SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

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Abstract

Tourism has become World’s largest and fastest growing industry with employment of 260 million people and contribution to 9% of world’s GDP. In today’s scenario Sustainable tourism is a responsible tourism intending to generate employment and income along with alleviating any deeper impact on environment and local culture. “Tourism destroys Tourism” -has been observed through many case studies like Shimla and Mussoorie. That’s why the need of the hour is that balance must be found between limits and usage so that continuous changing, monitoring and planning of the tourism projects ensures management of tourism for the longer run and for the generations and generations. Economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development must include the interests of all stakeholders including local people or communities, visitors, industry and government. In this paper it is aimed to understand the awareness of the planners and other stakeholders about sustainable development. Further, focus on the paper moves towards the major issues and challenges which Indian tourism industry is facing in promoting sustainable tourism practices.

Key words: Sustainable, environment, community, stakeholders, monitoring

Objectives of Research Paper

Purpose of the paper is to find out the relationship between tourism and environment so as to understand the importance of the concept of Sustainable Tourism for the practical application. This research paper aims to analyses how stakeholders can play an important role to promote the sustainable tourism. Further, the focus in the paper moves towards the establishment of a link between the tourism and society, tourism and culture and tourism and economy. Finally, the issues and challenges which tourism industry is facing in implementing the concept of sustainable tourism have been discussed.

Methodology Opted for Paper

The paper is based on secondary data. The facts and figures have been gathered from several surveys conducted from time to time in different regions all over the world. The required data and information has also been collected from various literatures, books, magazines, review articles, internet etc.

Introduction

With 1035 million international arrivals recorded in 2012, accounting for almost US$ 1075 billion of receipts. Annual growth rate in terms of arrivals and receipts are counted 4% & 3.2% globally. Tourism is a major global activity that has grown by 25 per cent in the past 10 years. Predicted growth rates remain high and, although global and regional patterns have fluctuated from year to year (most recently owing to fears over terrorism,
health crises (e.g. SARs) and natural disasters, Economic crises) tourism has shown a strong and rapid ability to recover. More and more people have the desire and means to travel and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) is predicting over 1500 million international arrivals by 2020, more than double the current level.

Forecasts to the year 2020 predict growth in tourism in all regions of the world, with the strongest relative growth occurring in parts of the developing world. Although Europe, the Americas, and East Asia and the Pacific will account for 80 per cent of total arrivals, and thus continue to lead in terms of volume, global tourist arrivals to Africa are predict to grow, on average, by 5.5 per cent per year during this period and those to South Asia by more than 6 per cent, compared with a world average of just over 4 per cent.

International travel is only one aspect of tourism. In many countries, domestic tourism outweighs international arrivals in terms of volume and income generated. This is also predicted to grow strongly. Tourism is also a major source of employment, supporting 74 million jobs directly according to a World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimate, and 215 million (8.1 per cent of the world total) if all the indirect economic effects of the sector are taken into account. It represents US$4 218 billion of GDP (10.4 percent of the world total), with travel and tourism making a particularly significant contribution to international trade, at over 12 per cent of total exports.

Employing 260 million people and generate 9% of world’s GDP, Tourism is one of the largest as well as the fastest industry of the world. Better planning and management is in dreadful need to control the tourism industry, and more important, to protect, preserve and conserve the biodiversity of tourist places. Dealing with such serious issues, sustainable tourism comes in great handy, as it is all about conserving the resources, valuing the local culture and tradition and, contributing mainly in economy.

Literature Review

Sustainable tourism has become an area of huge concern to both academia and industry over the past several years. However, a review of sustainable tourism and ecotourism literature reveals that over the past 15 years, there has been little improvement (or agreement) in regards to the definition of sustainable tourism/tourists or characteristics that may identify environmentally friendly (and sustainable) tourists. Due this lack of agreement and steady research findings, it would be expected that current researchers/academia/industry would be providing a large number of recommendations for future work.

Table 1 Key Social Effects of Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Impacts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matheison and Walls (1982)</td>
<td>Tourism changes the internal structure of the community by separating those who are involved in tourism from those who are not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Krippendorf (1987)  
Tourism is colonialist in nature, in that it takes away the freedom of decision from the local population.

Moderate level of tourism are more beneficial

Crompton and Sanderson (1990)  
Tourism needs to offer more flexible work so as to enable more women to get involved.

Urry (1991)  
Tourism offers women more work opportunities, thus giving them economic independence.

Harrison (1992)  
Tourism opens up more opportunities and produces social change.

Mc Kercher (1993)  
Investment is aimed more at profit than at facilities that require maintenance cost.

Sharpley (1994)  
Work opportunities attract the young to tourist areas. Diversification of work towards small business. A rise in the quality of life.

Burns and Holden (1995)  
Tourism brings social economic benefit on the one hand but it reinforces social inequality on the other. This force a change in local politics.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Key Social Effects of Tourism- Host Interaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Doxey (1975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative negative effect</td>
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<tr>
<td>De Kadt (1979)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The nature of the contract with the tourists influence ones behaviors, habits and values on tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matheison and Walls (1982)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourism changes safety and health conditions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murphy (1985)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The young are more sensitive to demonstrative effect. Even language is learnt for demonstrative effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krippendorf (1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely is real understanding/ communication established between tourist and host.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryan (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of local languages and dialects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mc Kercher (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is always a degree of conflict due to different lifestyles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharpley (1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism stimulates interaction among the local</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Tourism guarantees the preservation of artistic and religious heritage.
The host is forced to learn local languages.
Stereotypes are developed.
Religious behavior changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burns and Holden (1995)</th>
<th>The host copies foreigner behavior yet avoids direct contact with them.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mc Intosh et al (1995)</td>
<td>Social interaction is productive.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The difference in wealth generates resentment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resentment is caused by rise in price.</td>
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</table>

Source: After Brunt & Courtney (1999)

Table 1 discusses the various impacts of tourism which highlights the importance of the sustainable ecotourism in the current scenario to mould socio-cultural impacts towards the positive way. The literature review suggests that very few radically new directions or ideas have been proposed over the last fifteen years, despite the lack of agreement concerning a definition of sustainable tourists, or a consistent profile of these individuals. This is an extremely serious issue for not only sustainable tourism researchers, but for all work concerning the wider tourism context. A common and healthy intention should have been to develop a universal understanding of the subject sustainable tourism amongst the industry.

Sustainable Development

The most commonly used definition of sustainable development is still that given in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), i.e. sustainable development is ‘a process to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’ Sustainable development is therefore about creating a better life for all people in ways that will be as viable in the future as they are at present. In other words, sustainable development is based on principles of sound husbandry of the world’s resources, and on equity in the way those resources are used and in the way in which the benefits obtained from them are distributed.

Sustainable tourism is a kind of approach to tourism meant to make the development of tourism ecologically supportable in the long term. The very importance of sustainable tourism lies in its motives to conserve the resources and increase the value of local culture and tradition. Sustainable tourism is a responsible tourism aiming to generate employment and income along with alleviating any deeper impact on environment and local culture.
The concept has evolved since the 1987 definition, notably through Agenda 21, the plan of action which emerged from the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992), and the plan of implementation from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002). Three dimensions or ‘pillars’ of sustainable development are now recognized and underlined. These are:

- **Economic sustainability**, which means generating the prosperity at different stages of society and dealing with the cost effectiveness of all economic activities.
- **Social sustainability**, which means valuing human rights and providing equal opportunities for all in society.
- **Environmental sustainability**, which means conserving, preserving and managing the resources, especially those that are not renewable or are valuable in terms of life support.

**Fig. 1 Inter-relationship between environment-economic and social sustainable development**

Under section 5(2) of Resource Management Act, 1991 sustainable management means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety while —

- Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably probable needs of future generations;
- Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems;
- Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.
To pursue the concept of sustainable tourism development, tourism activity must comply with the following four key principles collectively referred as VICE principles.

1. Visitor Satisfaction (Visitors must be satisfied with all aspects of the tourism product);

2. Industry Profitability (The return to the industry must allow for reinvestment and growth);

3. Community Acceptance (Account must be taken of the host community’s present character and future aspirations);

4. Environmental Protection (The natural, cultural and historic resources on which the industry is based must be protected).

Characteristics of Sustainable Tourism

- Sustainable Tourism tries its utmost to maintain the importance of local culture and tradition.
- Sustainable Tourism is informatory, as it doesn’t only let tourist know about the destinations but also it helps locals knowing about the culture and civilisation of tourists.
- This type of tourism is intended to conserve the resources of destinations where one is visiting to
- Sustainable Tourism seeks deeper involvement of locals, which provide local people an opportunity and make their living. Above all, Sustainable Tourism stresses pointedly upon integrity of the tourist places.

Principles of Sustainable Tourism

With the increased footfalls of tourists, the deep need today is that tourism like other sector be planned and managed suitably. Sustainable development of tourism is possible only if it follows some of its guidelines and principles.

- Tourism must to be initiated at any location with the help of local people. The involvement of local people or community helps maintain the appropriate tourism development.
- The local community has to meet the direct benefit of flourishing tourism in their area. Link between local business and tourism enable local people gain economically as well.
- To aim large growth in sustainable development, there is need that codes, ethics and some fair guidelines be constituted.
- In order to enhance the importance of natural and heritage resources, and manage them better way, training and education programme should be instituted.

The essential components of sustainable tourism have been summarized by the National Geographic Society in the following requirements. Sustainable tourism must:

- Inform: tourists should learn not only about the destination, but also how to help sustains its character while deepening their own travel experiences. Residents
should learn that the ordinary and familiar may be of interest and value to outsiders;

- Support the integrity of place: tourist seeks out businesses that emphasise the character of the local in terms of architecture, aesthetic, cuisine, heritage and ecology. Tourism revenues in turn raise local professed value of those assets;
- Benefits residents: tourism industry should do its best to employ and train local community, buy local product or supplies and use local services;
- Conserve resources: environmentally aware tourist should favour businesses that minimise pollution and waste in general;
- Respect and honour local tradition and culture: tourist should learn how to behave and respect local culture; residents should learn how to deal with foreign expectation that may differ from their own;
- Not abuse its product: stakeholders must anticipate development pressures and apply limits and management techniques to prevent degradation of the environment, businesses must co-operate to sustain natural habitats, heritage places, picturesque appeal, and local culture & tradition;
- Strives for quality, not quantity: communities should measure tourism success not by the number of their visitors, but by the length of stay, money spent and quality of experience;
- Promote itself: satisfied, excited visitors or tourist bring new knowledge to their home and recommend/send friends off to experience the same, which provide continuing big business for the destination.

Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism

Many different interests can benefit from tourism being made more sustainable:

- Tourism enterprises, while seeking long term profitability, should be concerned regarding their corporate image, the good relationship with their staff, and impact on global environment and that immediately around them.

- Local communities are seeking increased prosperity but without exploitation or damage to their quality of life.

- Environmentalists are concerned about the harmful impacts of tourism but also see it as a valuable source of income for conservation.

- Tourists are seeking a high quality experience in safe and attractive environments; they are becoming more aware of the impacts of their travelling.
- In search of more sustainable tourism, governments must identify the different positions and motivations of these stakeholders and work with them to achieve common goals.

Strong Relationship; Sustainable Development and Tourism

Tourism is in a special position in the contribution it can make to sustainable development and the challenges it presents. Firstly, this is because of the dynamic nature and rapid growth of the sector, and the major contribution that it creates to the economies
of many nations and local destinations. Secondly, it is because tourism is an activity which involves a special relationship between consumers (visitors), the industry, the environment and local communities.

This special relationship occurs because, unlike most other sectors, the tourist (the consumer of tourism) travels to the producer and the product. This leads to three important and unique aspects of the relationship between tourism and sustainable development:

- **Interaction**: The nature of tourism, based on delivering an experience of new places, means that it involves a significant amount of interaction, both direct and indirect, between host communities, visitors and their local environments.

- **Awareness**: Tourism makes people (visitors and hosts) become far more conscious of environmental issues and differences between nations and cultures. This can affect attitudes and concerns for sustainability issues not only while travelling but throughout people’s lives.

- **Dependency**: Much of tourism is based on visitors seeking to experience intact and clean environments, attractive natural areas, authentic historic and cultural traditions, and friendly hosts with whom they have a good relationship. The industry depends on these traits being in place.

**ISSUES: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES**

**Tourism and the Environment**

The natural environment is an important resource for tourism. With growing urbanisation, destinations in industrialised developing countries with significant natural features, landscape, cultural heritage or biodiversity are becoming more and more popular sites for tourist destinations. Efforts to preserve, conserve and improve the natural environment should therefore be a high priority for the tourism sectors and for governments. But the reality is not quite as clear cut. Environments where past human interaction has been minimal are often weak. Small islands, wetlands, mountains, coastal areas, and deserts, all now fashionable as tourist destinations, are five of the six ‘fragile ecosystems’ as identified by Agenda 21 that require specific action by governments and international donors. The biophysical features of these habitats often render them particularly at risk to damage from human activities. 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 unapproachable and delicate. Mainstream “ecotourism”, as promoted after the Rio Earth Summit, hasn’t always enjoyed a good reputation. Tour operators have used the concept merely as a “greenwash” marketing tool. In reality it often meant introducing unsustainable levels of tourism into fragile areas, having scant regard for either the environment or for the residents of the destination areas.
Some of the different kinds of impacts that tourism development and operational activities can have include:

- Threats to ecosystems and biodiversity – e.g. loss of wildlife and indigenous or rare species, habitat loss, ruin flora & fauna and degradation,
- Disruption of coasts – e.g. shoreline erosion and pollution, impact to coral reefs and fish spawning grounds,
- Deforestation – loss of forests for fuel wood and timber by the tourist industry also impact on soil and water level, bio-diversity, integrity, minimising the collection of forest products by local communities,
- Water overuse – as a result of tourism / recreational activities e.g. water park, golf courses, swimming pools, roadside fountain and tourist consumption in hotels,
- Urban problems - Congestion and overcrowding, increased traffic jam and consequential environmental impacts, including air and noise pollution, and health impacts,
- Exacerbate climate change – from fossil fuel energy consumption for travel, hotel and recreational requirements,
- Unsustainable and inequitable resource use - Energy and water over consumption, excessive production of wastes, litter and garbage are all common impacts.

Positive Environment Impact

Tourism can contribute to environmental protection in many ways. It prompts conservation by convincing government officials and the general public of the importance of natural areas. Since protected areas, which are developed for tourism, become showpiece areas of a country, local government may be willing to provide extra resources to promote development in surrounding areas. It can also encourage productive use of lands, which are marginal for agriculture, enabling large tracts of land to remain covered in natural vegetation (UNEP '92). Revenue from park-entrance fees can be allocated specifically to pay for the protection and management of environmentally sensitive areas.

Another important power of tourism is its capacity to increase public appreciation of the environment and to spread awareness of environmental problems when it brings people into closer contact with nature and the environment. As it has been done by UNEP and by other international organizations and tours operators, it can be developed environmental and ethics codes of conduct for tourism, which promote public and industry awareness of the social, economic, cultural and environmental significance of tourism, and persuade efforts and behavioural patterns toward the respect on the environment.

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 and around 1960’s and 1970’s, when tourism was perceived as a key activity for generating foreign currency and employment by both development institutions, such as the World Bank, as well as by governments (Goodwin 2000). 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. This demand was largely driven by economic gains at all levels, including in the communities in remote, and hitherto relatively isolated,
destinations (Ashley, 2000). There is significant scope for enhancing the possible gains through addressing a number of issues that can help improve opportunities for entrepreneurs and the local communities in the area, for the inferior sections within these communities, as well as at the macro level for the national economy.

Impacts on Livelihoods in Destination Communities

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:

- Wages from formal employment.
- Earnings from selling goods, services, or casual labour (e.g. food, crafts, building materials, guide services)
- Dividends and profits arising from locally-owned enterprises.
- Collective income: this may include profits from a community-run enterprise, dividends from a private sector partnership and land rental paid by an investor.

Positive Economic Impact

The economic benefits of tourism can be considerable, and if it is adequately conducted, with a careful planning and effective tourism management, tourism can contribute to a positive impact on the physical and socio-cultural environment. It could be used as a tool to finance protection of natural areas, raise awareness of environmental values and contribute to environmental conservation.

Tourism and Society/Culture

Tourism developments often stop people from having the right of access to land, water and natural resources. NGO’s such as Tourism Concern and Rethinking Tourism have reported on examples worldwide where the articles in the UN Declaration of Human Rights are flouted, and where indigenous rights are lost or exploited. Adverse social impacts also include poor working conditions, low wages, child labour and sex tourism. The International Labour Organisation and International Confederation Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) note that some parts of the tourist industry still degrades labour and drives workers to the lowest levels, exhibiting the worst side of unsustainable production.

Cultural Transformation

Fears of tourism threatening local cultures can be misplaced and many cultures have proved resilient enough to be able to take rapid changes required by tourism in their stride. However, it is true that well-liked destinations are changed at a very fast pace. Vibrant small towns can replace sleepy one lane bazaars. Local areas where once only officials rode in motorised vehicles become a common site for traffic jams, and dealing with strange faces can become a daily incidence for people whose previous focus had been confined to a few score square kilometres to their home and work.
Tourism and Child Prostitution

On the darker side to global tourism, the drug tourism and sex trade remain areas that are poorly reported or regulated, especially related to children. The main reason behind these growing problems may not wholly lie with tourism growth, but it is important and should be a real cause for concern throughout the sector. In last decade the industry has started to try and tackle such kind of the problems. It collaborated with ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes) to draw up a Code of Conduct for travel & tour operators in relation to child prostitution and tourism in 1998. Signatories to ECPAT’s Code of Conduct commit themselves to:

- work against child abuse/exploitation in their policy documents;
- train staff on how to fight against child exploitation;
- provision of providing the information to customers/tourist;
- putting pressure on suppliers like hotel by including a clause against the commercial sexual exploitation of children or child prostitution in their contract
- Provision of information to key local people and organizations by creating a network in destinations to raise awareness amongst local people.

Positive Socio-Cultural Impact

Tourism has also positive effects on the socio-cultural side, it brings various cultures into contact and this contributes in terms of cultural enrichment. It can also serve as a supportive force for peace, foster pride in cultural tradition and mutual understanding between host and guests. Toward mutual knowledge prejudices are reduced as well as tension, these leaves space to sympathy and thus contribute to peace (WTTC). Tourism can help strengthening communities through the revaluation of local culture and traditions. In the more developed tourism regions increasing prosperity has brought greater understanding of the need to maintain local specificity and prevent the over exploitation of resources, as well as the resolve to do so (Keller ’02).

Future Challenges and Goals

To achieve the goals and challenges set for the travel and tourism industry as it continues to grow throughout the coming decades, will require a strong and co-operative partnership between government departments, international and national trade associations, national tourism authorities, trade unions and the travel and tourism private sector. All stakeholders must to share the responsibility for prospect or vision of travel and tourism and deliver the following to ensure its sustainability:

Governments need to:

- integrate travel and tourism policy, especially the environment, into broader government policies;
- set up realistic capacities within sustainability frameworks, which have been set in consultation with industry and other stakeholders;
- create incentives for the travel and tourism industry backed up where necessary by effective regulation;
- be committed to the controlled expansion, where appropriate, of infrastructure;
• Apply environmental taxes fairly and non discriminatorily, where needed. They should be carefully thought out to minimise their impact on economic development, and revenues should be allocated to travel- and tourism-associated environment improvement programmes;
• set up mechanisms to support SMEs in the adoption of sustainable good practice;
• design policies creating incentives for corporate social responsibility in tourism, favouring a sensitive and engaging approach towards the local communities at the destinations, especially in the developing countries.

Public-private partnerships need to:
• Plan and develop infrastructure with a long-term view and within a reference framework based on Agenda 21;
• implement indicators and environmental impact assessment tools to enable successful, effective and efficient local management and appropriate sustainable development;
• agree on common standards and tools to enable the measurement of progress towards achieving sustainable development;
• fund and develop contemporary research into sustainable tourism. Issues requiring attention include design, carrying capacity, tour operator activities, environmental reporting, and auditing and environmental impact assessments, socio-economic sustainability of the tourism businesses.

International bodies need to:
• co-ordinate environmental action to be undertaken by all sectors of the tourism industry, at national or an international level;
• review existing voluntary initiatives to improve the quality of reporting, their transparency and credibility, and the assessment of their contribution to sustainability;
• ensure that all funding, from international, national and local bodies, should be dependent on sound environmental practice;
• support and encourage multi-stakeholder projects seeking for sustainable tourism development;
• place the mechanisms to support and encourage the adoption of sustainable good practices by SMEs.

Private sector companies need to:
• Execute to place sustainable development issues at the centre of the management structure;
• develop and more widely apply and implement certification criteria to industry initiatives;
• innovate processes and applications through new and advance technology;
• make a commitment to the well defined education and environmental training of staff;
• encourage corporate citizenship as the standard for private sector companies;
• be ready to engage in multi-stakeholders dialogue.

Conclusion

A sustainable approach to tourism development and management is all about planning for the long term, working together, checking on outcomes and adapting to change. Effective communication is fundamental to this. Policies and instruments will not work unless they are put across in the right way. Governments should make sure that all relevant stakeholders know what is expected of them. The sustainable tourism strategy and policies should be clearly disseminated. Many of the instruments outlined in this document require effective communication but others can facilitate it, such as regular government reporting on their own actions and the issuing of simple guidelines based on the agreed policies. A commitment to regular monitoring and review, and to communicating results between all stakeholders, should become widespread. A move towards more sustainable tourism should be widely trumpeted and celebrated, amongst tourists, host communities and the participants in the industry. Yet in doing this, the commitment to change and improvement must be genuine and based on well-established policies and actions that can be delivered.

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