Tourism & Sustainable Development

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Introduction

A historical perspective of World Tourism

The substantial growth of tourism activity clearly marks tourism as one of the most remarkable economic and social phenomena of the past century. The number of international arrivals shows an evolution from a mere 25 million international arrivals in 1950 to over 700 million in 2002, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 6.6 per cent.

http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/tmt.html

Future Trends

The World Tourism Organisation’s (WTO's) *Tourism 2020 Vision* forecasts that international arrivals are expected to reach over 1.56 billion by the year 2020. Of these worldwide arrivals in 2020, 1.2 billion will be intraregional and 0.4 billion will be long-haul travellers.

The total tourist arrivals by region shows that by 2020 the top three receiving regions will be Europe (717 million tourists), East Asia and the Pacific (397 million) and the Americas (282 million), followed by Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.


Tourism and the world economy

Tourism (international tourism and international fare receipts) represents approximately 7% of worldwide exports of goods and services (as expressed in US$), occupying the fourth position in the ranking after exports of chemicals, automotive products and fuels. When considering service exports exclusively, the share of tourism exports increases to nearly 30%.
Tourism has become one of the most important economic activities in the world. It accounts for more than 10% employment and 11% of global GDP. As such, it has a major and increasing impact on both people and nature.

In response to new market opportunities, tourism has emerged as part of national and regional strategies
• to maximise foreign exchange earnings,
• to increase employment
• and to provide financial resources to preserve natural and cultural heritage.

Tourism as any industry can have negative impacts

Negative impacts for the host country include for example using the case of Mass tourism, in particular
• the displacement of local indigenous peoples,
• cultural degradation,
• distortion of local economies and social structures,
• environmental degradation
• diversion of scarce resources away from the local independent people,
• overdevelopment and domination by a few increasingly powerful corporations, almost all of whom are based in the west.

“The fact is that tourism often causes or exacerbates poverty.”
www.tourismconcern.org.uk

The Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development means different things to different people, but the most frequently quoted definition is from the report Our Common Future (also known as the Brundtland Report):

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”


Sustainable development focuses on improving the quality of life for all of the Earth's citizens without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely. It requires an understanding that inaction has consequences and that we must find innovative ways to change institutional structures and influence individual behaviour. It is about taking action, changing policy and practice at all levels, from the individual to the international.
Sustainable development is not a new idea. Many cultures over the course of human history have recognized the need for harmony between the environment, society and economy. What is new is an articulation of these ideas in the context of a global industrial and information society.

The Concept of Sustainable Tourism

An integrated approach is:

“Development that meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading 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”.

(WTO, 1999)

A key concern for many therefore is the appropriate interaction between biodiversity conservation planning and tourism planning and development

The concept of The Triple Bottom Line as an ethical business and ethical investment tool

The concept of Sustainability, for tourism as for other industries, has three interconnected aspects:

- Environment,
- Socio-cultural
- Economic.

Sustainability implies permanence, so sustainable tourism includes

- optimum use of resources, including biological diversity,
- minimization of ecological, cultural and social impacts
- and maximization of benefits to conservation and local communities.

It also refers to the management structures that are needed to achieve this.

The three dimensions of sustainability are used in the concept of triple bottom line an ethical business and ethical investment tool. This focuses corporations not just on the economic value they add, but on the environmental and social value they add and destroy.
**Terminology and Trends within the Tourism Industry**

There is a range of forms of tourism that are sensitive to biodiversity and the triple bottom-line approach. The terminology is quite confusing, but it is valid here to explore some of the more useful terms and trends within the Tourism industry.

- **Community tourism**, a form of ecotourism that consults, involves and benefits a local community. It fosters sustainable and collective responsibility. The community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community. It may be demand led. Ethical trade that starts with the companies and is seen throughout the chain of distribution or supply led which is small scale and could be operated by an NGO, community or commercial operator. This could also be fair-trade (targeting disadvantaged communities to enable them to be involved in international trade; including mainstream companies, for the purpose of poverty elimination. (Traidcraft, 2000)

- **Ethical tourism** is an all-encompassing term evolving out of sustainable development including for example industry, community, tourist behaviour, personal interactions and marketing. This follows on in the steps of the British Governments Ethical Trading initiative (2000), which demonstrated that people are willing to pay a premium for products of companies that guarantee good working conditions and fair wages to their producers. From this **Ethics within Tourism** follows with the” move from a niche market to a broad set of principles and practices that transform the way we travel and industry functions” (2000).

- **Pro-poor tourism** is not a specific product or sector of tourism, but an approach to the industry It is defined as

  “Tourism that generates net benefits for the poor”

  ODI, 2001

- **Responsible Tourism** is not a brand or product but rather an approach that delivers benefits to tourists, host populations, investors and governments. These can be tours that are run by commercial tour operators who behave responsibly towards local communities. A share of the profits may be given to the local community projects. Local people are trained as guides and properly paid. These tours are controlled by outsiders. Responsible tours are often with an emphasis on wildlife and nature than culture. This applies to well conceived ecotourism products and also for mass tourism if it can be undertaken in a responsible manner.
Ecotourism is a frequently debated term. “Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the wellbeing of local people.”
The Ecotourism Society (1991)

“When tourism is planned and managed effectively, the tourism industry can enhance their operations while acting as a catalyst for social development and biodiversity conservation.”
The Centre for Environmental Leadership in Business, 2002

Case Studies:
(To illustrate tourism & sustainable development in action)

1. Komodo National Park, Indonesia

- Established as a National Park in 1980 and declared a World Heritage Site, the park still faces threats such as overfishing, tourism growth, pollution, and destructive fishing practices
- The Nature Conservancy worked with the Indonesia government and park authority to develop a 25-year management plan that engages local communities and stakeholders.
The long-term plan is being implemented by:
  - Strengthening enforcement and patrolling mechanisms to stop illegal and destructive fishing
  - Conducting community outreach and education programs
  - Developing safe alternative livelihoods
  - Establishing ecotourism as a means of sustainable income for local villagers
  - Collaborating with local communities to research and monitor changes in coral, fish, and other marine resources

2. AITO Responsible Tourism Guidelines
(Association of Independent travel Operators)
Codes of conduct have been developed to help companies, customers & local suppliers recognise their responsibilities to:
  - Protect the environment
  - Respect local cultures- traditions, religions & built heritage
  - Benefit local communities-economically & socially
  - Conserve natural resource from office to destination
  - Minimise pollution – noise, waste & congestion
3. An example of a response from a Government is that of South Africa.

Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
NATIONAL RESPONSIBLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES
FOR SOUTH AFRICA Provisional Guidelines March 2002

1.0 Guiding Principles for Economic Responsibility show here that the government realizes that:

- Tourist enterprises attract domestic and international tourists and create opportunities for small entrepreneurs and economic linkages, for example agriculture, hunting, handicraft production, and a wide range of service industries which tourists are likely to consume in the destination.

And also that....

- Tourism provides particular opportunities for local economic development in rural areas where it can provide people with an alternative to moving to urban areas. Tourism must be market related.
- The African cultural tourism experience needs to be woven into the fabric of the mainstream South African tourism product.
- There is an increasing aspiration for Fair Trade in Tourism in several of the international originating markets; art of a trend towards increasing demand for equitably traded products. Increasing numbers of consumers are purchasing products that demonstrably benefit local communities more fairly than competitor products. The IUCN South Africa Fair Trade in Tourism marketing initiative has identified a set of principles that embody a strong commitment to responsible tourism
- Tourism is a "final good", all the final touches have to be provided in South Africa and so the value is captured here.
- The value of a taxi ride from the airport, wildlife viewing and restaurant meals all accrue to the local economy - the challenge is to maximise it by reducing leakages and developing the multiplier effect.

4. A recent example in the news of the negative impacts of tourism planning & exploitation can be seen here

Albanians defend Ionian idyll

- Villagers feel pain of free-market shift as Club Med plans resort at unspoilt bay.
- Club Med is holding talks with a local developer about creating a holiday village for 700 people.
- Villagers claim land belongs to them
- Villagers are not opposed to tourism on the bay but wanted to be consulted and reimbursed and to choose the best plan.

Guardian Weekly March 18-24 2005
5. The Indian Ocean Tsunami gives the example of tourism being detrimental & as a possible alternative livelihood for a sustainable future.

Mangrove forests have been destroyed in recent years to make way for tourism and shrimp farms. Asian scientists are now speaking about how the serious loss of mangroves seriously escalated the disaster.

“If mangroves hadn’t been destroyed, more lives could have been saved”
John Madeley www.earthisland.org

As a tourism consultant to the World Conservation Union IUCN I have recently co written:
“Practical guidelines for technical advisors & decision-makers for Tsunami reconstruction & rehabilitation for the Tourism sector.”
This is the tourism-sector supplement to the IUCN information paper titled:
“Recovery from the Indian Ocean Tsunami - Guidance for Ecosystem Rehabilitation Incorporating Livelihoods Concerns.” This is an example of using tourism as a tool for Sustainable Development in contrast to previous detrimental tourism activities.
http://iucn.org/tsunami

6. Private/Public Sector Partnership
Another important way forward is Private/Public Sector Partnership. An IFC/World Bank project in Transylvania shows that a region can have a potentially viable future with sustainable tourism being part of the alternative livelihood strategy.
Some of the activities are as follows: Home stays – ecotourism, setting up of a local Tourism Association, an Information & Visitor Centre, Heritage trails & Nature Trails - walking, riding etc linking villages together & a Local Development and Conservation Fund (LDCF) - a rotating fund.

Conclusion
Sustainable Tourism can play a very important role in a sector that is one of the most important economic activities in the world. Using the TBL approach one can have profit with principles – an ethical business. The key for success is the contribution of the business sector to sustainable development. This is a challenge for your business practice also.

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