Sustainable Development Conceptual Framework in Tourism Industry Context in Taiwan: Resource Based View

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Abstract: The purpose of this research was to develop and test a conceptual framework for sustainable development in tourism industry context to address the integration of social, economic, and ecological elements of sustainable development and the contextual nature of sustainable development. Resource-based view theory was used to model the driving force, state and response indicators of sustainability development for tourism industry. Data was collected by the official census developed by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau. Indicators such as employment in the tourism industry, expenditures attributed to the tourism industry, air and water quality, tourism service, and hotel issues were used in the study. Structural equation modeling using AMOS software platform was used to generate and analyze the hypothesized relationships. The research results will be discussed.

1. Introduction

A common criticism of sustainable tourism development is that there is no consistently agreed upon theoretical framework from which a scientific understanding can be built (Cocklin, 1995). Without guidance from theory that is verified through testing, the theoretical framework or model can be used inappropriate and lead to poor planning. Any tourism destination without an adequate plan for development that addresses the economic as well as social and environmental functions of the industry is under-prepared for the impacts of visitors, catastrophic events, and enforcing market forces.

Without an understanding of these potential impacts on the environment-economic fabric of a industry, the sustainability of that industry is questionable. Therefore, a need exists to understand the complex interplay between the economic, environmental and social dynamics of a industry. Furthermore, Brundland(1987) warned that a persistent ignorance of the inseparability of these elements would constitute a mistake by the global community, and human needs must understand. Many approaches, however, tend to focus on only an aspect of a system overall sustainability, either
environment or economic sustainbility( Cooper and Vargas,2004). Mathieson and Wall(1982) recognized the scope of tourism impacts to exist in the economic, physical and social arenas. Cocklin(1995) the efforts have been superficial and omit reference to the social dimensions of sustainability. Twining-Ward(1999) interpreted this apparent lack of attention to the social aspects of sustainable tourism development as an impediment to move sustainability from principles to policy making.

Efforts to create universal principles of sustainable tourism development have also come under criticism as understanding. Sustainable systems, according to Meyer and Helfman(1993) are not generalized at the global scale, but are adaptable to local conditions. The study addresses the contextual nature of sustainable tourism development. This is done by using a Delphi-method developed set of sustainability indicators by the World Tourism Organization to examine various issues of sustainability at a destination. Taiwan was examined using these indicators because the country has a number of attractive destinations within its borders and infant tourism product development.

Resource based view theory guides the formation of a conceptual framework that is fashioned from two concepts. Past research on tourism development has focused primarily on a perspective of economic or social impacts. Although this approach has resulted in a wealth of knowledge, any interconnectedness between economy and environment is only assumed. Looking at sustainable tourism development from a resource perspective is more complex, an empirical study for knowledge contribution is very important.

2. Literature Review

Sustainable development has received intense attention in both academic research and mass media in the late 20 years. The concept grew out of dissatisfaction with entrenched policies of continuous economic growth and unequal distribution of benefits and costs ( Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Hardy, Beeton, and Pearson,2002). Similarly, sustainable development for tourism industry is found to be difficult to define( Swarbrooke,1999), The term could be defined as a form of tourism sustained over a period time(Butler,1999). Accordingly, tourism industry that meets the needs of today’s tourists without taking away from the future generations the resource necessary to fulfill their own needs. Thus, the controversy exists over a definition for sustainable tourism development.
The most widely quoted definition of sustainable development is the one provided by the Brundtland Report, the report says that “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43). According to Wall (1997) and Hunter (1995), two important ingredients are included in this statement: human needs and environmental limitations. For the World Commission, the major objective of development is to satisfy human needs and aspirations for a better quality of life for all people.

In other words, sustainable development means long term economic sustainability within a framework of long term ecological sustainability plus the issue of equity (Woodley, 1992). Indeed, the tension between economy and natural environment was the dominant dilemma addressed by the Brundtland Report (Ding and Pizam, 1995; Garrod and Fyall, 1998; Wall, 2002). However, there are other dimensions which deserve to be sustained such as culture (Craik, 1995; Wall, 1997; Butler, 1998). Farrel (1992) also understood sustainable development as the need to find a balance in the development system between economy, environment and society.

Miltin (1992) suggested that sustainable development has two components: the meaning of development and conditions necessary for sustainability. Social, moral, ethical and environmental concerns (Ingham, 1993) and local empowerment (Wall, 1993) were incorporated into the concept. Today, sustainable development is generally viewed as a process that improves people’s living conditions (Bartelmus, 1986). It involves broader concerns about the quality of life, such as life expectancy, educational attainment, access to basic freedoms, nutritional status and common welfare (Pearce, Barbier and Markandya, 1990). Accordingly, the definition of development has been broadened to encompass a continuous and global process of human development guided by the principle of self-reliance, which embrace economic, socio-cultural, environment as well as ethical considerations (Wall, 1997; Sharpley, 2002).

Coccossis (1996) suggested that sustainable development for tourism is being understood variously based on different perspectives. It can be regarded as “economic sustainability of tourism” in which basic goal is the viability of tourist activity. Here, the emphasis is placed on the need to achieve a balance between commercial and environmental interests for the sake of ensuring the perpetuation of tourism itself (Butler, 1993). Tourism is not the only user of resources. The
appropriation of resources in the narrow interests of the tourism industry may not be compatible with the best interests of the broader community (Wall, 1997).

Sustainable development adopting a multi-sector perspective to development, requires holism and an appreciation of the interconnectedness of phenomena (Wall, 1997; 2002). It may incorporate tourism as part of the strategy to achieve sustainability (Tosun, 2001). This implies that the tourism industry should not seek for its own perpetuity at the cost of other sectors. Tourism development should be made consistent with the general tenets of sustainable development by determining specific principles (Stabler and Goodall, 1996; Twining-Ward, 1999). In other words, specific principles should be developed to guide tourism operation in a sound direction.

3. Proposed Management

The most current forms of sustainability are based on ideas of resource management that preclude excessive consumption in order to promote inter-generational equity and responsibility. The view has increasingly has been negated as both empirical evidence demonstrates the serious social, environmental and economic impacts tourism can bring to a nation or community (Dogan, 1989; King, Pizam and Milman, 1993; Wang and Miko, 1997). Tourism is an ancient human activity. Some industry academicians see the tourism industry when accounting for every sector and sub-sector with a role to play in providing services to the tourist as the largest industry in the world (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). In summary, nation may find it necessary to limit the extent of the negative impacts associated with tourism.

Tourism industry has been identified as one of the largest and fastest growing industries (Miller, 1990; Hunter, 1995; McMinn, 1997). For some developed or developing countries, tourism industry makes up a critical component of local, regional and national economies, contributing significantly to employment creation, GDP growth and foreign exchange earnings. The notion of sustainable development was raised common concern of policy makers, academic researchers and industry practitioners (Hunter, 1995). As a result, increasingly at all levels development is being remodeled along the lines of sustainable development (Farrell, 1999).

Empirical studies show that sustainable development strategies provide opportunities to multinational companies (MNCs) to deal with complicated issues as well as to gain
competitive advantage. Sharma and Vredenburg (1998) examined how proactive environmental firms can build organizational capabilities to gain competitive advantages. Rondinelli and Berry (2000) demonstrates how environmental programs contribute to pursue sustainable development objectives. Sharma, Vredenburg and Westley (1994) used a case study approach to describe the role of a MNCs in host country’s development while Moser (2001) used statistical analysis to demonstrate how the incorporation of sustainable business practice can benefit both firms and host countries in Latin American.

4. Research Methodology

Structural equation modeling will be employed as a statistical approach to analyze hypothesized relationships between variables and indicators that is used in the research to provide a mean of testing the relationships outlined in the conceptual framework. This method of statistical analysis allows researchers to understand where important relationships exist. Each indicator recommended by the World Tourism Organization and available from Taiwan Tourism Breaus for study in the study were assigned to the driving force, which were defined in the structural equation model as latent or unobserved variables and their relationships were examined through structural equation modeling. These indicators include but are not limited to: employment in the tourism industry, the ratio of individuals employed in the tourism industry to overall employment, air quality, drinking water quality, availability of tourism services in Taiwan, hotel issues and demographic information.

5. Evaluation of Proposed Management

The research results of the empirical analysis illustrate where important relationships between elements of a tourism destination (Taiwan) exists and how this influences common concepts of sustainable tourism development managing a tourism product. Therefore, the research problems was addressed two prevalent sustainable tourism development issues: the lack of a theoretical framework that enables the researcher to incorporate the economic, social and environmental elements of a system, and the contextual nature of sustainable tourism development. These issues are addressed with the application of resource based view theory as a theory as a theoretical framework for understanding the interactions of sustainable tourism development.
This study is seeking to investigate the sustainable tourism development with the expectation that it becomes a useful solution in addressing the negative impacts of tourism. Results from this investigation will be used to identify and categorise resource-based tools/applications and describe their potential uses in destination management for sustainable tourism. Additionally, these resource-based tools/applications can be used will be identified and the current approaches in destination management for the using to these tools will be investigated and evaluated. A research framework will also be developed that will guide destination managers in the best selection of management strategy and public policy for their respective destinations. Finally, it is anticipated that these results will be used by destination managers and destination management organisations as part of their strategy in dealing with sustainability issues of tourism destinations.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the objective of this study was to address the apparent lack of a theoretical framework for sustainable tourism development, attempt to the integrate social, economic, and ecological elements of sustainable tourism development and address the contextual nature of sustainable tourism development. Resource based view theory was used as a foundation for examining the tourism industry in a holistic manner. General indicators of tourism sustainability, as suggested by the World Tourism Organization, were operationalized as a realistic model for Taiwan tourism industry context in an effort to from the beginning of sustainable tourism development. Ideally, the conceptual framework and theoretical model developed for this study will some implications for tourism business planners and policy decision makers. If the tourism industry planners or those charged with participating in economic development and growth associated with a tourism product have a simple and easy to use model, they may better be able to inform decisions made about development actions. Future intention of modeling sustainable tourism development will serve to verify the framework and move it from a reflection of reality to a predict approach.
References


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