

The Study on Strategies of Sustainable Tourism Development

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Abstract

In recent years, with the development of economy and the improvement of the living standard, tourism grows rapidly and people's need for tourist resources become more and more urgent. In many countries with abundant tourist resources, people usually think highly of economic values and its contribution to nation's economy, and they ignore the negative impacts to environment brought by tourism. Sustainable tourism as a new trend in tourism attracts much attention around the world. The paper tries to analyze the issues and challenges we meet and to seek strategies to develop sustainable tourism .

Keywords: *Tourist Resources, Strategies, Sustainable Tourism.*

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries and an important source of foreign exchange and employment for many developing countries. In reviewing the first five years' implementation of Agenda 21 in 1997 at its nineteenth Special Session, the General Assembly indicated the need to give further consideration to the importance of tourism in the context of Agenda 21[1]. In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg addressed sustainable tourism in Chapter IV of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

There are a myriad of definitions for Sustainable Tourism, including eco-tourism, green travel, environmentally and culturally responsible tourism, fair trade and ethical travel. The most widely accepted definition is that of the World Tourism Organization[2]. They define sustainable tourism as "tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems"[3].

Based on the survey of guidelines for sustainable tourism by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the elements of sustainable tourism which are most frequently cited include: putting sustainable tourism development into practice in the development, management and integration of tourism with the wider economy, society and the environment; protecting bio-diversity, the environment and

natural resourced; including the participation of all stakeholders, and in particular, local communities in tourism; and ensuring that local communities have an equitable share in benefits resulting from tourism; siting tourism operations and development appropriately to avoid damage to bio-diversity and the environment; operation within the capacities of the environment, and of available infrastructure; using resources efficiently ,and preventing pollution and waste.

2. Issues and Challenges

2.1 Tourism and Environment

The natural environment is an important resource for tourism. With increasing urbanization, destinations in both industrialized and developing countries with significant natural features, scenery, cultural heritage or biodiversity are becoming increasingly popular sites for tourist destinations. Efforts to preserve and enhance the natural environment should therefore be a high priority for the industry and for governments. Small islands, coastal areas, wetlands, mountains and deserts, all now popular as tourist destinations, are five of the six 'fragile ecosystems' as identified by Agenda 21 that require specific action by governments and international donors.

As the scale of tourism grows, the resource use threatens to become unsustainable. With a degraded physical environment, the destination is in danger of losing its original attraction, increasing the levels of cheaper mass tourism and forcing more "nature-based" tourism to move on to new destinations, which are likely to be even more inaccessible and fragile.

Tourism's concern for the environment has also changed dramatically over time. Up to the middle of this century, the environment was mainly exploited for use and enjoyment .The past four decades saw a shift from an increasing awareness of the environment impact of tourism to the creation of harmonious relationships between environment and tourism as manifested in ecotourism and tourism on a sustainable basis. In many national tourism development plans, there is an increasing emphasis on the environment.

2.2 Tourism and Economics

Economic gains have been a major driving force for the growth of tourism in developing countries. The initial period of growth happened in the late 1960's and 1970's, when tourism was perceived as a key activity for generating foreign ex-change and employment by both development institutions, such as the World Bank, as well as by governments.

Despite the negative economic impacts of tourism (such as inflation; dominance by outsiders in land and property markets; inward-migration eroding economic opportunities for domestic industry including the poor) the demand for travel and tourism continues to grow[4]. The WTTC has estimated there was an approximate 40% cumulative growth in tourism demand between 1990 and 2000. This demand was largely driven by economic gains at all levels, including in the communities in remote, and hitherto relatively isolated, destinations.

In most tourist destinations of developing countries, the livelihood impacts of tourism, takes various forms. Jobs and wages are only a part of livelihood gains and often not the most significant ones. Tourism can generate four different types of local cash income, involving four distinct categories of people.

3. The Strategies to Develop Sustainable Tourism

3.1 Tourism and Government

The public sectors, particularly national and local government, have an important role to play by setting the agenda and providing the framework in which action should take place. The regulatory environment also plays an important role in creating the conditions suitable for sustainable tourism. Therefore, the role of trade associations and industry organizations in distributing information among their members and encouraging participation is essential.

The first point of action needed from Governments is to incorporate Agenda 21 principles into tourism policies at international and national level, and to promote their inclusion in regional and local tourism strategies. By providing such a lead and establishing a coherent global framework based on Agenda 21, national governments will make a vital contribution to developing a more sustainable tourism industry.

Governments should recognize that Travel & Tourism is a core service sector which should always be considered when looking at policies to expand trade, increase employment, modernize infrastructure and encourage investment - at both domestic and international level. It should also be included in national statistics with its economic impact calculated by means of a national tourism satellite account.

Governments should also consider helping Travel & Tourism by seeking to minimize regulatory impediments and by offering

appropriate investment incentives. By supporting tourism and allowing it to compete in open and fair markets, tourism's benefits can be more easily secured. What's more, governments can address some of the fundamental barriers to tourism growth by looking at how to expand and modernize infrastructure, to apply taxes fairly and to invest in human resource development.

3.2 Tourism and Industry

Tourism is not, as many people assert, a clean and non-polluting industry. A major problem is the lack of a common understanding of what sustainable tourism or ecotourism mean. This ambiguity leads to violations of environmental regulations and standards. Hence, the environmental problems evolving from tourism are manifold. First of all the tourism industry is very resource - and land intensive.

Firstly, the tourism industry should engage in promoting sustainability as a hole-mark for investors. More specifically, the investors in tourism should strive to adopt environmentally sound technologies or other measures to minimize the consumption of the local ground water. In the case of water utilization such measures might be water-saving equipment, desalination systems and collecting and utilizing rain water.

Secondly, there should be an acceleration of installation or solar/wind power in all public work projects of communities where tourism will be introduced. To prevent or minimize the impact of chemical inputs in soil, water and health, one should start utilizing sound ecological methods, including IPM (Integrated Pest Management). Ecological methods need to be applied in all areas utilized for tourism, including in the maintenance of golf courts, gardens and recreational facilities.

Thirdly, to avoid degradation of the natural environment, tourism projects can help finance protected areas and safeguard ecologically sensitive regions against further environmental deterioration. By empowering local populations and have them participating in the entire process, sustainability will be ensured as it becomes accepted by and adjusted to the local communities. A protected area might certainly also be a suitable tourist-attraction, where tourists can experience amazing nature and learn about conservation and traditional uses of natural resources in the area.

3.3 Tourism and Stakeholders

Sustainability has become an important topic and concept in relation to tourism planning and development. For sustainable tourism development to be successful stakeholders must be involved in the process.

A stakeholder is identified as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by" tourism development in an area. The focus on more stakeholder participation emphasizes its ability to handles multiple perceived issues. The first issue is that tourism development decisions are made from the top down, where "experts" make decisions. The second issue is that the decision making system is perceived to have competing interests within it, and, therefore, the decisions made are again not reflective of the public's interests. Further more; participation can potentially lead to the avoidance of major conflicts between stakeholder groups. Stakeholder involvement is a critical part of sustainable tourism development. To involve stakeholders, researchers and planners must first identify and understand what elements comprise stakeholder's knowledge of the concept of sustainable tourism.

From this study six factors of stakeholder understanding were identified; natural resources, stakeholder participation, stakeholder education, economic planning, awareness of tourism resources, and tourism resource protection.

For any type of stakeholder involvement to be successful, the involvement needs to possess the following five elements: fairness, efficiency, knowledge, wisdom, and stability. Fairness incorporates the idea that all of the stakeholders' interests were taken into account during the process. Fairness is subjective to each stakeholder, but the important thing is that all stakeholders, or as many as possible, perceive that the decision making process is fair. Stakeholders will be more likely to support the decision if they perceive it is fair.

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5. Conclusions

Tourism as one of the world's largest industries brings some problems along with its abundant economic profits. Sustainable tourism is the new trend to develop tourism around the world. Sustainable tourism mainly emphasizes the sustainability of tourism. Dealing with the relations between tourism and environment, tourism and economics is important. This paper made an attempt to seek some ways to develop sustainable tourism from the aspects of government, industry and stakeholders. The author's immature and comparatively subjective analysis of it needs improving later.

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