

# Tourism Policy: A Strategic Review

Noel Scott

## Contemporary Tourism Reviews

**Series Editor: Chris Cooper**

 Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited,  
Woodeaton, Oxford, OX3 9TJ

<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride



## About the author

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## Introduction

This review is arranged in four main sections. This first introduction will provide the reader with an orientation to the paper, its aims, importance, methods, structure, delimitations and scope. It will then provide a 'mapping' of the field using two analytical structures; the first is the policy cycle, and the second is based on the three different approaches to the analysis of policy (scientific, institutional and social). After these two sections, the paper reviews the methodology of tourism policy, followed by some conclusions, then a discussion of areas for further research, and finally an extensive reference list.

Why is it important to study tourism policy? Hall (2008a, p. 10) provides three reasons to study policy: to understand the shaping of policy decisions and their impacts (the policy cycle approach); to provide information about solutions to practical problems and to then feed this information into the policy process (scientific approach); and to understand the interests and values involved in policy and planning processes (associated with the social approach). These are general reasons for the study of policy, but do not provide a justification for the study of policy related to tourism in particular.

Tourism policy is an important area for study because of its practical and theoretical importance. Tourism is of practical significance as international travel requires government cooperation in, for example, bilateral airline negotiations, decisions about provision of facilities and services, interactions with other sectors, use of publicly 'owned' resources such as national parks as attractions, the issuing of tourist visas and in the funding of marketing of particular destinations (Ahmed & Krohn, 1990).

"It is only governments which have the power to provide the political stability, security and the legal and financial framework which tourism requires. They provide essential services and basic infrastructure. It is only national governments which can negotiate and make agreements with other governments on issues such as immigration procedures or flying over and landing on national territory" (Elliott, 1997, p. 2).

Governments have control of factors such as the amount of paid holidays and the application of currency restrictions (Wanhill, 1987), international affairs, border security, social and community development. Governments policy in agriculture (David Leslie & Black, 2005; Williams & Ferguson, 2005), security (Blake & Sinclair, 2003), and health (Zeng, Carter, & De Lacy, 2005). This government involvement is pervasive and can be at national, provincial and local levels with some authors considering that 'good' policy requires involvement of all three (Kerr, 2003, p. 17). Reasons for government involvement and policy formulation include market failure (Fayos-Sola, 1996, p. 410; Smeral, 1998), governments seeking to understand and mitigate the cultural, social and environmental effects of tourism, use by tourism of public goods, and the spatial nature of tourism that requires land use planning (Kerr, 2003).

Governments are interested in tourism due to the magnitude of its economic, social and environmental impacts, as tourism is generally considered to provide around 10% of the world's economy with consequent effects on the communities and natural environments with which it interacts. Perhaps tourism policy would not be so important if these economic benefits were only available for particular countries or tourism was a closed system where the potential for collateral impact and damage from external shocks, crises and disasters was less. Instead most governments have an involvement in tourism, although the existence of formally stated and

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