



Development of Main Directions for Achieving Sustainability in Tourism

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Abstract

It is challenging to identify key conditions for the integration of sustainable tourism in public or environmental policy, both in a national and international context. Therefore, this article aims to contribute insight into how sustainability can be integrated into environmental policy by studying a number of recent planning processes related to tourism. Sustainable tourism concept has been assuming a lot of importance especially since late 1980s. Tourism specialists are also doing ample researches on this topic. However, sustainability issues have not found its exact solutions so far. Especially, environmental impact of tourism is an alarming issue in some parts of the world. That's why, this study has been carried out being motivated by both existing issues and relevant environmental policies which are being instituted by nationally and globally. Findings indicate that main clogs for reaching sustainability in tourism are: lack of responsibility by humans towards their surrounding world, ecology, nature; less promotion of sustainable travel in tourism industry; lack of political or governmental participation in reaching sustainability in tourism sector. The study targets analyzing the main issues and offering some relevant solution.

Keywords: *Sustainable Tourism; Public Policy; Environmental Impact; Tourism Industry; Tourism Sector; Travel; Development*

Introduction

“The development of sustainable tourism meets the needs of the tourists and the current hosts of the region, at the same time as it protects and improves the opportunities of the future. It is focused on the management of all the resources in such a way as to satisfy all the economic, social and aesthetic needs, and at the same time as it respects the cultural integrity, the essential ecological processes, the biological diversity and the life support systems”.¹

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/94dc3fda-1b2a-427d-8532-4fdf9c16fe9a/Innogyuide%20Advanced%20Sustainability.pdf>.

Tourism is a very complex sector, and it greatly differs from other industries. Tourism can offer variety of products to the customers, from budget to luxury class. Its complexity can be seen in the great amount of tourist flow to the sites and their impact on the local community and the location itself. More people require more accommodation, more transportation, food and beverages demand, and other essential services. Cities and villages which receive a big amount of tourists undergo this type of challenges. A glance at the phenomenon may show that these demands are positive and it will help the development of infrastructures in the site. However, how much construction waste, how much environmentally bad impact they create is a serious issue. International tourist arrivals are expected to reach 1.8 billion by 2030². This prediction can show that sustainability is the main concern for authorities all over the world. People only choose to visit the place which is clean, comfortable and beautiful. If sustainability measures are not applied in time, many tourism destinations may suffer from ecological problems. John De Vial describes the case very clearly: “In the end it’s all about protecting our product. If the product – our destinations – aren’t protected in environmental and social terms, then people won’t want to visit them; it is as simple as that”.

The travel and tourism sector must show how it can help economies to rebuild – and stop being seen as victims or villains, say industry bosses. The sector must demonstrate its importance in destinations around the world, which are threatened by instability because of job losses and sustainability concerns³. Nowadays, more people are traveling than ever before, and 53% of global travelers want to travel more sustainably in the future to reduce the negative impact on local cultures and the environment⁴. Of course, it is a good understanding and approach by people. However, we are not sure if this approach is always put into practice or not. This study, thus, focuses on analyzing the current role of travelers and host communities (including governments, stakeholders) on the way towards sustainability.

The remaining part of the paper is structured as follows: First, review of the extant literature that led to the development of our hypotheses. Second, representation of our methodology, followed by analysis. Third, discussion of our results in light of theory development and managerial implications. The final paragraph highlights the conclusion with limitations and avenues for future research.

Literature Review

A systematic review of the literature related to sustainable tourism, tourism development, impact of tourism, environmental issues, government and international policies on sustainable tourism was conducted during the research. In addition, the authors used the online research database to find relevant materials for the research: Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A & HCI). Around 300 papers and articles were analyzed and the most relevant ones were used for the research. Excluded papers were not directly related to tourism or the data they contain were not reliable. However, Scholars have extensively shown the connection between tourism and development theories in an evolutionary manner, using well-known development theories, such as modernization, dependence, neo-liberalism, and sustainable development⁵.

The term sustainable tourism emerged in the late 1980s. Fennell described it as such: “Ecotourism is a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-

² United Nations World Tourism Organization (WTO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals–Journey to 2030; United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO): Madrid, Spain, 2017.

³ <https://hub.wtm.com/tourism-is-a-force-for-good-were-not-victims-or-villains/>.

⁴ <https://www.unsustainablemagazine.com/why-sustainable-tourism-is-important/>.

⁵ Telfer D.J., Sharpley, R. Tourism and Development in the Developing World; Routledge: Abingdon, UK, 2008.

consumptive, and locally-oriented⁶. Sustainable Tourism refers to sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry. It is an aspiration to acknowledge all impacts of tourism, both positive and negative. It aims to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones⁷.

According to the UNWTO sustainable tourism definition, it describes a tourism in which the needs of today are not placed before the needs of tomorrow. Since travel experiences contain a wide range of different activities and industries, all sectors and stakeholders need to collaborate in order for it to be successful⁸. The main goal of sustainable tourism is to make the best use of natural resources while having a positive impact on the conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity, the economy and rural communities. This means that a truly responsible tourism should provide more benefits than negative impacts, considering the needs of both visitors and residents of a destination, and resulting in a mutual “give and take” relationship⁹.

Methodology

The method of analyzing previous researches in the field has been used to conduct this research. Apart from that, some essential interviews have been carried out with the university tourism professors and specialists. Our choice of respondents stems from several reasons. First, professors, as those surveyed, have accurate knowledge of the specifics of a given destination, more so than tourists and other stakeholders. Second, they have a deep understanding of tourists’ behavior. Tourists might have a better assessment of the quality of tourism services, destinations attractions, and resources. However, destination tourism policy, social responsibility, and sustainable development evaluation required a wider viewpoint about the general business environment, social elements, management, policy, and destination issues, which are beyond traditional tourists’ attributes. Third, tourists are more concerned about the attractiveness of the destinations as compared to the policy, management, and social responsibility, or other supporting factors of STD. Thus, their focus on destination attractiveness may have an impact on their evaluation, which could be influenced by their set of preferences. Finally, managers at tourism companies are all residents and live in Langkawi/Penang Island, therefore, they are bound to be more concerned about the development of the tourism industry and its subsequent impacts¹⁰.

Findings

A socially responsible investment (SRI) investor is constantly balancing the potential profitability of an organisation against how sustainable and responsible its business model is. When it comes to the tourism sector, this makes for a complex investment strategy¹¹.

The tourism sector is heterogeneous and segmented, encompassing catering, hotels and resorts, and travel services. However, there are common issues that affect the whole sector. Trends such as

⁶ <https://www.gstcouncil.org/what-is-sustainable-tourism/#:~:text=The%20term%20emerged%20in%20the,consumptive%2C%20and%20locally%2Doriented.>

⁷ <https://www.gstcouncil.org/what-is-sustainable-tourism/#:~:text=The%20term%20emerged%20in%20the,consumptive%2C%20and%20locally%2Doriented.>

⁸ <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development.>

⁹ <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development.>

¹⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355907163_Sustainable_Tourism_Policy_Destination_Management_and_Sustainable_Tourism_Development_A_Moderated-Mediation_Model.

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/sustainable-tourism-10-key-issues-investors.>

climate change, resource depletion and health and wellness, have an impact on a companies' attractiveness¹².

Here are the key issues an SRI investor into the tourism sector should consider:

1. Carbon and other Emissions

Although the tourism sector may not be one of the major greenhouse gas contributors, the development of international travel and an increase in air traffic has contributed to its carbon footprint. An increasing regulatory burden may affect companies' future profitability, while the elimination – and eventually recycling of – restaurant grease and efforts to limit cruise ship exhausts illustrate other operational concerns that must be noted.

2. Energy Consumption and Water Waste

The tourism sector tends to have high energy consumption levels, particularly at hotels. A strong positive correlation is usually observed between a hotel's star rating and the energy consumption per room. While heating and cooling remain the main source of consumption, luxury services such as a heated pool, spa, golf or laundry services all increase energy bills. Extra amenities, combined with changes in consumer patterns, mean new hotels consume twice as much energy as the average hotel built in the 70s. Similar trends are observed in tap water consumption levels. As a consequence, an SRI investor should better value hotels of a lower standard (such as those in the budget or economy category), having implemented measures to monitor their energy and water consumption.

3. Job Creation and Contribution to Local Economy

The leisure industry is a major source of income for many emerging and developed countries. A recent report by The World Travel Organisation found tourism represented more than 9% of global GDP. The quality of a company's ties to local communities should also be under SRI investors' scope. The stability of partnerships with local authorities is often a key competition factor.

4. Working Conditions

While the tourism industry might be a significant source of employment, it can also be synonymous with tough working conditions, low-level remuneration and part-time contracts, particularly in the hotel and restaurant segments. As a result, companies often suffer from a shortage of skilled workers and face difficulties in retaining qualified staff. These challenges can result in a high turnover rate (in some cases 150% for employee position), which is responsible for high recruitment costs and declining productivity.

5. Responsible Sourcing

Consumers' increased interest in sustainability has driven the sector towards more open communication on suppliers, starting when some hotels explained the water consumption of their laundry suppliers. SRI Investors should definitively consider companies' purchasing criteria, with a particular focus on the restaurant and catering segment. Looking at food servicing, a major part of the environmental footprint is at the upstream level.

¹² <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/94dc3fda-1b2a-427d-8532-4fdf9c16fe9a/Innoguiide%20Advanced%20Sustainability.pdf>.

6. Franchising and Hotel Network Values

The hotel industry has experienced a great deal of franchise development, cession of walls and management contracts. Such changes to ownership models are supposed to be invisible to final clients, but they influence the management of environmental and social matters at local level. SRI investors should consider how hotels are monitoring these risks, considering clients' satisfaction is directly correlated to hotel staff motivation.

7. Health and Wellness

Obesity prevention and food allergies are both driving new consumption patterns as well as growing attention from health authorities. Some big fast food restaurant chains have even spent millions to offer alternative cooking methods delivering same taste with less salt, or guaranteeing non-use of hydrogenated oils. Operations and marketing practices are deeply affected by these considerations, as companies don't want to be targeted by regulators or miss a new consumer trend.

8. Food Safety

Catering and restaurant companies must now ensure full product traceability and well implemented hygiene measures to prevent outbreaks. Chemical and bacterial contaminations are high-profile and consequently impact companies' reputations.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to the sustainability literature by reporting the unexplored relationships between sustainable tourism policy and destination management, destination social responsibility, tourist value orientation, and sustainable tourism development. The study attempts to depict the dependency of sustainable development of tourism on effective sustainable policies and management. As emerged from the tourism literature review, there is a lack of knowledge about the role of STPDM and DSR for STD in presence of anti-environmental behavior of tourists, and there were no prior frameworks systematically presenting these relationships. Moreover, as the globe grapples with the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a chance to reconsider the future of tourism and grasp the opportunities for development of sustainable tourism¹³. Sustainable development has enormous economic, environmental and social implications as a core principle of development. The development of the tourism industry is also tied with three aspects of sustainable development linked to the modern world.

The analyses of new ways present in the modern world are important for the tourism industry, as global economic, social, and environmental mechanisms are expanding. It adopts that sustainable destination is best conceived of as an upper-level competence that involves the coordination of a range of different factors. STPDM and DSR intend to reduce adverse effects of tourism and tensions created by a complex interaction between tourists, environment, and host communities. Subsequently, development of sustainable tourism facilitates host community wellbeing, promotes sustainability education, and protects the environment, it also provides a better tourism experience, and promotes cultural exchange between tourists and natives. Tourists perform many activities that negatively influence destination sustainability. Hence, tourists' anti-environmental behavior needs to cope up with better management and planning strategies for sustainable development of tourism destinations.

This study addressed a research gap by establishing empirical evidence for the development of sustainable tourism through sustainable policies, management, and DSR. Additionally, research indicates

¹³ Romagosa F. The COVID-19 crisis: Opportunities for sustainable and proximity tourism. *Tour. Geogr.* 2020, 22. – p. 690–694.

that anti-environmental behavior of tourists can be coped up with effective sustainable management strategies. The findings of this study reveals that sustainable tourism policy and destination management empower local communities and facilitate tourist requirements via managing and controlling tourism destination activities. The results supported that STPDM positively and significantly influences STD. Moreover, DSR partially mediates the relationship between STPDM and STD. Although the theorized moderating effect of tourist value orientation was not supported, we yielded an interesting result: the relationship between destination social responsibility and sustainable tourism development becomes stronger when tourist value orientation is high¹⁴.

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¹⁴https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355907163_Sustainable_Tourism_Policy_Destination_Management_and_Sustainable_Tourism_Development_A_Moderated-Mediation_Model.