994). In Latin America, 50-79% of visitors advocated that visits to protected areas represented an important factor in choosing such destinations (Filion *et al.*, 1994). In America, it was claimed that over 100 million people participated in wildlife activities, of which 76.5 million were related to viewing wildlife, and 24.7 million were interested in birdwatching (USTC, 1993). This has generated over \$20 billion in economic activity with an estimated growth of 30% per year (USTC, 1993). In all the cases, it was estimated that tourism in the natural and wildlife settings accounted for a total 20-40%

international tourism receipts, with an estimate that it will increase by 20-50% per year (Filion *et al.*, 1994). However, despite the fact that these statistical estimates have not been matched by any commonly acceptable data, there is a growing concern that this segment accounts for a significant proportion of world travel. Herein lies the first major concern about ecotourism, that of measuring the number of visitors participating in ecotourism holidays as there is a breadth of definitions and a large scope of activities. Certain limitations also arise from the spectrum within which ecotourism operates. A variety of terms have been introduced to describe the same phenomenon which may be referred to as nature travel, nature orientated tourism, nature, nature-based tourism, sustainable tourism, alternative tourism and special interest tourism.

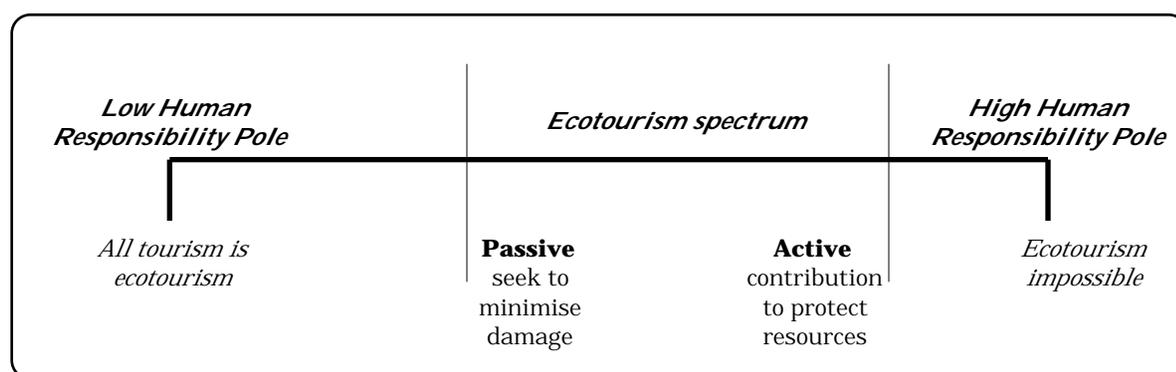
On this point, it has been noted that it is more feasible to treat ecotourism as a spectrum with a variety of products rather than attempting to define ecotourism from a specific stance or product (Wight, 1993a, 1993b). More specifically, it was claimed that the spectrum includes both (Wight, 1993b): *supply factors* (nature and resilience of resources; cultural or local community preferences; types of accommodation) and *demand factors* (types of activities and

experiences; degree of interest in natural or cultural resources; degree of physical effort). In this event, however, there is evidence to illustrate that ecotourism is not meeting existing demand, but is driven by a demand, which evolved through the marketing practices of this form of travel by the supply side (Boyd & Butler, 1993). In addition, ecotourism definitions have been treated as a continuum of paradigms based on polar extremes (Orams, 1995a).

Ecotourism definitional perspectives

The literature on ecotourism is divided into two broad schools of thought (Jaakson, 1997). Firstly, the location case studies raising issues concerning the impacts of ecotourism, and secondly the thematic studies illustrating issues regarding planning and development, where case studies are focused on the methodological issues (Jaakson, 1997). In both instances, there were a few concrete studies evaluating the definitional perspective of ecotourism, (Wheeller, 1994; Jaakson, 1997; Orams, 1995a, 1995b; Blamey, 1995a, 1995b, 1997) which this part of the analysis aims to discuss.

In particular, Orams (1995a) argues that the majority of ecotourism definitions lie between the passive position and the active position towards the high responsibility pole on the



Source: Orams, 1995a: 4

Figure 1: The continuum of ecotourism paradigms

continuum (see Figure 1). He further suggested that the desired state is to move from the minimum passive position towards a higher or active pole of the continuum (Orams, 1995a). The active pole mainly emphasises the actions of protecting the environment and the behavioral intentions of ecotourists, whereas the passive position concentrates solely on ecotourism development, not enhancing the antagonistic impacts or the ecotourists need to be satisfied (Orams, 1995a). Ecotourism has also been defined based on three criteria (Wall, 1994): the characteristics of the destinations; the motivations of its participants; and the organisational characteristics of the ecotourism trip.

More specifically, ecotourism was first defined as

traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas.

(Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987, p. 14; 1991a, 1991b; 1993a, 1993b; 1996).

On a similar vein to Ceballos-Lascurain's, a variety of other definitions of ecotourism worked more or less along the same principles (see Table 1):

- Valentine addressed *mainly the nature-based, sustainability, conservation* components of ecotourism (1993). Valentine distinguished between nature tourism and ecotourism, in that the former form of tourism does not necessarily include a conservation motive, whereas the latter form of tourism, is a contributor to the protection of the environment (Valentine, 1993, pp. 108-109; Hvenegaard, 1994; Orams,

Table 1: Definitions of Ecotourism.

Ecotourism is restricted to that kind of tourism which is (Valentine, 1993, pp. 108-109):

- (a) *based on relatively undisturbed natural areas;*
- (b) *non-damaging, non-degrading, ecologically sustainable;*
- (c) *a direct contributor to the continued protection and management of the natural areas; and*
- (d) *subject to an adequate and appropriate management regime.*

Nature-based tourism that is focused on provision of learning opportunities while providing local and regional benefits, while demonstrating environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability.

(Forestry Tasmania, 1994, p. ii)

Nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecological sustainable. This definition recognizes that natural environment includes cultural components, and that ecologically sustainable involves an appropriate return to the local community and long-term conservation of the resource.

(Australia Department of Tourism, 1994, p. 17)

Travel to enjoy the world's amazing diversity of natural life and human culture without causing damage to either.

(Tickell, 1994, p. ix)

Ecotourism is travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas for study, enjoyment, or volunteer assistance. It is travel that concerns itself with flora, fauna, geology, and ecosystems of an area, as well as the people (caretakers) who live nearby, their needs, their culture, and their relationships to the land. It views natural areas both as 'home to all of us' in a global sense ('eco' meaning home) but 'home to nearby residents' specifically. It is envisioned as a tool for both conservation and sustainable development-especially in areas where local people are asked to forgo the consumptive use of resources for others....

(Wallace and Pierce, 1996, p. 848)

An ecotourism experience is one in which an individual travels to a relatively undisturbed natural area that is more than 40 km from home, the primary intention being to study, admire, or appreciate the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas.

An ecotourist is anyone who undertakes at least one ecotourism experience in a specified region during a specified period of time..

(Blamey, 1995a, p. 24)

Ecotourism is tourism and recreation that is both nature-based and sustainable.

(Lindberg and McKercher, 1997, p. 67)

1995a). Valentine (1993) also expressed an active stance, addressing mainly the characteristics of the destinations and the trip (Orams, 1995a; Wall, 1994);

- Forestry Tasmania mainly emphasised the *nature-based, educational, social and sustainability components of ecotourism* by distinguishing

between ecotourism and nature-based tourism. Here, ecotourism is a sub-component of the nature-based tourism which has been generally defined as a form of tourism which takes place in the natural environment (1994). In addition, the definition is situated at the active stance of the high responsibility pole, providing mainly the

characteristics of the destination (Orams, 1995a; Wall, 1994);

- The Australia Department of Tourism suggested the *natural-based, ecological and cultural sustainability, education and interpretation, and provision of local and regional benefits* (1994). In this case, the Australia Ecotourism Strategy claimed that ecotourism is a small subset of nature-based tourism, in that it operates in the natural settings. It could be seen to incorporate an active stance towards ecotourism mainly comparing the characteristics of the destination (Orams, 1995a; Wall, 1994);
- Tickell raised the *natural based, cultural and non-damaging or conservation components* of the concept (1994). Tickell emphasised mainly the ecosystems vulnerability and as such ecotourism should be seen as a form of tourism which could preserve the natural and cultural components (1994). This definition is situated on the passive position of the continuum illustrating mainly the characteristics of the trip and destinations (Orams, 1995a; Wall, 1994);
- Wallace and Pierce attested *the natural-based, sustainable, cultural, social, and conservation* components of ecotourism (1996). Their definition lies predominantly on the active stance with high responsibility, combining mainly the characteristics of the destinations (Orams, 1995a; Wall, 1994);
- Blamey's dimensions of ecotourism includes four main components that of ecotourism that is *nature-based, environmentally-educated, sustainably-managed and distance/time* (1995a, 1995b; 1997). In terms of his treatment of the concept of

ecotourism, his definition focused on the appreciation/interpretation component as suggested by Ceballos-Lascurain (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987). In all the cases, Blamey's definition is an active stance definition that is primarily applicable for marketing research purposes. In terms of the ecotourists characteristics, it highlighted the distance/time dimension that of 40km from home and one ecotourism trip during vacation time, hence clarifying the characteristics of both destination and trip (Blamey, 1995a; 1997; Orams, 1995a; Wall, 1994); and

- Lindberg's and McKercher's definition highlights the *natural based and sustainability* components of ecotourism (1997). Their definition is based on the distinction that the natural-based component is descriptive, as it highlights the setting of ecotourism, and the sustainability component is prescriptive as it indicates the peoples opinion of the nature of the activity (Lindberg & McKercher, 1997). This viewpoint is located at a central or passive position of the continuum, acknowledging both the characteristics of the destination and the trip (Orams, 1995a; Wall, 1994).

In comparing the definitions of ecotourism, the majority of the examined definitions are situated between a passive and more active stance, mainly describing the characteristics of the destination and the trip (see Table 1). There are few definitions, which are based on the motivational characteristics of the consumers, and as such illustrate the lack of the perspective attesting consumer-selected attributes and/or consequences. In terms of the definitional perspective of ecotourism, Weaver (1998) suggests that it includes the entire spectrum from a passive to

an active stance 'with the proviso that host societies be included along with natural environment as aspects of the destination that are not intentionally affected in a negative way' (p.17). Although this view is a contrast to Oram's earlier indication of a more active stance towards the definitional perspective of ecotourism, Weaver argues that the active stance becomes restrictive, and would result in a small number of participants (Orams, 1995a, 1995b; Weaver, 1998).

In the light of this suggestion and in comparing all the definitions of ecotourism, three elements could be identified: natural based, educational, and sustainable management which includes economic and/or socio-cultural issues. Hence ***as a guiding principle ecotourism should include the entire spectrum from passive to active in a form of trade-off scenarios based on the link between the three elements, all depending on the setting in which it is examined.***

For instance four different definitional approaches could be created ranging from very weak to very strong. In a very weak definition, the core emphasis could be given to the natural-based component. In the weak definition, the core emphasis is placed mainly on the natural-based component rather than on the educational and sustainability components. In the strong definition, all three elements should be considered equally. On a similar vein, in the very strong definition, all three elements should be equally considered but with less emphasis on the economic aspects of ecotourism (see Table 2). Inevitably, these views highlight another dilemma, the issue of linking ecotourism to other forms of tourism and secondly, the exact nature of the elements which are interwoven into the concept of ecotourism in terms of its definitional treatment.

Table 2: Trade-off Definitions of Ecotourism.

Definition	Elements
Very weak	<i>Core emphasis:</i> Natural-based component.
Weak	<i>Core emphasis:</i> Natural-based component <i>To a lesser degree:</i> Educational component; and Sustainability component: economic and/or social-cultural elements.
Strong	<i>Core emphasis:</i> Natural-based component; Educational component; and Sustainability component: equally emphasis on economic and social-cultural elements
Very strong	<i>Core emphasis:</i> Natural-based component; Educational component; and Sustainability component: more emphasis on social-cultural elements rather than on economic elements.

Linkages and position of ecotourism within sustainability

One of the difficulties in providing a commonly accepted definition of ecotourism, is the notion of ecotourism similarities with other types of tourism, as well as its principles of environmental management (Weaver, 1993; Lindberg & McKercher, 1997; Dowling, 1995; Hummel, 1994). It was claimed that it is impossible to identify all the linkages between ecotourism and other forms of tourism due to the lack of information to justify the exact nature of the links in a simplistic manner, and that the existence of many terms could mask key interrelationships that are present among related ideas (Boyd & Butler, 1993:14). Hence, Boyd and Butler (1993) claimed that ecotourism should be based upon a balanced understanding of both ecosystems and tourism systems.

Based on these limitations, the first view which generally exists is that ecotourism is considered as a component of sustainable tourism development (Hvenegaard, 1994; Lindberg &

McKercher, 1997; Dowling, 1995; Boyd & Butler, 1993, 1996a, 1996b; Forestry Tasmania, 1994; Australia Department of Tourism, 1994; Wallace & Pierce, 1996; Blamey, 1995a, 1995b; 1997). There is also evidence to illustrate that ecotourism is regarded as a sub-component of alternative tourism, (Weaver, 1993, 1998) or special interest tourism (Hall & Rudkin, 1993) having similarities with adventure travel (Boyd & Butler, 1993, 1996a). Although the relationship between adventure tourism and ecotourism is critical (Butler, 1996 in Weaver, 1998), this was possibly based on the criticism between ecotourism and adventure tourism over the natural appreciation element (Wheeller, 1994).

Here, the interaction between adventure travel and the natural environment points to adventure travel activities containing certain elements of risk (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1991; Robinson, 1992). This is referred to as risk recreation which is self-initiated activities (i.e. rock climbing) and although these occur in the natural environment, they have both a harmful nature and an

uncertain outcome (Robinson, 1992). Under this setting, it was proclaimed that adventure travel is a logical extension or component of ecotourism, only when the level of risk and physical challenge engaged in adventure activities is lowered (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1991). For instance, the adventure activity of mountain climbing can be substituted with the ecotourism activity of mountain walking (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1991). Moreover, the extent to which adventure travel involves a high degree of risk and possible environmental impact is the reasoning behind its partial inclusion under the sustainable development umbrella (Wheeller, 1994; Boyd & Butler, 1993, 1996a, 1996b). In turn the relationship between ecotourism and alternative tourism remains important, ironically over the similarities in terms of the natural environmental component of both the concepts (Weaver, 1998).

On a similar vein, other research emphasised that ecotourism is a sub-component of natural based travel (Hvenegaard, 1994; Australia Department of Tourism, 1994; Wallace & Pierce, 1996; Blamey, 1995a, 1995b, 1997). In most of the studies, natural-based is also a sub-component of alternative tourism, highlighting that ecotourism is part of both alternative and natural-based tourism (Dowling, 1995; Forestry Tasmania, 1994; Australia Department of Tourism, 1994; Wallace & Pierce, 1996; Blamey, 1995a, 1995b; 1997). Alternatively, the specific interrelationships with natural based tourism suggests that ecotourism is somewhat between two forms of tourism (Tisdell, 1994): natural-based tourism and tourism which is environmentally sensitive and non-natural based tourism. Further, Wight (1993b) viewed ecotourism as somewhat in between nature tourism, adventure tourism, and cultural tourism. However, she added an

ethical perspective by claiming that ecotourism appears only when the ethical principles are fulfilled (Wight, 1993b). Hence, although ecotourism is related with three forms of tourism, it is the ethical perspective that distinguishes it from these forms by progressing its nature component to be sustainable .

Generally critics have questioned ecotourism on a platform of its ideologically biased nature, elitist scope, shortsighted principles, anti-democratic tendencies, and unsustainable nature (Machlis & Bacci, 1992). Others suggested that it is not necessary to make a distinction between tourism and ecotourism as both concepts should be considered 'as woven into a broad fabric of tourism and should not be limited by artificially trying to categorize the phenomenon' (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995, p. 10). On the other hand, Blamey (1995a, 1995b, 1997) suggested that converting all forms of tourism to ecotourism is not appropriate, as it goes against the principles of sustainability. Hence, it is suggested that ecotourism could be treated as a sub-component of the natural based market, based on strong environmental management grounds and as

such representing an example for environmental management practices for other forms of tourism (Blamey 1995a, 1995b, 1997).

Taking into consideration all the latter suggestions of ecotourism's position within tourism, figure 2 presents all the linkages of ecotourism with other forms of tourism (Diamantis, 1998b). Ecotourism is treated both as a sub-component of alternative tourism and as natural-based tourism, being mainly part of the concept of sustainability. In addition, other forms of sustainable tourism have claimed to have similarities with ecotourism as well as being part of both nature based travel and alternative tourism (see Figure 2). For example, ecotourism has claimed to have similarities with soft ecotourism, nature-orientated tourism, and nature tourism nature-based tourism and wildlife tourism.

On the other end of the spectrum, both mass tourism and other forms of tourism such as events / festivals, conference and business tourism, are searching for sustainability in their practices and as such are placed outside the sustainability borders. Ecotourism characteristics are

opposite to those of mass tourism especially the experiential aspects of both concepts (Jaakson, 1997). For instance, for ecotourism holidays the product is not commodified and the experience is not contrived whereas for mass tourism the product is commodified and the experience is contrived (Jaakson, 1997). Finally, certain practices of alternative, nature based, ecotourism, and sustainable forms of tourism which have practiced unsustainable principles are situated outside the borders of sustainability and have been repositioned with other tourism products which are searching for sustainable practices [see Figure 2].

Conclusion

Over the past ten years a vast number of studies concentrated on the effectiveness of sustainable and ecotourism products. Albeit their differences, these types of tourism are correlated which not only creates the debates over their applicability and distinct characteristics but also over the framework in which they both operate. What seems to be occurring is that sustainable tourism is used as a broad term to represent all the 'green' niche products. In the case of one of its products, that of ecotourism, there are some limitations as far as its definitions are concerned. Here, the lack of a widely accepted definition for ecotourism could be overcome if four different trade-off scenarios based on the concepts of ecotourism were generated. What becomes apparent, is the question of whether or not these different trades off definitional scenarios are operational. Inevitably, methodologies and research should be carried out to explore the effectiveness of such definitions with reference to their relationship with 'green' niche products as well as the identification of the elements that cause their sustainable and unsustainable application.

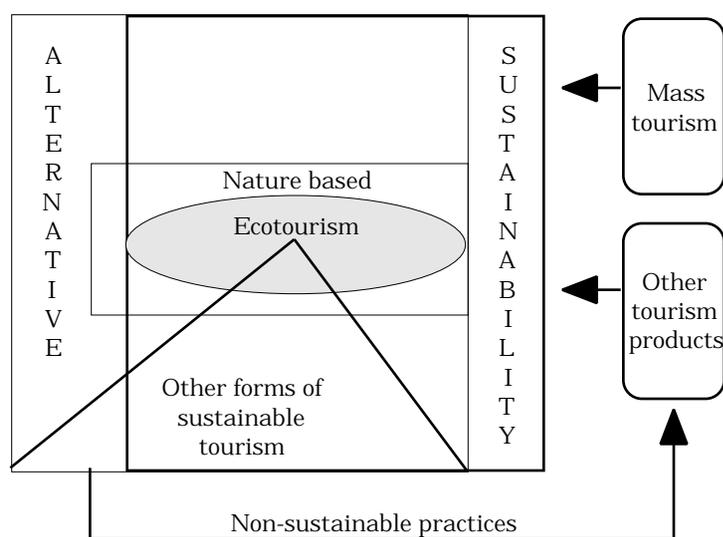


Figure 2: The position of ecotourism within the tourism products spectrum
Source: Diamantis, 1998b.

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