Benefits to Communities from Sustainable Tourism

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MAXIMISING COMMUNITY BENEFITS FROM A MORE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

INTRODUCTION
TOOLS
ORGANISATION
ENABLORS
CONCLUSIONS
INTRODUCTION
Key Elements of Sustainability

Elements:

Long Term View
Local Focus
Environmentally Benign
Socio/Culturally Supportive
Equitable

Essentially good commonsense development.
I am not convinced that there are unique benefits to communities from sustainable tourism. I would argue that the benefits to communities from sustainable tourism should be the same as those from all sensible and appropriate tourism development that has been well designed and planned. The only unusual element of ST is the commitment to inter and intra generational equity.
COMMUNITY BENEFITS

In most cases communities desire the maintenance of quality of life with added benefits from tourism. This often means minimal environmental and socio-cultural change but added economic benefits such as tourist expenditure, job creation and tax revenues.
COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Quality of Life (maintenance)
Control remaining in the community
Long term viability of economic activities

Environmental Quality (maintenance)
Heritage Maintenance (Ecological and Cultural)

Cultural Viability
Achieving Sustainable Tourism Needs:

**DESIRE:** Public, Private sectors, Communities

Tourists? (knowledge, support)

**STRATEGIC:** Public and Private sectors

**PLANNING:** (funds, arrangements)

**TOOLS:** Public and Private sectors

(funding, policies, indicators, controls, skills, research)

Proactive not Reactive
PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Lack of equality among participants
Lack of desire among all parties
Lack of appreciation of implications
Lack of mechanisms for managing tourism
Lack of data and knowledge about tourism and its effects, as well as about sustainability.
Successful Community Responses:

- Undertake public participation
- Produce plan and define limits
- Establish co-ordination and implementation strategies
- Apply and enforce policy
- Monitor and adapt policy and limits
- Respond to change, constantly review.
TOOLS
CLARITY OF DEFINITION

It is essential that communities understand what sustainable tourism means. Lack of understanding is one of the major barriers to successful implementation. Thus a clear definition and explanation of what is meant by the term and what will be required to achieve successful implementation is absolutely necessary.
GOALS

If there are no goals, then one cannot talk realistically of maximising benefits of any kind. Goals must be supported by the community as a whole and be clear to the community. It is important to have the community involved from the beginning in deciding on the goals and their relative priority. Different interest groups will have different goals and compromise will be necessary inevitably.
TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

The literature argues that a triple bottom line must be achieved. In reality, in most communities it is impossible to achieve equality across all three elements. Communities must, therefore, decide if equality is possible, and if not, what compromises need to be made. In reality, there is a fourth element, politics/institutions which need to be accommodated.
MONITORING

Without monitoring there is no understanding of whether actions are really leading to increased benefits or not. Indicators of progress are essential, both to provide a measure of success and to reveal specific improvements and benefits. Many communities claim to be operating sustainably before this can be ascertained.
ORGANISATION
LONG TERM VIEW

Communities which take a long term view are generally more likely to maximise benefits from sustainable tourism introduction. This is difficult as politicians at all levels operate on a 2-5 year cycle and the media on a 1-3 day cycle of interest in most cases. The reasons for a long term view need to be made explicit, along with an indicative timetable of when costs and benefits will accrue.
INTEGRATION

If it is to yield maximum benefits, then sustainable tourism must be properly and fairly integrated with other policies and processes that occur in a community. If it is not, then it will never produce all of the potential benefits because of potential conflict and lack of symbiosis.
COSTS

Costs are as important as benefits, perhaps more so as they have to be made before benefits accrue. Participants need to be assured that costs will be more than compensated by benefits (including financial ones) over the long term. If this is not explicit, one can expect fewer people to participate and support sustainable initiatives. Support as well as regulations is needed to deal with costs.
Criteria for Maximising Social Benefits from Sustainable Tourism at the Community Level

- ConserVing Natural Environment
- Sensitivity to Market Changes
- Sensitivity to Impacts on Locals
- Improving the Sustainable Nature of Tourism
- Improving Quality of Life and Tourism
ENABLORS
LEARNING FROM OTHER SECTORS

Tourism is not the leader in moving towards sustainability. Valuable lessons can be learned from other sectors and communities not heavily involved in tourism because the basic principles of sustainability are common to all sectors; e.g. Shetland Islands and offshore oil.
LEADER

The most successful communities in terms of achieving sustainable tourism benefits are those which have a designated and accepted leader/champion. Such an individual may be a “normal” public employee, e.g. chief executive of council, or be a specific appointee, such as Sustainable Development Coordinator or Manager (as in Helsingborg). A volunteer is less effective in such a role than an employee of the community.
REPORTING

Communities need to know that policies and actions are yielding results, Monitoring of indicators provides evidence but this must be reported to communities regularly for them to have faith in the policies and to continue to support them. Meetings, newsletters, and websites can all be successful, as in the New Forest in England.
CO-OPERATION

Some of the greatest benefits have been achieved where development is appropriate in scale and locally owned/operated. This suggests that developments must be in line with community preferences, which should be reflected in community plans and policies. That way all parties are looking to share in the resultant benefits from development, both economic and social.
INDIVIDUAL-COMMUNITY DIFFERENCES

There is a difference between the operation of single tourist enterprises and the concept of a more sustainable form of tourism in a community. Individual enterprises can operate sustainably, but a tourist destination cannot do so, primarily because of the travel component. The timing of benefits and costs may also be different between individual enterprises and a community at large.
The “Towel” Effect (reduced laundry):
This is popular in accommodation establishments because:
Savings accrue directly to the operator;
Customers feel good and responsible;
Benefits are positive and immediate, even though miniscule, and there are minimal costs;
Few reward the customer however.
Changing Marketing Approaches

A shift from reactive marketing, chasing the market, as seen in many conventional mass tourism destinations can be changed to a proactive approach, shaping the market can result in a more appropriate type of tourism and tourist.
TRADITIONAL VIEW OF TOURISM

Destination Environment

Ecological Social Economic Impacts

Tourist Characteristics

- Numbers
- Type
- Seasonality
- Origin
- Etc.
“SUSTAINABLE” VIEW OF TOURISM

Destination Environment
MODIFIES
Ecological Social Economic Impacts
BY SHAPING
Tourist Characteristics

- NUMBERS
- TYPE
- SEASONALITY
- ORIGIN
- ETC.
CONCLUSIONS
Sustainability and Rejuvenation

There has been considerable confusion in tourist communities, particularly those facing a decline in visitation, that moving up-market is the same as achieving sustainability. In reality, this is rarely the case, as up-market tourists normally place greater per capita demands on all resources and thus are often less sustainable individually, e.g. Canary Islands, Thailand.
Points to Remember

Large scale developments can and should be made more sustainable, so communities should not concentrate solely on creating small scale developments. Globally and locally we will gain more benefits from making large scale operations more sustainable (retrofitting) than building more new small scale “sustainable” operations. It takes all sorts to make tourism more sustainable and yield community benefits.
Points to Remember

Policy does not automatically result in implementation
Political support at high levels does not automatically result in action at local or private levels.
Political support does not automatically result in appropriate financial and logistical support if this would cost money or votes.
DIFFICULTIES

S.T. is hard to achieve at the community level: Benefits are rarely initially to individuals. Many of costs **are** borne by individuals. Benefits are likely to be long-term, but costs are often immediate. Tourists will not appreciate benefits for some time and rarely unless they return. Community priorities are not homogeneous.
Sustainable Tourism Communities

Moving towards sustainability is the best hope for communities. For once, tourism’s potential problems are everyone’s problems. Areas focusing on quality are likely to be more sustainable than others. Areas ignoring issues are likely to suffer……
18th fairway, Old Course, St. Andrews, 2050 (after climate change).