

Progress in Responsible Tourism



Volume 3(1) April 2014

Editors: Harold Goodwin and Xavier Font

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Editorial

The International Centre for Responsible Tourism continues in its transition towards an independent organisation with its own agenda, activities and membership more obviously since the last issue, as Harold Goodwin has moved to Manchester Metropolitan University while Xavier Font remains in Leeds Metropolitan University. This is good news for everyone involved in Responsible Tourism. The ICRT became a registered social enterprise in 2012. The UK ICRT now has Directors employed in two different UK universities and the opportunities for growth are significant. The Centres for Responsible Tourism at Leeds and Manchester will doubtless define complementary Masters Degrees and research focuses. The ICRT has space to grow and to develop its own agenda, benefits for members, partnerships and funding mechanisms. The future is positive. The future will belong to those who engage and realise the ambitions of the ICRT.

In this spirit of collaboration, this issue has been edited by Xavier Font and published during the 8th International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations, hosted by Manchester Metropolitan University on 3-5 April 2013. It is fitting that the conference takes place for the first time in the UK, after touring several continents, at a time of change for the ICRT. More than ever we need to work with our alumni, friends and supporters in the UK and around the world to develop a collective sense of belonging and purpose, to develop an agenda to encourage individuals, businesses and destinations to take responsibility to be more sustainable.

The articles in this issue focus on different aspects of that process of taking responsibility.

Three papers look at the thorny issue of donor funded project success and failure. Thorny because it is often compared with the children's story of the emperor's cloak: we may know he is naked but it is in nobody's interest to say so. Both reflect the recent research interests of the editors themselves. Using a Delphi study commissioned by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development to better identify pre-funding the characteristics of more successful projects, Font Goodwin and Walton use the same survey was also used to better understand why projects also fail. In doing so we open the Pandora's box of acknowledging that project failure happens, in order to learn from it. Acknowledging failure is less common than one would hope: an unknown source close to us working in a donor organisation shared that ill-defined projects that fail to achieve the objectives are filed as having "long term potential" rather than failures, for acknowledging failure reduces budgets and the status of tourism as a programme within the donor agency. We are pleased that our research informed the Global Partnership's approach to reducing donor risk through their project screening guidelines,

while we would like to continue the debate of how to make tax payer funded projects more transparent on their outcomes, and by necessity make the design of projects more realistic.

The application of well-intended but ill-designed donor funding is particularly evident in community based tourism. Goodwin, Santilli and Armstrong report on a two stage study to identify successful community based projects. What is concerning from this study is that of 750 experts, only 133 initiatives that they considered successful could be identified- and that from these, actually only 15 would strictly be community based initiatives, and 6 would have economic sustainability. Their study shows the challenges of funded projects self-promoting their success without rigorous examination. Our third paper reviews the struggles as well as the opportunities for conservation agencies wrestling with tourism which arise from the fact that now much of the funding now available for conservation comes with strings, usually on the socio-economic impacts expected from alternative, green economies, and tourism has for years been seen as one of these. Øvstetun and Cochrane exemplify well the principles outlined the two previous papers, illustrated with the experience of WWF in Sebangau National Park, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The benefits of tourism for conservation and towards the local communities are not evident, lacking both the commercial awareness and the stakeholder collaboration needed.

Our next two articles take on two aspects of corporate governance: investment and public relations.

The communication of environmental, social and governance as part of investor relations is analysed by Sören Stöber. As part of socially responsible investment, the communication of corporate social performance (usually through CSR reports), more recently framed under the concept of environmental, social and governance, should help international companies demonstrate their due diligence and create investor confidence. The results of this study however show how ESG information is usually handled by the sustainability department with limited involvement from the investor relations department, it is seen as bureaucratic and burdensome, and investors do not pay attention to the content. The paper suggests that strengthened legislation, integrated reporting, investor and business coalition initiatives as well as improved metrics all will help mainstream ESG integration into corporate reporting and overall investor relations.

Our public relations article reports on the ability of National Tourist Offices (NTOs) to fairly represent the resources of countries as a tourist draw, as the danger of the commercialisation of a nation's culture is an issue of responsible tourism. This paper is unique to our field in applying literature from public relations, which provides a more nuanced reading of what an NTO is supposed to do. Using five features of dialogue theory (ease of the interface, usefulness of information, generation of return

visits, conservation of visitors and dialogic loop), it compares the communication and commoditization of culture in the Australian and Costa Rican official tourism websites. The findings show how computer-mediated communications have allowed NTOs to evolve from a one-way communication structure to a more *emphatic and responsive approach*; where the public's views are being considered. Regardless of the particular communication tool that is employed, what is relevant here is that new technologies are being learnt and applied by public relations professionals in their daily operations. However it is not clear that a nation with strong governmental intervention will incorporate a more social and cultural dimension within its communications strategy than a country with major private funding for promotional activities.

Our next article reminds us how it is important to also challenge our stereotypes of who is environmentally friendly and for what reasons, if we are to empower more people to take responsibility. Interviews of owner-managers in agritourism businesses in Southern Poland show greater knowledge of and commitment towards the environment than surveys may have indicated previously, and placed all the reasons for not acting as being external (lack of funding, resources, information, facilities) rather than internal (time or commitment). Zientara and Bohdanowicz-Godfrey's paper is innovative because it breaks away from the conception that pro-sustainability is a Western priority, and helps us move towards a more nuanced understanding of what the environment may mean in different contexts.

A qualitative, contextualised analysis of what sustainability means in different cultures may indeed suggest that global definitions and criteria for sustainability are unhelpful and that if we want individuals to genuinely take responsibility for a more sustainable future, we need to empower them to define their own agendas in their own terms. This reminds us of how often sustainability certification programmes are in effect 90% environmental and within those focus on the eco-saving end (water, energy and waste management), approaches typical of countries with a scarcity of natural resources but an individualistic self-centred culture- in the West our beliefs that the system will create a safety net (social care) and a perception of meritocracy give the successful individuals a sense of entitlement to their power achieved, and promote self-centredness in social terms but an expectation for a level playing field towards preserving the natural resources. Instead countries with greater natural resources available plus a collectivistic society would understand sustainability different- the emphasis would be first for caring for others, and the resources available would be a means to an end. Zientara and Bohdanowicz-Godfrey's paper demonstrates the need to ask environmental questions differently. As editors, we would argue also that we need to ask different questions about what sustainability means in different contexts, to include more aspects of maintaining culture and traditions as well as community ties amongst others.

We finish with a review of the lessons learned at the 2013 World Responsible Tourism Awards. Beyond listing the winners, there are many opportunities to appreciate the uniqueness of what some of these companies do.

We hope you enjoy this issue. We are pleased to have attracted a number of non-academics to write for us this time and share their experiences, and we wish we'd had more short opinion or experience articles to share with you. We are open to new contributions from academics who usually feel their articles do not reflect the mainstream journal requirements, and from professionals who would like to put a point across.

Dr Xavier Font, Leeds Metropolitan University and the International Centre for Responsible Tourism.

Prof Harold Goodwin, Manchester Metropolitan University and the International Centre for Responsible Tourism.

Academic Papers

Donor funded tourism projects: factors for success

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Abstract

This paper draws on the inter-disciplinary literature on the efficacy of donor activity and on the results of a Delphi study undertaken to elicit views from professionals engaged in tourism development about the factors which are key to success or failure of donor funded tourism projects. We review the literature on project success and failure around the role of the donor, the business of aid and the monitoring and evaluation of aid programmes. The literature informs research funded by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism which is hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme. A policy Delphi survey was used to seek the views of practitioners about critical success factors in tourism interventions. The purpose of this was to determine which initiatives should be funded to achieve the donor's objective of enabling multiple stakeholders to adapt, replicate, and scale-up successful projects. The results suggest a number of measures donors can implement along the project lifecycle to internally ensure projects are more realistic, to be more market oriented and mainstreamed, to increase conditionality of aid on agents, and to improve monitoring and evaluation transparency.

Keywords: Donors, aid, beneficiaries, monitoring, evaluation, failure.

Introduction

Donors, ranging from development banks to philanthropic charities, aim to generate economic growth and reduce poverty through finance investments and interventions in tourism can create a favourable context for conservation and for the local society. Emphasis has been placed on tourism's potential contribution to conservation¹ and poverty reduction². There is a large literature on the efficacy of development aid provided by development banks and agencies and by other donors, but relatively few

¹ Brandon, 1996

² Bennett, Roe, & Ashley, 1999; Scheyvens, 2007

studies have focussed on donor assistance for sustainable development through tourism. Project and programme evaluations are conducted but they are generally confidential and remain unpublished, although they may be used to inform review articles; for example on the experience of using tourism for poverty reduction³.

Hawkins and Mann⁴ reviewed the World Bank's experience in supporting tourism development from the mid-sixties, describing how the World Bank strategy towards tourism as a development tool evolved over the last 40 years. They report that "projects that continued to be implemented during the 80s performed poorly", that project overruns were costly both to the World Bank and the beneficiary countries and that the "bank's loss of focus resulted in poor supervision that ultimately affected the outcomes of these projects". The development of Pro-Poor Tourism and the commitments made to the Millennium Development Goals at the turn of the century caused some donor re-engagement with tourism particularly at the micro-level (H. Goodwin, 2008; H. Goodwin, 2009; Hawkins & Mann, 2007). At this level there have been many interventions which have explicitly sought to use tourism to promote conservation, particularly of biodiversity; and for community development and poverty reduction. Zebu and Bush (1990) surveyed protected areas and reported that park authorities had realised that local populations could no longer be ignored in the planning and management of national parks and that tourism formed part of the management strategy of three quarters of respondents. In a study of Integrated Conservation and Development Projects originated in the 1980s, Wells and Brandon (1992) reported disappointing results in creating neither sufficient income nor employment to create local support for parks. There has been little rigorous research on the benefits or otherwise of ecotourism. Weaver and Lawton (2007) assessed the field as still being in a "state of adolescence", and as Buckley points out, Weaver and Lawton "specifically excluded any attempt to evaluate its practical achievements or outcomes" (2009:643). World Bank employee Agnes Kiss was already writing in 2004 on how projects which are often promoted as successful rely on external funding for long periods of time, or have little impact to show for themselves, and that such investments cannot be generally justified based on the value for money achieved for those communities and conservation (Kiss, 2004).

As with ecotourism there have been very few efforts to evaluate the efficacy of community based tourism as a development strategy. Goodwin and Santilli (2009) identified only six initiatives, from 116 recommended by experts and practitioners, which could be considered economically successful. Armstrong⁵ analysed the conditions necessary for the success of community based tourism enterprises and concluded that there were 10 characteristics which were important in explaining success and failure

3 Ashley & Goodwin, 2007; H. Goodwin, 2008; H. Goodwin, 2009

4 Hawkins and Mann, 2007:356

5 Armstrong, 2012

in the implementation of investments: a cohesive and resilient community; genuine community participation, ownership and control; adoption of a commercial mind-set, planning for financial viability from the outset; engagement with the private sector; initiatives based on market research and demand-driven product development; providing attractive, quality products based on natural and cultural assets and which are more accessible to tourists; time; engagement, support and collaboration in the enterprise by stakeholders with key areas of expertise; transparent and accountable governance, leadership and decision-making structures as well as sound, skilled financial management; and monitoring and evaluation so that communities and others can share and learn from experience and ensure continued success. Field data confirms that projects work best when the local team has good management and book keeping, there is an established but not too competitive market, they have good market research, and creates an enterprise that used skills the community already had⁶.

Literature review

Tourism is only one of the many areas where donors and agencies intervene in order to accelerate development, reduce poverty or contribute to conservation. The efficacy of aid intervention is a critical question. When and how does aid succeed, and how do we understand both failure and success? The multitude of aid targets and methods makes analysing aid effectiveness complex. In its broadest sense, success is defined as achieving the project's goals and objectives, in time, cost and quality and in the context of the project's terms of reference⁷. Success factors are the variables that affect the likelihood of success, although all too often they are expected to explain success without taking into consideration the complex and dynamic relationships between the objectives, the interventions and the social and economic context in which the intervention occurs.

Those studies conducted at the macro-economic level seek country and large donor level reasons for the discrepancies in aid success⁸ and added impetus for the shift from macro to micro level funding⁹. Analysis at the micro level helps us to understand "what works?", but also "why?" and "under what circumstances?" This provides more positive evidence of micro-level success, which in turn has led to the pursuit of answers in the micro-macro paradox¹⁰ - if small projects work, why is it making such little difference at the bigger picture level? However, this leaves the challenge that there are no common denominators for project success due to the heterogeneity of identified success

6 Salafsky et al., 2001; von der Weppen & Cochrane, 2012

7 Abdullah, Rahman, Harun, Alashwal, & Beksin, 2010

8 Easterly, 2006; Hansen & Tarp, 2000; Moyo, 2009

9 Hawkins & Mann, 2007

10 Mosley, 1987

factors and the importance of the local context¹¹. We will focus our analysis on the reasons for success and failure to the donors, the business of aid, and project evaluation.

The donors

Many explanations for the success or failure of funded projects come from the donors themselves. There is a myriad of donors of aid to both developed and developing countries, including multilateral (World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, Asian Development Bank, European Union) and bilateral donors (national cooperation/development aid agencies), non-governmental organisations, and foundations. There is a lack of transparency in decision making about development assistance¹². While development assistance is often assumed to be apolitical, in reality practise has been closer to enlightened self-interest¹³. There is evidence of donors partly choosing aid recipients based on potential trade benefits¹⁴ or because of historic ties with former colonies. Donor rankings based on how they allocate aid across countries (allocative performance) are common, with income, population and policy the most commonly used criteria¹⁵. However donor performance goes beyond allocation, to include the amount of aid that is tied or the share of aid spent on administration costs. In a study of aid practice measures UN agencies were found to perform far worse than bilateral aid, and all agencies made only marginal improvements on aid transparency and improving ineffective aid channels. There was no discernible improvement (or weaker performance) on specialization, selectivity, and overhead costs despite agencies claiming the contrary¹⁶.

Reviewing World Bank lending processes, Mosley, Harrigan and Toye¹⁷ have argued that staff are under pressure to meet disbursement targets and spending the budget is a primary management objective. Failure to disburse funds may be seen as an indicator that there are problems in the country department which reflects badly on staff¹⁸. Budgets are committed to interventions based on pledges, not performance, or when the latter is taken into account, it relates to procedural due diligence and not impact¹⁹.

Donors prefer to finance short term, target driven projects; whereas effective aid usually requires core funding over a longer period in order to facilitate local empowerment²⁰. However:

11 Abdullah, Rahman, Harun, Alashwal, & Beksin, 2010

12 Rashid, 2005; Svensson, 2000

13 Wilson 2007

14 Younas, 2008

15 Anderson & Clist, 2011

16 Easterly & Williamson, 2011

17 Mosley, Harrigan & Toye 2005

18 Edgren, 1996

19 Svensson, 2003

20 Birdsall, 2004

“donors appear to be weakly placed to support the rapid development of strong institutional structures due both to a lack of knowledge about the right institutions for a particular environment and a lack of knowledge of (and access to) effective mechanisms to catalyse institutional change. Improved institutions demand far more than technical assistance and knowledge transfer, involving changes in country-specific incentive structures and governance mechanisms”²¹.

Knack and Rahman²² argue that development assistance can (and often does) undermine local governance by bypassing government agencies, relying on external experts, funding the building of infrastructures without maintenance budgets, and by prioritising short term visibility.

Donors spread their aid very widely. Data shows that over 80% of aid events involved less than 1% of donors’ total aid budget. The result is appearance of success at the micro project level. Competitive donor practices, where there are many small donors and no dominant donor, erode administrative capacity in recipient country governments²³ and yet the efforts for coordination between donors relate to harmonising reporting systems or sharing evaluation reports, not specialising geographically or by sector. The appearance of success would be less if there were more thorough and careful reporting distinguishing between outputs (what was spent), outcomes (the activities which were funded by the aid e.g. consultancy and training days and buildings and equipment) and impacts, the benefits achieved.

The business of aid

Seeing aid as a business can help explain some of the reasons for project success and failure. Project content delivery revolves around the principal–agent relations inherent in the aid delivery system and the resulting potential for agency problems from having unclear aid contracts that do not provide sufficient incentive to the recipient to use aid effectively²⁴. The recipients of the aid are the agencies in the beneficiary country that will facilitate the implementation of the project, for tourism this is likely to be the ministry, a parastatal or public-private partnership or an NGO. The work is often implemented by consultants, international and or local, working to the local intermediary. Svensson²⁵ identifies rent-seeking behaviour arising from aid dependency as one of the reasons for project failure as donors and intermediaries seek to ensure the sustainability of intermediaries and consultants (implementers), in going from project to project, rather than concerning themselves with the sustainability of the initiatives, or the long term

21 Kenny, 2008:338

22 Knack and Rahman 2007

23 Knack & Rahman, 2007

24 Paul, 2006

25 Svensson 2000

impacts for the intended beneficiaries²⁶. The underfunding of intermediary agencies and consequent lack of professional capacity and high staff turnover means that often the implementers have the institutional memory²⁷.

Coordinators of development projects perceive success of their own projects based on the management performance (as commonly defined, by time, cost and quality) and on the project's profile (visibility/ reputation/ image). Khang and Moe²⁸ found that "despite the conventional wisdom that the competence of the project designers, planners and the project management team is most related to success", the empirical evidence shows that effective consultations are far more important in influencing the project success, at least for the international development projects. Ika, Diallo and Thuillier²⁹ surveyed World Bank Task Team Leaders, project supervisors, and found that the most prominent Critical Success Factors for project supervisors are design and monitoring, at least in part because these are elements over which they have some control, other significant aspects of the management (coordination, training, and institutional environment) are under the control of the national project co-ordinators.

What was striking to Diallo and Thuillier³⁰ is that project impact (understood as performance against objectives in the logical framework) was not an important criteria for these coordinators of projects. Instead it was all about getting the job done on time, on budget and on spec, and being seen to do a good job. Also interpersonal relationships between all parties (including the implementing team and between the task manager-in the development agency headquarters, responsible for commissioning the project and budgets) and trust, (impacting on team cohesion and communication are more important than quantitative project evaluations would suggest³¹. Aid managers judge the implementers by criteria which focus on the process of outputs and outcomes, there is little or no focus or accountability for impacts. Donors and intermediaries are predisposed to work with intermediaries who deliver outputs and outcomes.

A substantial study in Cambodia found that technical assistance projects are donor-driven and not based on the local needs³², the result of having limited knowledge of the local realities³³. All too often donors have not shown respect for the knowledge of others³⁴, and then wondered why the intermediaries and implementers do not do as they are told. Technical assistance has repeatedly fallen short of its intended purpose,

26 Williamson, 2010

27 Godfrey et al., 2002

28 Khang and Moe, 2008:82

29 Diallo and Thuillier 2010

30 Diallo and Thuillier 2004

31 Diallo & Thuillier, 2005

32 Godfrey et al., 2002

33 Williamson, 2010

34 Chambers, 1997

failing to adapt to local conditions, being used as a short term fix, not measuring or reporting the impacts, and lacking in consistent approaches³⁵. Rather, learning needs to take place collaboratively, and slowly, based on trust and mutual respect. Technical assistance rarely creates communities of practice for joint and long term collaborative learning³⁶. Self-reliance does not happen overnight, changing mental structures and allowing the recipients to see for themselves what can be achieved is far more complex³⁷.

Goodwin has pointed to the capture of Pro-Poor Tourism as a means of continuing more traditional ecotourism and community based tourism approaches, driven by supply rather than market demand as one of the reasons for failure: “efforts to engage with the private sector were few and far between” and the PPT Partnership was “unsuccessful in asserting the importance of measuring net benefits for the poor and in maintaining the emphasis on engagement with the private sector” or even in maintaining a focus on the intended beneficiaries, the economically poor.

“Funders and development agency staff did not require implementing field staff to monitor, measure and report ... the established consultants and field workers adroitly adopted the rhetoric of PPT and poverty reduction and continued with the traditional approaches, paying insufficient attention to the market ... failing to measure the net benefits and not engaging with the private sector”³⁸.

Briedenhann³⁹ also argues that projects tend to be supply driven despite commercial sustainability and market access being critical. Simpson⁴⁰ has argued that the development of community based tourism initiatives, a typical donor funded project type, suffers from a lack of understanding of the requirements of both the market and the distribution channels, which continue to have the factors of competitiveness by controlling the flow of visitors, and the knowledge of what these visitors need. Beneficiaries, in whose name the project is being delivered, are rarely included as empowered stakeholders in the projects and they can rarely act as clients because they lack the organisational structures and experience to validate the project outputs, despite participative approaches to project delivery and evaluation⁴¹.

35 Wilson, 2007

36 Johnson, 2007

37 Briedenhann, 2011

38 Goodwin, 2009:92

39 Briedenhann, 2011

40 Simpson, 2008

41 Diallo & Thuillier, 2005

Project evaluation

The final aspect to consider is how all stakeholders learn from previous experience through project evaluation, as rarely are the impacts of interventions reported. This will continue to be the case unless donors insist that impacts are monitored and reported, those implementing will rarely voluntarily make themselves accountable for the results of their work in this way. The argument that since all impacts cannot be captured it is not worth reporting, needs to be resisted. There are resource implications in recording and reporting impacts, but it is difficult to see how it is possible to learn what works and what does not without considering impacts. Impact studies should also address policy-relevant questions which are not strictly related to impact. Principle amongst these are issues of replicability (and scaling up), and sustainability. Addressing these issues will require, amongst other things, a discussion of cost effectiveness, return on investment or a full cost-benefit analysis.

Much of the work funded to test the PPT approach was captured by established consultants and NGO field workers, they merely rebranded their existing work to ensure their sustainability and without any process for measuring and reporting impacts this went unchallenged. Hawkins and Mann⁴² have argued that the World Bank has made tourism development decisions that were data poor and that funded interventions have not been monitored sufficiently to identify the impact of the interventions, particularly in relation to poverty reduction. In a unique ethnography of aid for tourism, Hummel and van der Duim⁴³ show how SNV defined and produced success undergoing a full circle process: framing tourism within the organisational and political requirements of the time including the Millennium Development Goals and the pro-poor tourism agenda, developing and continuously reshaping the structures to grow the services provided, during a long period when the number of clients but not impact was measured. The last phase in SNV's tourism involvement came, however, as a result of larger scale partnership agreements requiring impact studies. Despite having changed from "counting the numbers of beneficiaries in community based tourism projects, via more general outcome indicators based on capacity-building (numbers of people trained), to an alignment with the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) standards", SNV was struggling to find a convincing way to measure the complexity of how tourism interventions reduce poverty. SNV decided to refocus away from tourism before impacts could be measured, or externally reported, as part of a realignment of donor priorities in the context of the economic crisis. When a pro-poor tourism measurement was introduced in SNV's Asia work, it showed that policies to date had been misguided⁴⁴, something quite uncomfortable both for donors and imple-

42 Hawkins and Mann, 2007

43 Hummel and van der Duim, 2012:332

44 Hummel, Gujadhur, & Ritsma, 2012

menting agencies. From those results, SNV changed its project focus to build capacity for pro-poor tourism in the private sector to become more industry focused and develop impact at a scale.

Measuring success is complex, for the intangibility of many project outcomes and the fact that we mainly measure perception of success by different stakeholders, each of them with their own agendas⁴⁵. Much of the literature on project success, and the lion's share of the overseas development assistance, is on debt relief and "hard" infrastructure projects (e.g. airports and roads). Technical assistance and "soft" projects, including capacity building, education, health, human development, market access, product development and business development are well established. Reporting on how many people received vaccines may make sense, for we can calculate the impact this will have, yet the evaluation of technical assistance requires methodologies which go beyond standard programme monitoring or process evaluations (i.e. how many people attended a workshop). As seen in the case of SNV, the main focus in monitoring and evaluation was on outputs and outcomes, rather than on the impacts⁴⁶. We know more about whether programmes met the expected milestones and spend on the right budgets than about the impact of these interventions⁴⁷.

It is not only the complexity, but also the lack of incentives and the numerous technical, bureaucratic and political challenges that impede good impact evaluations. We have a habit of acknowledging success as the result of project staff, while we attribute failure as the unpredictable outcome of changes in our operating environment⁴⁸. This compounds the bias which results from valuing the timely spending of budgets and accomplishing of outcomes over the achievement of measurable impacts. Data collection to evaluate projects is rare. When collected, it is all too often from a single source, or lacks rigour in both the collection, analysis and triangulation. Particularly lacking are methodologies that take into account the impacts as perceived by the beneficiaries of the funded projects which can often show how the positive impacts promoted are actually offset by negative impacts that go unrecorded and are suffered by the more vulnerable members of the community⁴⁹. It was for this reason that the PPT Partnership emphasised the importance of measuring and reporting net impacts. An initiative can only be described as pro-poor when there are demonstrable and measurable net benefits for the locally economically poor⁵⁰.

It is testimony to the strength of the ideas embedded in ecotourism and community based tourism that interventions continue to be funded despite the lack of evidence of

45 Diallo & Thuillier, 2005

46 Hummel & van der Duim, 2012

47 Savedoff, Levine, & Birdsall, 2006

48 Shore, 2008

49 Simpson, 2009

50 Goodwin, 2007

positive impacts. There is of course a case which can and is often made that interventions bring a range of social and other benefits. Briedenhann⁵¹ reports that South African experts placed more importance than UK counterparts on the *additional benefits* of project development. These include: promoting social understanding; assisting community members and entrepreneurs to identify and develop skills and products which could be incorporated into and enhance the project; local people developing the right to control cultural activities and presentations; and developers helping affected local communities to build capacity and organise themselves to provide suitable, and relevant, goods and non-core services to the project. The UK experts placed more importance instead on the performance of the project against its own terms of reference. Where all panellists agreed was in the importance of clarity and realism with regard to the aims, goals, rewards and potential impacts of projects. The point is surely that additional benefits, however worthwhile in themselves, were not the purpose for which the resources were provided. If there is to be learning, and if intermediaries and implementers are to be held to account for their performance in achieving the project objectives then monitoring and evaluation must be against the declared objectives of the intervention. The evaluation design should incorporate analysis of the causal chain from inputs to impacts, and increase the potential for evaluation of projects from the design stage, and get donors to accept and learn from shortcomings in the project outcomes⁵².

Methodology

Delphi studies have been used to gather the opinions of homogeneous groups of stakeholders to reach consensus. A Policy Delphi shares the basic characteristics of a traditional Delphi in iterative consultation and controlled feedback, but the main purpose is not to reach consensus, but instead to explore the policy implications of a wide range of stakeholder opinions⁵³, as it “rests on the premise that the decision maker is not interested in having a group generate his decision; but rather, have an informed group present all the options and supporting evidence for his consideration”⁵⁴. The objectives of a Policy Delphi are to systematically gather reliable information to inform policy decisions “to ensure that all possible options have been put on the table for consideration, to estimate impact and consequences of any particular option, and to examine and estimate the acceptability of any particular option”⁵⁵.

The advantage of designing policy through a Delphi process is accessing current unpublished data (as opposed to policies arising from literature), in a systematic format that allows wide ranging opinions to be heard equally, and removing the pressure of

51 Briedenhann, 2009

52 Birdsall, 2004

53 Steinert, 2009

54 Turoff, 2002:80

55 Turoff, 1997:87

conforming with opinion leaders, and the avoidance of group-think. Providing a set of well-considered options for policy makers to understand the range of issues faced and the possible consequences of decisions taken, relies on understanding issues that will usually not be written down in donor terms of reference or project manager reports and which may be fundamentally sensitive. However the Delphi technique has seldom been used to evaluate tourism projects⁵⁶ and to our knowledge a Policy Delphi has only been used in one tourism study⁵⁷.

The Policy Delphi steps follow the standard template of a Delphi study as a systematic data collection tool, a hybrid between qualitative and quantitative methods⁵⁸ with some modifications. Policy Delphi studies are significantly more time consuming than using traditional Delphi format, in giving the due attention to qualitative statements explaining the quantitative assessments for their contribution to designing policy goal and option questions⁵⁹, although others have remarked on the relative simplicity and time efficiency of this method for the quality of results achieved⁶⁰. The survey instrument format is different from a traditional Delphi, in that the questions organised into four elements: forecast, issue, goal, and options, which can be seen as an example in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of Delphi Items and the Distribution of Responses for Second Stages

Item	Response	N	%
Desirability: "Policy. Donors should spread the risk by funding smaller initiatives". How desirable is this objective?"	Very desirable	2	6
	Desirable	8	25
	Neither	12	38
	Undesirable	7	22
	Very undesirable	3	9
Desirability: "Feasibility. Donors should ensure there is credible evidence that the project will be sustainable and will not be donor dependent". How desirable is this objective?"	Very desirable	21	68
	Desirable	9	29
	Neither	1	3
Feasibility: "Donors should only finance projects which benefit those in greatest need, not just what is most likely to succeed commercially". How likely are donors to implement such a policy?"	Very likely	6	19
	Likely	7	22
	Neither	9	28
	Unlikely	7	22
	Very unlikely	3	9
Feasibility: "Outcomes, Impact and Evaluation. Projects should be judged by impacts not the deliverables". How likely are donors to implement such a policy?"	Very likely	3	10
	Likely	6	20
	Neither	14	47
	Unlikely	5	17
	Very unlikely	2	7

56 Briedenhann & Butts, 2006; Northcote, Lee, Chok, & Wegner, 2008

57 d'Amore, 1993

58 Dunn, 2003; Turoff, 1975, 2002

59 Franklin & Hart, 2007; Turoff, 2002

60 Steinert, 2009

The Forecast aims to get experts to estimate the likelihood of an event occurring (i.e. project failure through poor market linkages, poor management expertise, poor financial management...). Ideally issue ranking tasks the experts to prioritise these forecasts, but that was not attempted, others have also omitted this step⁶¹. The Goal item seeks information on the desirability of different policy options and the Options measure the viability of different actions to fulfil the policy goals. The purpose is to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions to ensure the success of initiatives.

The engagement of key stakeholders from an early stage greatly facilitates policy influence and later policy acceptability. Panel selection is a key criteria, with opposing views on how essential it is for these to be real experts as most stakeholders will be affected by policy decisions irrespective of their expertise⁶². It is important however to recruit a motivated panel who can make an effective contribution, by making them aware of the benefits to the common good from participating, the knowledge which it provides, although anonymised, of the opinion(s) of their peers, and the provision of feedback on how their contribution has been used in decision-making⁶³.

41 panellists took part in the study in total covering a cross-section of categories; consultants, implementation bodies, governments, private sector workers and universities. A wide range of respondents from different working backgrounds were represented (for example; import consultant, sustainability consultant, industry association, sustainable tourism network, tour operators, travel agent, co-operative, researchers, university representatives, a people focused non-profit organisation, a biodiversity non-profit organisation, ministries, chambers of commerce), and from a variety of different countries (France, UK, Sweden, Jordan, US, Italy, Spain, Finland, Canada, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Vietnam, Costa Rica, Croatia, Peru, Oman, Switzerland and Thailand). Not all participants were able to engage in all stages: 31 participated in the initial round, 31 in round 2, and 32 in the final round. The overall extent of participation varied- of the 31 panellists participating in round 1; 11 completed all three rounds of the Delphi process; 6 completed rounds 1 and 2; 5 completed round 1 only; and 9 completed rounds 1 and 3. As 14 people had declined participation in round 1, 14 additional people were invited to replace them with similar backgrounds. Overall all backgrounds were represented at each stage.

Delphi, and also Policy Delphi, carry some statistical limitations on reliability, objectivity and validity, and Delphi approaches should be used mainly as an exploratory tool when insufficient data on a subject is available⁶⁴. The analysis of qualitative data is by its nature subject to the knowledge and experience of the researchers, with the potential for

61 Rayens & Hahn, 2000

62 Franklin & Hart, 2007; Steinert, 2009; Turoff, 2002

63 Franklin & Hart, 2007; Landeta, 2006

64 Steinert, 2009

researcher bias⁶⁵, for example in deciding what policy options to present to the panel, or in grouping and interpreting open ended responses. Furthermore, the time requirement to participate impacts not only on attrition rates, but also because it is likely to be those stakeholders with vested interests or the most confidence in their opinions who are most likely to stay until the bitter end⁶⁶. A Policy Delphi study also presents the difficulty of developing an initial research instrument that captures the complexity of the issue to be addressed, as well as the range of options available for policy makers to deal with it⁶⁷. To address this challenge, a pre-Delphi round was added to map out the experts' opinions on reasons for success and failure in donor projects, with entirely open questions. To avoid potential or perceived biases by experts from the team conducting the research, a professional market researcher was contracted to manage all data handling, and the instrument design using anonymised data was shared between the client at UNEP and the academic team. Also, because of the tendency to drop out at the last questionnaire, the policy elements of desirability and likelihood were introduced in the second and not the last round.

Results

The pre-Delphi round generated the initial list of the reasons why donor funded projects fail or succeed from experts. This was achieved via two open-ended questions; *"In your experience, what are the reasons why projects fail?"* and *"In your experience, what are the reasons why projects succeed?"* For each given reason for success or failure, the extent of importance was ascertained via a closed scalar question; *"How important is it?"* (High, Medium or Low). The initial stage of analysis was qualitative and identified themes from the open-ended responses for each of success and failure. The level of importance was input into an excel spread sheet alongside each of the reasons. The analysis output included a table summarising the responses by theme and extent of importance as well as categorising each of the emergent themes. The research identified twenty eight reasons (or *issues*) for project success and failure which fell into ten categories. The top six reasons for project failure, the most common first, were unprofessional project management, lack of understanding of the local situation, unskilled/unprofessional implementation, lack of leadership, collaboration and communication between stakeholders and poorly defined project scope and scale.

The results from this first open ended stage went into the first Policy Delphi questionnaire, asking for Forecast (likelihood) and Goal (importance), which can be seen in Figure 1. Focusing on the high importance/low likelihood of the issue being addressed box, "Sufficient funding" and "Realistic and achievable project" can be seen as two sides

65 Franklin & Hart, 2007

66 Franklin & Hart, 2007

67 Franklin & Hart, 2007

of the same coin, in relation to the need for project applicants to over claim what can be achieved with the funds in order to gain the contract. The further issue is how often the “Rationale and objectives AREN’T clearly understood by all” with partners entering projects simply because there is a chance of funding, and worrying about how to deliver if and when the contract is won.

Figure 1: First Policy Delphi round - Importance/likelihood matrix

	Low importance	Medium	High importance
High likelihood	Relevant administrative procedures	Monitoring and evaluation	Partners believing in the project The project is well-defined Effective budget management The project is appropriate for the location
Med	Political support and stability Multi-stakeholder involvement A stakeholder management approach	Having access to market Coherence between resources and scope & scale, early strategic thinking Professionalism and skill of staff Public/private engagement Collaboration & communication between stakeholders Realistic timeline A consistent and stable project team	Sustainability of the project The involvement of local people Leadership Professionalism of project management
Low likelihood	Synergies with other ongoing interventions Flexible/dynamic project Innovative project		Sufficient funding Realistic and achievable project Rationale and objectives clearly understood by all

Panellists were given the opportunity to convey what they thought donors should do to address each *issue* via an open-ended question. The purpose of this was to develop *policies* to be carried through to the final round. The purpose of this round was to identify how *desirable* the *goal* of each *policy* is and to pinpoint how *viable* each *option* would be. Panellists’ thoughts about what should be done by donors to address the *issues* from round 2 were qualitatively analysed. Every response by each panellist was input for each *issue* in Excel. Themes for each *issue* were identified and 60 *policy* statements developed subsequently. The statements with desirability above average (4.2 out of 5) are presented in Table 2, according to a project’s life-cycle (1)Donor’s aid policy, 2) Identification and conceptualisation of projects, 3)Feasibility, 4) Project approval and funding, 5)Monitoring and supervision, and 6) Outcomes, Impact and Evaluation).

Table 2: Desirability of policy choices along the project lifecycle (statements above the average 4.2-range from 0 to 5)

Policy. Donors should...	
Be clear about their objectives and targets	4.8
Build local capacity and ensure knowledge transfer	4.8
Provide detailed guidance for applicants on the donor's expectations of beneficiaries, strategy and methods, outcomes and criteria for funding eligibility	4.3
Identification and conceptualisation. Donor should ensure...	
Objectives are focused and realistic given the limitations of time and resources	4.8
Engagement and sharing of objectives from all relevant stakeholders, including identified beneficiaries and those who can enable market access	4.3
The market isn't an afterthought.	4.3
The project is based on a partnership approach with shared risk and benefits between the stakeholders	4.5
The project implementer/client/beneficiary relationships are clear to all	4.6
Potential negative impacts have been considered	4.5
The difference between project success and failure is clear	4.5
Full engagement of the private sector from project conceptualisation onwards	4.3
Realism about the potential number of beneficiaries, and that all members of the community know who the beneficiaries will be and who will get what	4.3
Feasibility should require...	
Detailed proposals prior to funding with clear and tangible objectives.	4.5
Targets been accepted and endorsed by all stakeholders as realistic and achievable	4.3
Funding capacity building where necessary to ensure success	4.5
The products or services are clearly defined and are within the capacity of the producer(s) to deliver	4.5
There is a clear market, tourists or tourism businesses, for the goods or services	4.7
Credible evidence that the project will be sustainable and will not be donor dependent	4.6
The project team has competent workers with the capacity to engage both local community and the commercial routes to market	4.6
Are all stakeholders committed to the objectives and to delivering their contribution to achieving those shared objectives	4.3
Not wasting money on experts unless they have skills which make a difference commensurate with their cost	4.4
Experts effectively transfer knowledge and skills so as to build local capacity	4.5

Project approval and funding should...

Ensure that there is a viable market for the goods and services proposed 4.5

Ensure that the contribution expected of project beneficiaries, including their time, is proportionate to demonstrable benefits 4.2

Engage local people in the project approval process 4.4

Monitoring and supervision should include...

A review of progress undertaken annually and targets and approach modified accordingly based on really understanding what is happening on the ground 4.3

Evaluation need to be built into the project process in order to ensure delivery of the planned impacts and not just that money is spent on the right headings 4.5

Review stages to permit redesign or withdrawal if the results are not being achieved 4.6

Regular reporting by the project team on progress and problems 4.5

Monitor inputs, outcomes and most importantly the range of impacts, qualitative and quantitative achieved 4.5

Avoid collusion between the donor manager and the project 4.3

Outcomes, Impact and Evaluation

Project impacts should be measured and reported along with the difference, positive or negative, between what was "promised" and what was delivered 4.4

Negative impacts should be monitored and reported 4.5

Determine the Return on Investment of the project 4.3

Full desirability and feasibility results tables are downloadable from the journal's website. For space reasons, only the issues with the greatest gap between desirability and feasibility (the percentage showing how less feasible it is than desirable) are presented in table 3. The average was 21% less feasible than desirable. This could arguably be the most important list, for it is where donors could have the greatest impact in closing the gap that contributes to more successful projects.

Table 3: Feasibility-desirability gap in policy options

Issue	Gap
Engage local people in the project approval process	34%
Ensure there is a mechanism for ensuring that the development of supply does not outstrip demand	34%
Gather credible evidence that the project will be sustainable and will not be donor dependent	33%
Not fund projects unless all positive and negative impacts will be monitored and reported publicly	32%
Ensure experts effectively transfer knowledge and skills so as to build local capacity	31%
Determine the Return on Investment of the project	30%
Ensure there is a clear market, tourists or tourism businesses, for the goods or services	28%
Ensure the difference between project success and failure is clear	28%

Discussion

While we may accept that there can't be one blueprint for a long-term success story⁶⁸, the primary research for this article has attempted to identify a range of issues that explain why projects succeed or fail, and propose possible policy options for donors. Following the project lifecycle approach from the data, we revert to the three sequential themes in the literature of donors, the business of aid, and monitoring & evaluation.

Donor behaviour partly explains project success and failure, through their policies and how they identify and conceptualise funding lines. The panellists are wanting strong leadership and direction from the donor (table 2) asking for clear objectives and targets (4.8) which are focused and realistic given the limitations of time and resources (4.8) with detailed guidance (4.3). The preferences are for projects with partnerships (4.5) with clear relationships (4.6), supporting the suggestion that any sustainable project management must include an evaluation of the organisational culture of an enterprise that plans to implement any new project or initiative (Sustainable Project Management, 2011). Yet we found high importance but low likelihood for having rationale and objectives clearly understood by all, with a realistic and achievable project and sufficient funding (see Figure 1). The qualitative explanations were pointing to project applicant knowingly overpromising to gain the funds, on the basis that suggesting something reasonable would not be sufficiently innovative or ambitious.

The panellists demand that the difference between project success and failure is clear (4.5), but they prefer projects that build local capacity and ensure knowledge transfer (4.8), but not necessarily to only finance replicable projects with clear transferability (3.3)- this may reflect the fact that it was implementing bodies and not necessarily the donors themselves that responded. The literature suggests that the current type of projects funded are rarely transferable, nor are they likely to affect mainstream tourism⁶⁹. The data suggests a substantial gap between the desirability and the feasibility of ensuring supply does not outstrip demand (34%) or that there is a market for the goods or services (28%), which in turn negatively affect project sustainability (33%) and return on investment (30%) (see table 3). The literature confirms projects that are unrealistic and inappropriate in commercial terms, but politically appealing⁷⁰. The qualitative statements explained for example how funding is often allocated to areas of high biodiversity and poverty, in order to meet development goals- yet these tend to be difficult to access and away from current markets, while the products developed might be additions to an existing supply chain they might not be tourist destinations in their own right.

68 Simpson, 2008

69 Dixey, 2008

70 Dixey, 2008

The analysis of the gaps between feasibility and desirability (table 3) should provide donors with some clear warning signs and issues to watch out for in allocating project funds. It may be understandable why some desirable policy options are not seen as very feasible. "Engaging local people in the project approval process" (topping the list at 34% gap between desirability and feasibility) is complex and expensive. The qualitative statements point towards instances of limited legitimacy of organisations that represent these beneficiaries, who act on their personal interests but in the name of local communities, where non-profit organisations become sustainable through donor funding, but not the donor funded project themselves.

This lends us to look at the business of aid literature, which explains principal-agent related reasons for failure or success, acknowledging that the principal (donor) and the agent (the recipient, government, non-profit organisation or other implementing agency) have different views about the desirability of the project outcomes. The principal uses "sticks and carrots" to ensure the recipient has sufficient incentive to make appropriate use of the aid. Conditionality on funding is supposed to increase aid effectiveness⁷¹, often in the form of policy reform, or in repayment of funds, yet there is evidence of treating soft loans as grants⁷². A further form of conditionality is more regular monitoring, yet we recorded high likelihood but low importance for project success having relevant administrative procedures (see Figure 1). And such conditionality is partial, when agency staff are judged by their success in disbursing funds⁷³ and procedural due diligence are more important than impact⁷⁴ suggesting diverse views on the purpose of aid within the principal itself. Diallo and Thuillier⁷⁵ concluded that project impact was not an important criterion for managers of donor funds. This raises questions about the nature of the relationships between donors and implementers where the success of projects is judged by the quality of reporting and the smooth delivery of the outputs and outcomes, without much, if any, attention being paid to the measurement and reporting of impacts. The donor manager and the implementers have a common interest in reporting success, and they are not often required to judge their success by reporting on the impacts.

A final breakdown in the principal-agent relationship is visible in the feasibility/desirability gap in "lack of expert transfer of skills" (31%, table 3). This cannot be put down simply to the rush of getting the job done, but also to vested interests from consultants to not share all results in the hope this data gives them a competitive advantage in any follow on tendering as the qualitative statements indicated. Svensson⁷⁶ has pointed

71 Paul, 2006

72 Dixey, 2008

73 Edgren, 1996

74 Svensson, 2003

75 Diallo and Thuillier, 2004

76 Svensson, 2000

to the tendency of intermediaries (the implementers) to become dependent upon the donors, which makes aid the actual reason for slowing down reform⁷⁷ - getting these communities out of poverty would mean the non-profit organisation is no longer needed, and as one panellist said, "turkeys don't vote for Christmas".

Monitoring and evaluation is integral to conditionality, as the principal will collect data to see if conditions are met. Whilst some interventions and programme evaluations are conducted, and confidential internal reports written, they are rarely shared or published. The literature and results agree that impacts of interventions are rarely reported. The feasibility/desirability gap (table 3) in "public reporting of all positive and negative impacts" (32%) is unlikely to be closed substantially, when at present there is little transparency. The results that are given are incomplete and open to interpretation, with a literature "full of claims but short on data and quantitative analysis"⁷⁸. For example in SNV the emphasis was on measuring inputs or processes, but not outputs - they argued to create "success" predominantly through its international agenda setting, its increasing number of advisers, projects and partnerships, its expanding number of clients... but were not able to produce evidence of "success" in terms of quantifiable pro-poor impact beneficiary figures - such as numbers of jobs or increases in the income of the "poor" - in a timely and convincingly manner⁷⁹. This reflection is only available now, after John Hummel has left SNV, while earlier reports glossed over the issues. Often no financial data is available for the projects financed⁸⁰, let alone data on other types of impacts. The argument that, since all impacts cannot be captured it is not worth reporting any, needs to be resisted. It is not surprising that there is no public reporting, when the majority of conservation projects analysed (including many ecotourism enterprises), despite being chosen for their commercial potential, did not go beyond covering variable costs and without donor support would be unable to pay for the necessary management skills⁸¹. In community based tourism we mainly see projects at a high cost and limited revenue opportunities⁸². And yet non-cash benefits and the perception of benefits were more important than cash benefits in getting communities to engage in conservation⁸³. The lack of revenue therefore may not necessarily worry the donor, as there are reports of a poor relationship between business success and conservation, but a positive relation between community involvement in the business and conservation, which might explain why destinations think so highly of the broader stakeholder benefits of the donor funded projects⁸⁴. If the donor was primarily interested therefore in

77 Paul, 2006

78 Kiss, 2004:234

79 Hummel & van der Duim, 2012:333

80 Dixey, 2008; Salafsky et al., 2001

81 Salafsky et al., 2001

82 Dixey, 2008

83 Salafsky et al., 2001

84 Briedenhann, 2009

conservation and only sees the commercial viability of the project as a mean and not an end, they may accept the need for continuous fundraising.

There are resource implications in recording and reporting impacts, but with this it is difficult to see how it is possible to learn what works and what does not without considering impacts. If the purpose of an initiative is to build a community lodge for community based tourism then it may be enough to focus on the outcome and publish a photo of the lodge. If the purpose is community empowerment, local economic development or poverty reduction then impacts need to be monitored and reported. Careful distinctions need to be drawn between the outputs (what the intervention funds are spent on, for example training), the outcomes (the success of the activities which are funded, for example how many people attended training and for how long) and impact (what difference the training made to the lives of the intended beneficiaries). Impact studies should also address policy-relevant questions which are not strictly related to impact. Principle amongst these are issues of replicability (and scaling up), and sustainability, particularly for the purposes of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism. Addressing these issues will require, amongst other things, a discussion of cost effectiveness, return on investment or a full cost-benefit analysis which goes beyond the scope of this paper.

Conclusions

This paper aims to look beyond aid ineffectiveness as being the responsibility of recipient countries, to identify what donors themselves can do to improve success rates. We contribute to further understand the reasons for project success and failure with an assessment of desirability of policy goals to improve project success rates and the feasibility of policy options to achieve such goals. Hosted by UNEP, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism's purpose is to identify approaches to achieving sustainable development through tourism which have been successful and to encourage the replication of those approaches. Identifying Critical Success Factors is important because without an understanding both of the necessary and sufficient conditions for the success of the original intervention, and an understanding of the situation where replication is planned, the donor is unable to determine whether the intervention can be successfully implemented, with or without adaptation.

Donors can aim to improve the success rate of their projects by ensuring their calls for tender and policies are clearer and more realistic, and ensuring that agents demonstrate how their values align with those of the donor/principal. A careful balance needs to be placed between allocating funds to those most in need, and those that can make best use of those funds, which implicitly determines the risk the donor is willing to accept for project failure. Projects work best when they have strong leaders, the projects are market oriented and can access mainstream tourism flows. Increasing conditionality on

aid on agents by disburse funds only on proving performance requires a confident donor and a well-funded agent prepared to take risks and subsidise cash flow shortages, cutting out smaller players. Donors will need to be confident in their performance but also prepared to accept to learn from failure before transparently monitoring and publicly evaluating. Further research is needed to test some of these exploratory insights and to also assess the impacts occurring from a single donor moving towards more accountable practices against the status quo.

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Community-based tourism in the developing world: delivering the goods?

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Abstract

The literature on Community-based tourism (CBT) is generally positive although there has been some criticism of the approach in the academic and grey literature. In order to distinguish CBT from other forms of tourism which have significant benefits for local communities, CBT is defined as tourism owned and /or managed by communities and intended to deliver wider community benefits. This research sought the views of practitioners, donors and implementers engaged in tourism and conservation about the ways in which they understand CBT, asking them to identify successful examples of CBT and then approaching those successful examples to seek data on performance. The sample of successful CBT initiatives was therefore identified by practitioners, those same practitioners also being asked what they considered were the characteristics of success. 750 key informant practitioners were surveyed. They identified 133 successful initiatives; of those that responded only 15 met an academic definition of CBT and only 6 could be considered economically sustainable. The research identified what characteristics practitioners use to identify successful CBT projects and what managers of those initiatives considered relevant to their project. The paper concludes with some reflections on the research agenda.

Keywords: Community-based tourism; donors, success, stakeholders, feasibility

Introduction

Community-based tourism (CBT) is generally perceived as a positive model in empowering and engaging local communities, offering them a means of participating in and benefitting from the tourism industry. However, a number of studies have been critical of CBT and/or have noted regrettably poor performance and low levels of benefits being generated for some communities who participate in CBT initiatives. Few studies have reported in detail on the impacts of specific initiatives and donors rarely report on the outcomes of the projects they fund.

This study reveals that there is little consensus amongst practitioners, donors and implementers, as to what community-based tourism (CBT) is and what benefits it should provide. Those working in and with CBT initiatives use a host of definitions in relation to the concept itself and in particular what constitutes success. This research was therefore a preliminary step in demonstrating and examining that wide range of ideas, seeking to 'pin down' what most commonly defines a successful CBT initiative amongst practitioners, and provide a baseline for further research.

Early origins of CBT

The idea of CBT is not new¹. The concept initially originated in the developed world, emerging out of work in Canada² where local government pursued the idea in the 1980s. From the beginning CBT was promoted as an alternative form of tourism; Pearce, quoting Dernoï, defined it as "a privately offered set of hospitality services ... extended to visitors, by individuals, families, or a local community."³ By 1992 a CBT group had been formed in north east England⁴ and by 1994 the concept was being pursued in Ireland⁵. In the USA CBT was seen as a way in which Native American ideals could be included in community-based plans for tourism to reduce the negative aspects of the mainstream industry⁶. In the South Pacific CBT was being investigated as a means of reducing economic subsidies and out-migration⁷. The concept is now used widely in the developing and developed world. The present study focuses on its use in developing country destinations.

Recent definitions

The challenge of assessing the impacts, positive and negative, of CBT initiatives is compounded by the challenges of definition. A great deal is expected of CBT. Mann⁸ defined CBT, in his guide to the sector, so widely that it appears to include almost all forms of tourism which involve community members and benefit them: "anything that involves genuine community participation and benefits". Community, participation and benefits are broad concepts and, defined thus, fail to distinguish CBT from any form of tourism which employs and benefits local people. Similarly, the Mountain Institute defined CBT very widely to "describe a variety of activities that encourage and support a wide range of objectives in economic and social development and conservation"⁹

1 Dobbin, Lemay and Dobbin, 1983; Murphy, 1988

2 Hamley, 1991; Joppe, 1996; Murphy, 1988.

3 Dernoï, 1988; Nash, 1988; Pearce, 1988:18

4 Long and Glendinning, 1992

5 Phillips and Tubridy, 1994

6 Smith, 1994

7 Krausse, 1995

8 Mann 2000, p.18

9 Mountain Institute, 2000, p.1

The Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute defines CBT more rigorously as: "tourism that takes environmental, social and cultural sustainability into account. It is managed and owned by the community, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life."¹⁰ WWF defined CBT as a form of tourism "where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community." WWF accepted that the concept of community depends on local "social and institutional structures" and that it "must also embrace individual initiatives within the community"¹¹ Mitchell and Muckosy concluded from their research that CBT "generally involves collective ownership and management of tourist assets"¹².

For the purposes of this paper, CBT is defined as an alternative to conventional tourism: tourism owned and /or managed by communities and intended to deliver wider community benefits, CBT provides collective community benefits as well as individual benefits. CBT needs to be distinguished from the many forms of tourism undertaken by people living in communities or which benefit individuals or households in communities. Many traditional forms of tourism development have significant benefits for local communities through direct, indirect and induced employment and supply chain multipliers; CBT needs to be distinguished from these. The concept of community is used here to refer to people living close enough to the CBT enterprise to benefit from it.

Rationale for and expectations of CBT

As early as 1972 Myers had identified tourism as a potential incentive for conservation and Budowski (1976) argued that there was a potential symbiosis between conservation and tourism. Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) emerged in the 1980s as conservationists sought to find ways of compensating local communities for their exclusion from national parks as recognition grew that the long-term future of the parks depended upon finding ways of sustainably compensating communities for their loss of access to resources.¹³ In 1990 Zebu and Bush produced clear survey evidence that national parks included engagement with local communities in their management strategies. Their survey revealed that tourism formed part of the management strategy in 75% of those national parks which returned data.

Some development practitioners and community group believe that mainstream, or conventional, tourism excludes "vulnerable groups and commodifies indigenous

10 REST, 2003, p.14

11 WWF International, 2001

12 2008, p.1

13 Goodwin, 1996;Wells, 1996.

culture”¹⁴. CBT and ecotourism emerged conterminously as alternatives to mainstream tourism and rapidly began to be used together¹⁵. As Scheyvens concludes, a “community-based approach to ecotourism recognises the need to promote both the quality of life of people and the conservation of resources”¹⁶. However as Buckley has shown in his extensive literature review some researchers argue “that industry advocates use the jargon of sustainability and community to strengthen power bases and legitimise current unsustainable practices.”¹⁷ Murphy and Murphy argue that tourism “alters the landscape and social fabric of destination areas”¹⁸. Their work focuses on engaging “local community interests in a meaningful partnership with the tourism industry to construct a destination product ...appropriate from a local business, societal and environmental perspective.”¹⁹

In the extensive literature on CBT in developing countries it is generally presented as a desirable alternative to mainstream tourism, but has rarely been subject to extensive critical review. It is advocated as a way of achieving community development by offering a tourism product, bringing economic and social benefits to the community as well as encouraging them to conserve the environment.

The substantial literature on CBT is largely composed of case studies and reviews of initiatives in particular countries. Expectations in the literature are both diverse and high: an alternative more appropriate ‘grass-roots’ form of sustainable tourism than mass tourism²⁰, “an attempt to integrate the interests of all community stakeholders”²¹ and a contribution to local economic development and poverty reduction²². Advocates argue that developing CBT enterprises engenders pride, raises self-esteem and status, improves cohesion and community development and helps create an equitable community political and democratic structure, which can result in communities being empowered.²³ Through developing tourism, it is believed that communities can share its benefits²⁴ - rather than simply enduring its consequences²⁵ - and offer tourists an enhanced experience and an opportunity to experience community life.²⁶

14 Mitchell and Muckosy, 2008, p.1

15 Alcock, 1996; Jones, 2005.

16 1999, p.246

17 Buckley, 2012, p.530

18 2004, p.4

19 Murphy and Murphy, 2004, p.7

20 France, 1997; Mann, 2000.

21 Murphy and Murphy, 2004, p.29.

22 Marris, 2001; WTO, 2004.

23 Doorne, 2004; Rozemeijer, 2001; Scheyvens, 1997; Urquico, 1998; WTO, 2006.

24 Duffy, 2006

25 Timothy and Tosun, 2003

26 Suansri, 2003.

Scheyvens has argued that the ultimate goal of CBT is to empower the host community at four levels – economic, psychological, social and political.²⁷ The diversity of the impacts which are considered important, however, makes any comparative assessment challenging. Brohman saw CBT as making a contribution to strengthening “institutions designed to enhance local participation and promote the economic, social and cultural well-being of the popular majority.” CBT was capable of ensuring the “compatibility of various forms of development with other components of the local economy; the quality of development, both culturally and environmentally; and the divergent needs, interests and potentials of the community and its inhabitants”²⁸ Gascón, based on research at Lake Titicaca, argues that the complexity involved in introducing a non-traditional activity like CBT into the “rural-peasant world” requires the application of the Precautionary Principle.²⁹

Determining effectiveness

There have been very few studies which have reported quantitatively on the impacts of particular initiatives on community livelihoods. (Goodwin, 2007, Goodwin and Boekold, 2010; Saville, 2001,). As Simpson has pointed out there is in the literature an assumption that community participation is often “closely linked to the derivation of livelihood and other benefits.”³⁰ Simpson raises one of the key questions: “how essential is community participation, ownership or control to the delivery of benefits to the community from a tourism initiative?”³¹ In considering the benefits of CBT approaches it is necessary to look at net benefits from tourism to a community - recognising that there will often be both positive and negative impacts which may impact differently on different community groups and members. Some will gain; others will lose³². In the absence of comparative studies which enable an informed review of the efficacy of different approaches, based on the net benefits which initiatives deliver to the community; it is difficult to determine the value of CBT as an alternative approach.

Determining the effectiveness of CBT is also bedevilled by the diversity of definitions used in the literature and the mixture of tangible and intangible benefits ascribed to CBT, often without empirical evidence. CBT is undoubtedly an attractive idea; people subscribe to it enthusiastically but generally with little evidence that it will deliver either tangible or intangible benefits. The lack of evidence of benefits, for local communities has not yet dented the enthusiasm of funders and practitioners.

27 Scheyvens, 2002

28 Brohman, 1996, p.60.

29 Gascón, 2012, p.11.

30 Simpson, 2008, p.1; Murphy, 1985; Scheyvens, 1999; Tosun, 2000 and 2006; WWF, 2001.

31 Simpson 2008, p.2

32 Ashley, 2000; Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2001.

Programme evaluations have been conducted on behalf of donors but these are not published, and the evaluators are generally required to sign non-disclosure confidentiality agreements. It would assist the development of policy and implementation if donors were to press for the evaluation of outcomes and impacts, and differentiate between them. For example, the building of a CBT lodge is an outcome, and it can be photographed. But the impacts are different, although related. The community benefit can only be determined by deducting costs, including the opportunity costs of labour donated to the building of the lodge as the community contribution, from the earnings of the community from visitors.

Studies and critiques

There have been critiques of CBT; some have questioned its efficacy. As early as 1992 Wells and Brandon, reviewing ICDPs, reported that the results had been disappointing: it was unusual for any additional revenues from tourism to be made available to local management; revenues were remitted to national treasuries; rarely did the local community benefit.

Butler (1992) cautioned that alternative forms of tourism should be subject to the same scrutiny as more conventional forms. He called "for rational, objective evaluation of the merits and problems of all forms of tourism" and pointed out that alternative tourism initiatives often "penetrate further into the personal space of residents" and "expose often fragile resources to greater visitation".³³ Wheeler put it most memorably: "The traveller is preferred to the tourist, the individual to the group, specialist operators rather than large firms, indigenous accommodation to multinational hotel chains, small not large – essentially good versus bad ... Perhaps the true situation is best expressed as the good guise versus the bad guys...".³⁴

More recently, Kiss concluded that on CBT (as perhaps on tourism in general) "the literature is full of claims but short on data and quantitative analysis" (Kiss, 2004, p. 234). Chapin (2004) concluded that conservationists were not suited to work in enterprise development and that success is exaggerated. Dixey reported, from field work in Zambia, that "several community tourism projects were alarmingly ill-conceived and/or poorly implemented ... several interventions by NGOs had ... resulted in wasted technical, financial and community resources, disappointed expectations and disillusioned local people" (2008, p.336) .

Blackstock (2005), researching CBT, identified three shortcomings in the literature: its functional approach to community involvement; its tendency to treat the host community as a homogeneous bloc; and its neglect of the structural constraints to

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34 Wheeler, 1992, p.104-5.

local control of the tourism industry. Belsky researched a community-based rural ecotourism project at Gales Point Manatee in Belize, from 1992–1998, and concluded that the “politics of class, gender, and patronage inequities” limited the co-management ability of ecotourism associations, the equitable distribution of ecotourism income, and the support for conservation across the community.³⁵ Forstner (2004) described the challenge of physical distance from national and international markets and cultural distance, the absence of understanding in the community of what attracts tourists and of what they expect; and pointed to the importance of intermediaries in providing market information and market access through networks and marketing skills.

Whilst CBT, and ecotourism, are presented as alternative forms of tourism, they rely on much of the same infrastructure, attractions and services as conventional tourism. Wearing and McDonald, although of the opinion that ecotourism is “relatively speaking ... not reliant on access to markets”, conclude that the “question remains, under what conditions can community-based tourism or ecotourism, strike a balance between conservation and development – between the old forms of knowledge and the new?” and conclude that the answer lies with the community.³⁶ The Rainforest Alliance “found that 40% of CBT projects in developing countries did not involve communities in decision-making”.³⁷

Harrison and Schipani discuss the relationship between CBT and conventional tourism in Lao PDR and argue that the former relies on the latter and that both forms of tourism in Lao are partially capitalist, as conventional tourism relies on support for the Asian Development Bank and aid agencies, and the latter is dominated by small guest houses employing family labour.³⁸ They have argued, using Lao PDR as their example, that in CBT, the initial development costs are borne by international donors who become “in effect, surrogate entrepreneurs.” They also point out that even “the most worthy project is unsustainable if it is too far from the main tourist routes, not marketed, or charged at too high a price”³⁹. They conclude that the Nam Ha Ecotourism CBT project did generate very significant earnings for the rural poor.

Kiss argued that the contribution of community-based ecotourism to “conservation and local economic development is limited by factors such as the small areas and few people involved, limited earnings, weak linkages between biodiversity gains and commercial success, and the competitive and specialized nature of the tourism industry.” She went on to argue that “success stories actually involve little change in existing local land and resource-use practices, provide only a modest supplement to

35 Belsky, 1999, p.641

36 Wearing and McDonald, 2002, p. 204-5.

37 cited in Mitchell and Muckosy, 2008, p.1

38 Harrison and Schipani, 2008, p.187.

39 2007, p.224.

local livelihoods, and remain dependent on external support for long periods, if not indefinitely"⁴⁰. Somarriba-Chang and Gunnarsdotter concluded from research in Nicaragua that local community benefits from tourism to protected areas are limited and that "local circumstances, management issues, development stages, local skills, financial resources, location and cultures" all affect community benefit through ecotourism initiatives.⁴¹

Others have pointed to the importance of governance, rights and capacity. Nelson concluded from research in northern Tanzania that the "ability of ecotourism to realise its promise for linking rural livelihoods with biodiversity conservation depends largely on the future of local rights and decision-making authority".⁴² Salazar concluded from fieldwork in Tanzania that whilst local level participation is necessary in order to achieve sustainable development, that this often "involves a shift of power from local authorities to local actors", that there was "a need for fundamental education and training in target communities" and that the right balance had to be struck "between economic gain and cultural integrity"⁴³. He also "stresses the need for effective exit/handover strategies" before the conclusion of projects in order to ensure their sustainability.⁴⁴

In 2006 Responsibletravel.com, an online travel agency, collaborated with Conservation International to identify CBT projects with which they could work to improve their marketing and enable them to secure better market access. Through a combination of desk research, recommendations and direct contact from CBT projects that had received information about the programme through Conservation International, responsibletravel.com or world media, they identified 150 CBT organisations.⁴⁵ Of the 150 CBT organisations identified 25 (16.6%) had a non-functioning email address and a further 72 (48%) did not return a questionnaire. Of those 53 (35.3%) that did return a questionnaire only 27 (18%) qualified as CBT organisations, defined for the purpose of the Conservation International / ResponsibleTravel.com project as projects owned by the community, where the community had a claim on the land or business. The majority of the enterprises which responded were already working with tour operators, suggesting that the responding CBT enterprises were those best connected to the market. Although one CBT enterprise had 95% bed occupancy, the average was close to 5%. The Conservation International / Responsibletravel.com project demonstrated both the small number of viable CBT projects and their relative lack of success.⁴⁶

40 Kiss, 2004, p. 232.

41 2012, p.1040

42 2004, p.32.

43 2012, p.18.

44 2012, p.19.

45 Responsibletravel.com, 2006.

46 Responsibletravel.com, 2006

In a more radical critique Manyara and Jones (2007) reviewed six CBT enterprises (CBEs) and concluded that based on partnerships with white investors they did “not adequately address the priorities of local communities” and that they consequently reinforce a “neocolonial model, whereby control of tourism resources is vested in the hands of a few foreigners.” They also reported that CBEs are “not perceived to have made a significant impact on poverty reduction at an individual household level”.⁴⁷ They concluded that the positive impacts of CBEs would be greater if they were able to “emphasise independence, address local community priorities, enhance community empowerment and transparency, discourage elitism, promote effective community leadership and develop community capacity to operate their own enterprises efficiently...”.⁴⁸

When the question, “Community-based tourism: failing to deliver?” was posed by Goodwin in May 2006 it provoked some antipathy. However others have also raised concerns. Mitchell and Muckosy undertook a review of CBT in Latin America and concluded that CBT advocates “should acknowledge the shocking lack of financial viability for most CBT projects, or more are doomed to failure.” They pointed out that “the collapse of a CBT project can be harrowing, often pushing poverty above pre-project levels. Consultants and donors can move on, but the supposed beneficiaries may have invested their own assets in tourism projects and abandoned alternative livelihoods.” Mitchell and Muckosy concluded from their review that “the most likely outcome for a CBT initiative is collapse after funding dries up.” They reported that the main causes of collapse were poor market access and poor governance.⁴⁹ This apparently poor success rate is critical. If expectations have been raised, investments made by the community, traditional activities displaced and then no benefits produced, failure of an enterprise is very likely to make an already vulnerable community worse off.⁵⁰

Mitchell and Muckosy reported research by Wood for the Rainforest Alliance and Conservation International which reviewed 200 CBT projects across the Americas and revealed that many accommodation providers had only 5% occupancy. The heavily subsidised Siecoya CBT project in Ecuador was reported to have generated only \$200 for the community fund in 1996, 80% of this being from tourism. By contrast the Zabalo initiative has good market access and in 1996 was reported to be making \$500 per community member per year; it has developed a co-operative structure.⁵¹

Hitchins and Highstead (2005) report that in Namibia there appears to have been no attempt to undertake cost-benefit analyses of interventions or to measure the impact, if any, on livelihoods and poverty reduction; and they point out that “these omissions are

47 2007, p.642.

48 2007, p.642.

49 Mitchell and Muckosy, 2008, p.2.

50 Townsend, 2006, p. 27.

51 Mitchell and Muckosy, 2008, p.1.

an obstacle to learning, objective decision-making and improved practice".⁵²

In explaining the failures of CBT in Namibia Hitchins and Highstead pointed to the isolation of CBT from the private sector in Namibia and the dependency on development aid which has been created by donors, concluding that "only a small number of members can be expected to survive as on-going independent businesses in the medium to long-term".⁵³ What distinguished sustainable development from charity was the ability of the CBT enterprise to become self-sufficient and sustainable. Too often they said a supported CBT enterprise is "seen as having a social and educational function rather than being a commercial business".⁵⁴ There are successful CBT initiatives "but exceptions do not create rules".⁵⁵

Indicators of success

The literature contains comparatively few studies on what constitutes a successful CBT initiative. It is clear that success should not only be judged on the financial results; the social benefits can also be important⁵⁶, but they need to be proven. As Harrison and Schipani (2007) report, one of the key objectives of the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project was to reduce opium consumption in the community. Halstead (2003), based on research in Namibia, concluded that strong community structures supporting engagement were necessary to success, as was tangible economic benefit.

The large majority of community-based tourism initiatives are based on the development of community-owned and managed lodges or homestays. La Yunga in Bolivia is one such initiative where an NGO encouraged the community to develop a lodge. In 2003 the lodge attracted only 60 visitors per year - a bed occupancy of 2.7%. However, the community subsequently developed a walking trail, which in 2005 attracted 1000 people paying a \$1.80 trail fee, grossing \$1800 plus guide fees and other purchases from the community.⁵⁷ The example demonstrates that the common focus on accommodation may be misplaced – the community benefited far more when it provided an activity; their initiative required a much smaller investment than the investment in the lodge and provided significantly larger benefits.

Hitchins and Highstead, in their review of the Namibia Community Based Tourism Association (NACOBTA), reported that there are only a small number of successful CBT enterprises, "usually in prime areas, with good proximity to established tourism routes and links to the private sector" and concluded that the most successful CBT enterprises

52 Hitchins and Highstead, 2005, p.23.

53 Hitchins and Highstead, 2005, p.12.

54 Hitchins and Highstead, 2005, p.12,18.

55 Mitchell and Muckosy, 2008, p. 1.

56 Brennan and Allen, 2001.

57 Goodwin, 2011, p. 206.

have been those with narrower ownership structures, which as they point out is consistent with learning from work on enterprise development.⁵⁸

Need for research

The literature review thus demonstrates that since its early origins there has been a marked lack of consensus about CBT in many respects. In particular the challenge of assessing the impacts, positive and negative, of CBT initiatives is compounded by the challenges of definition, which varies broadly between those who use the term.

CBT is viewed by many as an alternative form of tourism; a model which enables local communities to develop and offer a tourism product whilst generating economic and broader benefits for that community. Unfortunately the reality does not always match the ideal and in some instances poor performance and a lack of significant benefits being generated have led to criticism of the model. It is also rare that impacts and outcomes are monitored and reported in detail, particularly in respect of donor-funded initiatives.

Against that background, and recognising that the definition of CBT is both imprecise and contested, this research sought to understand the range of ways in which CBT is understood by practitioners in conservation and tourism, asking them to identify successful examples of CBT and then approaching those successful examples to seek data on their success. It adopted this approach to enable respondents, donors, conservationists and tourism development workers, consultants and NGOs, to define what constitutes a CBT initiative and what constitutes success. The approach was inclusive and permissive, seeking examples of successful initiatives as defined by practitioners rather than by academics. This approach avoided researcher bias, in this case the tendency only to approach and research examples where, on the basis of prior knowledge, only successful initiatives, with good data, are chosen for research

Methodology

The survey of practitioners was conducted by emailing 750 key informants through Flora and Fauna International, the IUCN and the International Centre for Responsible Tourism. The practitioners, staff working for donors, NGOs or consultants, in tourism and conservation, were identified from the address books of three senior staff and they assisted in eliciting responses. The response rate was 18%, 133 responses being received. The initial question put to respondents was "We are inviting you to identify for us examples of Community based tourism projects which you consider to have been successful." This was left purposefully broad. The practitioners were allowed to define "successful" as they wished in order to ensure that as many successful initiatives as

58 Hitchins and Highstead, 2005, p.14.

possible were identified. We then invited our key informants

“to nominate and provide full details of any successful CBT projects that you are currently involved with, or are aware of, and comment on why the project is successful, what factors have led to this success and what indicators have been used in determining this success.”

The key informants identified 133 initiatives as successful examples of CBT, but in only 116 cases provided sufficient details for the researchers to contact the initiative. The second stage of the research in October 2007 surveyed those 116 cases, these were followed up and chased twice but only 28 completed surveys were received, a response rate of 24%. The survey form was 9 sides of A4 and although the survey was simplified by requiring participants merely to tick boxes, the length of the survey may have deterred potential respondents. Each of the 116 cases was asked to use an opinion scale to rate the relative importance of the characteristics identified in the first stage of the research, to which was added managing negative impacts. This criterion was added because, although it was unlikely to emerge in a question about criteria for success, it seemed likely that the issue would be important to the managers of initiatives.

Of the 28 responses secured, 15 could be classified, using the provision of collective community benefits criteria: “tourism owned and /or managed by communities and intended to deliver wider community benefits”, as CBT. Six of these could be considered economically sustainable and two of these are joint ventures.

Scope of the research and limitations

In the literature there is little or no consensus about the criteria, factors or indicators which should, or can, be used to determine the success of CBT projects or, indeed, what characteristics such projects share which could be used to inform decision makers in establishing future projects. This research was intended to be wide in scope as it sought to establish the range of definitions of CBT currently being used by practitioners and the criteria they use to judge success. For this reason very open questions were used. The results highlight the wide range of opinions and practice in the field of CBT – a purpose which could not have been achieved by focusing on a small sample of projects or asking narrower or more directed questions at this stage. Had the study simply focused on a few case studies, it would not have been able to identify the diverse range of definitions and factors for success that are currently being used by practitioners, nor highlight the lack of importance being given to certain aspects of CBT projects, in particular collective benefits. What this study has highlighted, through the approach adopted, is that there is little consensus amongst practitioners as to what CBT is and what benefits it should provide.

The research did not seek examples of successful initiatives to analyse and report upon drawn from the literature. Rather a large sample of practitioners was asked to identify successful projects which were then analysed and reported. The practitioners identified 133 CBT examples they considered successful, and provided sufficient details for the second survey to be sent to 116 initiatives. 28 completed surveys were returned; it is likely that as with other research efforts a significant number of the enterprises were inactive.⁵⁹ The small number of successful CBT initiatives identified and analysed is disappointing but in this way the sampling bias of looking primarily at published success stories was avoided. It was a consequence of the sampling approach used that there was no guarantee, at the outset, that data would be available for those initiatives identified as a success by the key informants. By adopting this approach the research avoided looking only at successful projects for which there was known to be data available.

We do not know whether or not one of the constraints on the number of responses was that those asked did not know of any successful initiatives. A negative response was not sought because the publication of the initial announcement⁶⁰ had resulted in some negative comment. The research was framed positively in order to avoid causing non-participation or being dismissed as being anti-CBT. In common with all surveys which rely on self-completion there is a degree of self-selection amongst respondents and it cannot be claimed with certainty that this group is necessarily representative of the broader population of practitioners, nor that the initial population was necessarily representative of all those who might have a professional view about CBT. The approach was however inclusive, and the sample a very divergent group of professionals involved with CBT.

Results

Research stage 1: practitioners

Table 1 presents the range of reasons provided by the practitioner respondents and clusters them in 10 categories. This categorisation was then used to analyse the prevalence of particular reasons used by respondents to identify success. The open questions resulted in untidy data but more reliably reflects the spread and nuanced thinking amongst respondents.

⁵⁹ Responsibletravel.com, 2006.

⁶⁰ Goodwin, 2006.

Table 1: Practitioner Responses Success Factor Clusters

A: Improved Livelihoods / Standard of Living	Employment Increased livelihood options Establishment of micro-enterprises Poverty alleviation Improved standard of living Income/revenue generation
B: Local Economic Development	Economic Development and benefits Use of local products, reduce leakage Rural development Stakeholder partnerships and linkages
C: Commercial Viability	Profitable Commercially functional Longevity of project Sound business or project plan Innovative or good product Growth or opportunity for growth Economically Sustainable Increased or high visitation Achieved with minimal donor intervention or funding
D: Collective Benefits	Ability to fund social or other projects or products Regeneration Infrastructure development
E: Social Capital and Empowerment	Equal opportunities Empowerment, decision making, capacity building Local community management, ownership, leadership, governance Participation Local community working together, compromise shared interest Minimal impact on community
F: Sense of Place	Cultural revitalisation Cultural conservation Raised community and/or tourist awareness of cultural/natural heritage and environmental issues Instilled sense of place and/or pride
G: Education	Education Training Using local skills
H: Conservation and environment	Conservation, environment and heritage Sustainable technologies, use of resources Environmental policies and standards Environmental monitoring and management
I: Tourism	Improved tourist experience, more authentic Raised awareness of destination Award winner
J: Other	Triggered replication by other projects Allowed sufficient time for projects Funding and investment

N=116

The distinction between category (A) Improved Livelihoods and category (B) Local Economic Development is significant. The former refers to individual and household outcomes and the latter refers to a more general economic impact. 425 'reasons' were cited by 116 respondents. On average each respondent gave 3.6 'reasons' for considering the initiatives(s) they identified a success. Table 2 presents the clusters in order of frequency.

Table 2: Practitioner Responses Cluster Categories by Frequency

Category	Category Description	Frequency	%
E	Social Capital and Empowerment	81	69.8
A	Improved livelihoods/standard of living	78	67.2
B	Local economic development	68	58.6
C	Commercial viability	47	40.5
H	Conservation/Environment	46	39.7
G	Education	34	29.3
F	Sense of Place	26	22.4
I	Tourism	18	15.5
D	Collective benefits	14	12.1
J	Other	13	11.2
Total		425	

N=116

Social capital and empowerment (A) was the most frequently cited category mentioned by nearly 70% of respondents. Only 40% of respondents mentioned anything which might be interpreted as referring to the importance of commercial viability, although this was very close to the number mentioning conservation or environmental benefits. Only 12% of respondents mentioned collective benefits as a reason for a CBT initiative being a success. Table 3 presents the same data but with more detail; it reports the order in which the categories were mentioned by respondents, indicative of the prominence of each category to the respondents. For example, only one respondent placed collective benefits first, and five placed it second. Only 12 respondents mentioned livelihoods first.

If we look only at first mentions then 30 (26%) respondents mention social capital and empowerment, 24 (21%) local economic development, 20 commercial viability and only 12 livelihoods, one more than first mentioned conservation or environmental benefits. Only 1 mentioned collective benefits. These results demonstrate that amongst the practitioner respondents there is a very wide range of criteria used to identify an initiative as CBT. Only a quarter of respondents mentioned social capital and empowerment, although it was the most frequently first mentioned criteria. Only 1 respondent mentioned collective benefits. Less than one third (36, 31%) of respondents first mentioned economic benefits. 12 respondents first mentioned livelihoods or standard of living and 24 first mentioned local economic development.

Table 3: Prominence of categories in the minds of respondents

Category Description	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	T
Social Capital and Empowerment	30	23	11	8	3	2	2	1	0	1	81
Improved livelihoods/standard of living	12	18	20	14	4	6	2	1	1	0	78
Local economic development	24	16	16	6	2	3	0	0	0	1	68
Commercial viability	20	6	6	3	6	3	2	0	1	0	47
Conservation/Environment	11	15	8	2	5	3	1	1	0	0	46
Education	7	11	2	5	3	4	2	0	0	0	34
Sense of Place	6	4	2	5	5	2	0	1	1	0	26
Tourism	3	3	5	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	18
Collective benefits	1	5	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	14
Other	2	2	4	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	13

N=116

Given that the average number of reasons given was 3.6 it is reasonable to consider the distribution of opinion based on the first three reasons given, see Table 4. Over half mention social capital and empowerment and just short of half mention livelihoods and standard of living (48.3%) and local economic development (43.1%). Less than one third mention commercial viability (29.3%). It is striking that less than 7% of respondents mention collective benefits.

Table 4: Ranking of categories cited in first three reasons

Category Description	Σ	%
Social Capital and Empowerment	64	55.2
Improved livelihoods/standard of living	56	48.3
Local economic development	50	43.1
Commercial viability	34	29.3
Conservation/Environment	32	27.6
Education	20	17.2
Sense of Place	12	10.3
Tourism	11	9.5
Collective benefits	8	6.9
Other	8	6.9

N=116 % is calculated on sum of respondents

Research stage 2: managers

In the second stage of the research the CBT managers were asked their views about the relative importance of the different criteria identified by the practitioners, to which was added managing negative impacts. The results, reported in Table 5, suggest that those involved in managing the initiatives place a higher importance on livelihoods, tourism and commercial viability. In these responses there is relatively little difference

between the economic and social criteria for success, although local economic development was considered of very low importance. Collective benefits were again scored very low. CBT managers rank social capital and empowerment 4th and collective benefits 8th. Improved livelihoods and conservation were regarded equally as the most important.

Table 5: Ranked Importance of Criteria for Managers

Category Description	1	2	3	4	5	Index
Improved livelihoods/standard of living	1	0	3	6	16	4.4
Conservation/Environment	1	1	4	5	16	4.3
Tourism	1	2	1	6	17	4.3
Social Capital and Empowerment	1	2	2	7	15	4.2
Sense of Place	1	0	7	4	14	4.2
Commercial viability	1	2	2	9	13	4.1
Education	1	0	6	9	11	4.1
Collective benefits	1	2	6	8	10	3.9
Managing Negative Impacts	1	0	8	9	9	3.9
Local economic development	1	2	8	8	8	3.9

Opinion Scale (index created by multiplying each score by the header and dividing by number of responses. 1 - not necessary; 2 - relatively unimportant; 3 - necessary; 4 - important ; 5 - very important. The authors acknowledge, and regret, that the anchors are unbalanced.

The two stages of the research suggest that there is a very marked disparity between the views of the practitioners nominating successful CBT projects and those managing the projects identified by the practitioners as successful. Table 6 compares the views of the managers with those of the practitioners on the relative importance of the different characteristics of CBT.

Table 6: Comparison of ranked importance of criteria for Managers and Practitioners

Category Description	Managers	Practitioners
Improved livelihoods/standard of living	1	3
Conservation/Environment	2	4
Tourism	3	8
Social Capital and Empowerment	4	1
Sense of Place	5	7
Commercial viability	6	5
Education	7	6
Collective benefits	8	9
Local economic development	9	2

Neither the practitioners nor the managers place any great importance on collective benefits, ranked 9th and 8th respectively. The practitioners place more importance on social capital (1st) and local economic development (2nd) than do the managers who rate them 4th and 9th respectively. It is not surprising perhaps that the managers

placed considerably more emphasis on livelihood impacts (1st) than the more general local economic development (9th). The managers place considerably more importance on tourism than do the practitioners, suggesting that there is more awareness of the importance of the market, although there is little difference in the importance accorded to commercial viability between the managers (6th) and the practitioners (5th).

Analysis and discussion

Meaning of CBT in the view of respondents

In analysing the successful projects nominated by the practitioners, the characteristics of CBT they described were diverse, ranging from benefits going to individuals/households in the community to collective benefits (creation of assets which are used by the community as a whole, roads, schools, clinics etc.); from community owned and managed enterprises to private sector enterprises generating community benefits. It is clearly evident that there is little or no agreement about the meaning of CBT or what benefits it should be providing and to whom. Thus, whenever the words are used, it is vital the meaning be made clear.

Reasons for regarding initiatives as successful

There are a wide range of reasons given by the practitioners and managers for identifying particular CBT initiatives as successful.

Social Capital and Empowerment

This is the most frequently cited reason for a CBT initiative being identified as a success by practitioners, but only ranked 4th for managers. 70% of practitioners cited this as a reason and a quarter of them cited this first. This suggests that for a significant number of respondents the social impacts are of primary importance. The Dutch development agency SNV's review of CBT projects in Botswana suggested that community empowerment can be considered the most important benefit of CBT.⁶¹

Improved Livelihoods and Standard of Living

Improved livelihoods and standard of living reasons were given by 67% of practitioners, of whom one in eight gave this as their first reason. The managers ranked this of primary importance for practitioners it was third.

Local Economic Development

Local economic development, cited by 58% of practitioners, differs from livelihoods - being less focused on individuals and households and more focused on broad local

⁶¹ SNV, 2001, p.61.

economic effects. Twice as many practitioners cited local economic development impacts (24) as their first reason for regarding a CBT initiative as a success as did those citing livelihood impacts (12). For managers livelihoods were ranked of primary importance and second by the practitioners.

Commercial Viability

This was only identified as a primary reason for success by 17% of practitioners but it was mentioned by 40% of practitioners. Of the 28 initiatives identified by the practitioners as successful, which returned completed survey forms, only 15 could be categorised as CBT initiatives in the traditional meaning of the word, being community owned and with some element of collective benefits. As at October 2007 six of the 28 initiatives surveyed had achieved economic viability, two of which were joint ventures. The remaining nine CBT initiatives (60%) were donor-dependent in that they were receiving or seeking such funding.

82% of the managers reported that they considered their initiative successful, only 14% said that there were elements of success, as well as failure. This despite the reliance on continuing subsidy; three quarters of the sample said that they were still dependent on donor funding. Only one third of the managers who responded to the survey (35%) mentioned commercial viability as a factor for success.

Conservation/Environment

Reasons for success relating to conservation and the environment were given by 40% of respondents and a quarter of practitioners mentioned this reason first. Despite the relatively small number of conservationists who responded to the survey (18), this suggests that the conservation "history" of CBT still influences perceptions of it.

Education and Sense of Place

Just over one in eight (17%) of the practitioners mentioned education and only seven regarded it of primary importance in assessing the success on a CBT initiative. One in ten mentioned sense of place and six regarded it as of primary importance. On the comparative ranking (Table 6) managers placed sense of place in 5th place whilst practitioners placed it in 7th.

Tourism

One in eight (15%) of practitioners mentioned tourism when asked about their criteria for success. They made reference to improved tourism experiences, award winning or the contribution the CBT enterprise made to raising awareness of the destination. Only 3 respondents cited tourism as being of primary importance. The managers ranked tourism in 3rd place, the practitioners in 8th place in Table 6.

Collective Benefits

Collective benefits are regarded by many academics as one of the distinguishing characteristic of CBT. These were ranked 8th by managers and 9th by the practitioners (Table 6). Only 14 respondents (12%) cited collective benefits as a reason for a CBT initiative being regarded as successful. Only one person cited it as their first reason, but gave no other reasons indicating its primacy for them. It may be legitimately countered that other social benefits are accorded prominence, 81 respondents (69.8%) cited social capital and empowerment as a reason for identifying a CBT project as a success; 34 (29.3%) cited education and 26 (22.4%) cited “sense of place” reasons. Whilst these are all reasons which attribute importance to social benefits, only 33 expert respondents (28%) gave a “social” reason first compared with 56 (48%) who gave an economic reason first (local economic development, commercial viability or livelihoods). If collective benefits are added this increases to 57 (49%).

Conclusion

This research purposefully used a very broad approach to identify CBT successes, to ensure that as many successful initiatives as possible were identified. However, then applying a degree of rigour to defining successful initiatives significantly reduced the number of successful cases identified.

The research did successfully identify examples of initiatives which met the CBT criteria of providing community benefits and which went beyond providing livelihood or local economic development benefits. These initiatives could be distinguished from tourism ventures which merely provide local economic benefits, a much broader category.

This research also highlighted the absence of consensus about what constitutes CBT, and how success is defined. A wide range of criteria are used by CBT practitioners and managers to define this form of tourism. It is therefore important that, in discussing CBT, practitioners and academics define carefully what they mean by CBT and what they mean by success.

Evidence from other studies suggests that average bed occupancy achieved by CBT initiatives is around 5% and that this is unsustainable. Communities incur costs when they engage in CBT projects. Their time has an opportunity cost, their labour also has value and is often used as the community’s contribution to the project. A failed project may damage their social capital and the coherence and confidence of the community.

Many CBT projects involve a funded development agency partnering with a community to develop a lodge. Communities have an interest in knowing how successful such initiatives are before engaging with NGOs and others to realise the aspiration of CBT.

Will their engagement bring them net benefits? Will what they get from the initiative be larger than what they have to contribute? Donors should be able to answer the question: How, and to what extent, do CBT interventions benefit communities?

This research demonstrated that there are a number of initiatives which were identified by the practitioners as successful CBT initiatives which have demonstrated very considerable employment, local economic development and collective community benefits, but which are not distinctive as CBT. For example the Aga Khan Development Network's Baltit and Shigar Forts in Pakistan, Nkwichi, Manda Wilderness in Mozambique and Chumbe Island in Tanzania are successful initiatives with major community benefits. These enterprises provide significant individual and collective benefits to local communities but they are not CBT enterprises in that they are not owned or managed by the community. As Harrison and Schipani conclude:

"instead of automatically assuming that tourism enterprises in the private sector are unwelcome and inferior competitors of 'alternative' donor-assisted, [CBT] projects, they might be considered as potential partners in tourism development with their own expertise and links to the community, ... with an entitlement to ... some financial and technical support..." 62

As Hitchins and Highstead contend, "If tourism businesses are to succeed they need to be understood within the context of successful business practices and the realities of markets and customer demand."⁶³ Thus, as with any business, if commercial viability is not achieved the likelihood of project failure is high. One of the key determinants of success is whether or not links have been created to the mainstream industry.

In their review of community-based tourism in Lao PDR, Harrison and Schipani concluded that the early engagement of the private sector in the development of CBT products is necessary if they are to be sustainable. They conclude that CBT and the private sector need each other, the CBT products rely on mainstream tourism to provide the clients. They continue "... despite the burgeoning literature on 'alternative' tourism, ecotourism and community-based tourism, such projects cater for a minority of tourists, and will continue to do so."⁶⁴

The literature suggests that community engagement in decision making in CBT enterprises is often missing, and that the initiatives are not as alternative as CBT is often portrayed. If not all the initiatives labelled CBT are community owned or managed and if they do not provide collective benefits then perhaps they should be judged alongside joint ventures and more conventional, mainstream, forms of tourism. They should be judged for their efficacy in providing economic, social and environmental benefits

62 Harrison and Schipani, 2007, p. 226.

63 Hitchins and Highstead 2005, p. 2.

64 Harrison and Schipani 2007, p.225.

to communities, individually and collectively, rather than presumed to be preferable because they are alternative. As with tourism and poverty reduction, in judging efficacy, the focus should be on the results rather than on the ideal. We should be asking empirical questions about net benefits⁶⁵ and about community ownership and management, and importantly we should be expecting to see more data on the impacts of initiatives as well as more analysis of the form and extent of community empowerment.

The need for further research

This research was the first stage in the process of defining the characteristics of CBT, having identified and explored the diverse range of characteristics currently used by practitioners in assessing success. The study also highlights the need for, and provides a platform for, further research to define the conditions under which CBT initiatives can operate successfully; and to focus on specific examples of best practice. Having sought the views of practitioners and managers of CBT initiatives, it would now also be valuable to conduct research specifically with the communities involved in a sample of successful initiatives, to gain their perspective on what constitutes success and the necessary conditions for it.

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⁶⁵ Goodwin, 2007.

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The role of conservation agencies in ecotourism: a case study from Central Kalimantan in Indonesia

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Abstract

Deforestation is contributing to loss of wildlife habitat as well as to release of greenhouse gases. Forests are logged for many reasons, mostly related to money or to people's need to provide for their families. Over the last few decades, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have received local, national and international support to target biodiversity loss. To alleviate pressure on forests, socio-economic development strategies based on grass-root inclusion and top-down funding have increasingly been applied. Conservation NGOs have also embraced this strategy, with ecotourism one of the initiatives intended to create additional income and engage local communities in conservation. This paper focuses on the role of conservation NGOs in ecotourism, illustrated by a case study of WWF's work in Sebangau National Park, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The research audited WWF's contribution to ecotourism projects aimed at improving forest conservation through socio-economic welfare. The findings include poor cooperation and communication between stakeholders and missing frameworks for ecotourism implementation. Although interested parties have welcomed ecotourism and see a great future for tourism to Sebangau, it has not so far thrived or helped conservation to any great extent. Few benefits of visitor activities have reached people in the communities, who are therefore poorly incentivised to support WWF's conservation work.

Keywords: Donor-assisted ecotourism, NGOs and ecotourism, local communities and ecotourism, WWF, Indonesia

Central Kalimantan and Sebangau National Park

Borneo is one of few places that still has large stands of intact rainforest, although deforestation rates are extremely high. The Indonesian part of Borneo, Kalimantan, shows evidence of huge forest loss due to failed and poor government planning and implementation, and clearing of forests for economic gain. An analysis from 2002 assumes that few areas had been deforested at the start of the 19th century¹, but between

1 Holmes, D.A (2002). "Indonesia. Where have all the forests gone?" Environment and Social Development East Asia and Pacific Region Discussion Paper. Environment and Social Development Unit (EASES), East Asia and Pacific Region of the World Bank.

1985 and 2002 Kalimantan lost over 13 million hectares, i.e. 34% of its forests². This has had huge implications on an international, national and local scale for carbon dynamics, biodiversity conservation, and local livelihoods³.

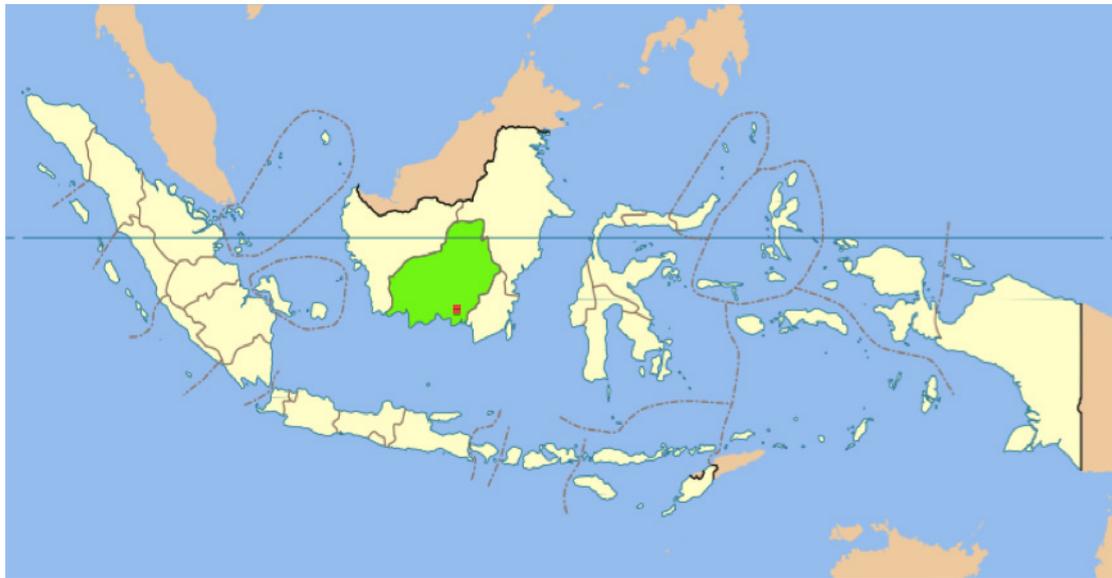


Figure 1: Map of Indonesia with provincial borders and boundaries of neighbouring countries. Central Kalimantan is highlighted, with Sebangau National Park highlighted in red. (Source: **Wikipedia.org**).

The Sebangau Ecosystem in Central Kalimantan (Figure. 1) is an extensive area of tropical peat-swamp forest and is of high conservation importance as a major global store of carbon. Sebangau was the site of 13 massive logging concessions between 1980 and 1995. This, as well as illegal logging and canal-drainage, led to the destruction of huge peat-swamp forest areas that will take centuries to restore⁴ (Jemadu 2012). The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) established a field office in Central Kalimantan (WWF-CK) in 2001 and worked to establish Sebangau as a national park and introduce reforestation programs. In 2004, the Minister of Forestry declared it as Indonesia's 50th national park⁵.

Sebangau National Park (SNP) supports the world's largest population – around 6,000-9,000 individuals - of the endangered Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*) and other endangered species, as well as providing several natural resource functions for the

2 World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Germany (2005). Borneo: Treasure Island at Risk. Status of Forest, Wildlife and related Threats on the Island of Borneo. WWF Germany.

3 Broich, M., Hansen, M., Stolle, F., Potapov, P., B. A., Margono & Adusei, B. (2011). "Remotely sensed forest cover loss shows high spatial and temporal variation across Sumatera and Kalimantan, Indonesia 2000–2008". *Environ. Res.* Vol. 6.

4 Jemadu, L. (2012). Can Heavily Deforested Sebangau National Park be Saved? *The Jakarta Globe*, July 21.

5 World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Indonesia (2012). [Internet]. Available from: http://www.wwf.or.id/en/about_wwf/whatwedo/forest_species/where_we_work/sebangau/aboutsebangau/. [Accessed 20.04.12].

surrounding human communities⁶. WWF-CK is engaged in conservation of the forest, its habitats and local communities as well as climate change alleviation. In line with WWF Indonesia policy to create mechanisms for providing income to the local communities linked to protection of the natural resources, WWF-CK has supported efforts to introduce ecotourism to villages around SNP.

This article starts with an overview of international funding for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as affected by the evolution of development policies. The links between conservation, development and tourism will then be outlined, with a review of donor-assisted ecotourism development. As part of the increased international focus on the links between conservation and development, several guidelines for best practice for reconciling the two spheres of activity have been produced. These guidelines are reviewed and used as an analytical framework for investigating WWF-CK's ecotourism practices. Findings concerning WWF-CK's work and their use of frameworks are highlighted, and these are analysed to produce recommendations for improved practice.

The Evolving role of Development and Conservation in NGO Strategies

The term NGO refers to organizations that operate on a scale larger than a community or village and are typically international, national or regional in scope⁷. Others identify an NGO as an independent organization neither run by government nor driven by profit motives, although point out that some NGOs receive high levels of government funding and have characteristics similar to bureaucracies or strong corporate identities⁸. Meanwhile, the scope of international funding many NGOs rely on has changed considerably in the 70 years since World War 2, having been influenced by successive development theories, such as modernization theories, dependency theory, neoliberalism and bottom-up approaches.

Today's emphasis on linking environment and development emerged from the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. The same principles were emphasized at later international conferences on the global environment such as Nairobi in 1982, Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Johannesburg in 2002⁹ and the 'Rio+20' Earth Summit in 2012. The conservation of biodiversity integrated with development primarily focused on the idea that wealthier countries should pay

6 World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Indonesia (2012). [Internet]. Available from: http://www.wwf.or.id/en/about_wwf/whatwedo/forest_species/where_we_work/sebangau/aboutsebangau/. [Accessed 20.04.12].

7 Mercer, C (2006). Working with Partners: NGOs and CBOs, pp. 94-103. In: Doing Development Research. Edited by: Desai, V. & Potter, R.B. (2006). London Sage Publications Ltd.

8 Lewis, D. & Kanji, N. (2009). Non-Governmental Organisations and Development. London: Routledge.

9 Hicks, R.L., Parks, B.C., Roberts, T. & Tierney, M.J. (2008). "Greening Aid? Understanding the Environmental Impacts of Development Assistance". Oxford University Press.

poorer countries to address environmental protection. It is also argued that cooperation between international communities to transfer resources from richer to poorer countries is essential for environmental protection¹⁰, however it is contended that the political will to take action on this basis remains weak¹¹.

NGOs have increasingly been seen as intermediaries between civil society and government in order to overcome the gap between policy and implementation: for instance contributors to the debate state that NGOs are engaging in international development and advocacy with development of a nature-conservation culture on behalf of civil society¹². Also, it is further remarked on the increasing tendency for government development agencies to channel funds through NGOs as an efficient and cost-effective method of partnering with civil society¹³.

NGOs' role as intermediaries has created space for them to become more involved in distributing aid, act as consultants and focus on development as well as conservation¹⁴, while also allowing them to act as neutral agents between the developed and developing world and to take a leading role in the preservation of biodiversity¹⁵. However, their dependence on external aid infuses their position with ambiguity in that they are not in fact free from direct governmental control: Willis (2011) contends that projects are more likely to be shaped by the requirements and preferred activities of potential donors (NGOs, foreign governments and multilateral organizations) than by those of local people¹⁶, while others see NGOs as an extension of or a surrogate arm of governments¹⁷. This donor reliance threatens the "non-governmental" nature of NGOs as their capacity for autonomous action and independence is reduced¹⁸.

The interaction and partnerships between governments, international organizations and NGOs has been thoroughly studied¹⁹. The question explored is whose policy

10 Hicks, R.L., Parks, B.C., Roberts, T. & Tierney, M.J. (2008). "Greening Aid? Understanding the Environmental Impacts of Development Assistance". Oxford University Press.

11 Schreurs, M.A. (2012). Rio+20: "Assessing Progress to Date and Future Challenges". *The Journal of Environment and Development*, 21 (1), pp. 19-23.

12 Hails, C. (2007). "The Evolution of Approaches to Conserving the World's Natural Heritage: The Experiences of WWF". *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 13, pp. 365-379; Ohanyan, A. (2009). "Policy Wars For Peace: Network Model of NGO Behavior". *International Studies Review*, 11, pp. 475-501.

13 Gibbon, P. (1995). "Liberalised development in Tanzania: studies on accumulation processes and local institutions". Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

14 Butcher, J. 2007: "Ecotourism, NGOs and development: a critical analysis". London: Routledge.

15 Bernau, B.M. (2006). "Help for Hotspots: NGO Participation in the Preservation of Worldwide Biodiversity". *Indiana Journal for Global Legal Studies*. Vol 13, pp. 617-643.

16 Willis, K. (2011). "Theories and Practices of Development". Second Edition. London: Routledge.

17 Mercer, C (2006). Working with Partners: NGOs and CBOs, pp. 94-103. In: *Doing Development Research*. Edited by: Desai, V. & Potter, R.B. (2006). London Sage Publications Ltd.

18 Lewis, D. & Kanji, N. (2009). *Non-Governmental Organisations and Development*. London: Routledge; Willis, K. (2011). "Theories and Practices of Development". Second Edition. London: Routledge.

19 Ohanyan, A. (2009). "Policy Wars For Peace: Network Model of NGO Behavior". *International Studies Review*, 11, pp. 475-501.

preferences are pursued, implemented and delivered on the ground. Similarly, it is pointed to the power imbalances between NGOs and donors and further stated that donors attempt to maintain control over NGO agendas in policy processes around the world²⁰. However, it is stressed that NGOs nevertheless seek to exert their autonomy and identity in implementing their own missions and preferences²¹. A more critical view of NGOs is also presented: it is argued that conservation NGOs are the beneficiaries of these power relations because of a political climate that has generally been favourable to NGOs in recent decades²². The extent to which power relations between donors and WWF-CK have affected ecotourism implementation in Central Kalimantan will be explored below.

In order to achieve socio-economic and conservation success, cross-sectoral collaboration is needed. It has been contended that the conservation-planning community needs to move beyond its comfort zone of biology and engage with other disciplines, specifically the complex world of politics and decision-making on biodiversity management²³. Based on the growth of civil society and acknowledged need for participation between stakeholders, collaboration across disciplines and institutions is now seen as mandatory for success in the field. The need for trust-building, perseverance, long time-frames and a host of skills are pre-requisites to successfully alleviate biodiversity loss and improve development outcomes²⁴. However, politics and inter-governmental decisions are not the only factors in the fight against biodiversity loss: the local contribution to conservation success has also been on the agenda since the 1970's as a result of the grass root-movement²⁵. Thus, conservation of ecosystems through development activities such as tourism must take account of the needs of local communities who depend on primary exploitation of natural resources.

The Introduction of Ecotourism

Tourism is a set of experiences and activities enjoyed by tourists and takes place in destinations where tourists interact with the people who live and work there²⁶. Over the

20 Makuwira, J. (2006) "Aid Partnership in the Bougainville Conflict: The Case of a Local Women's NGO and Its Donors". *Development in Practice* 16 (3 and 4): 322-333.

21 Ohanyan, A. (2009). "Policy Wars For Peace: Network Model of NGO Behavior". *International Studies Review*, 11, pp. 475-501.

22 Holmes G. (2010). "The Rich, the Powerful and the Endangered: Conservation Elites, Networks and the Dominican Republic". *Antipode*, Vol. 13, pp. 624-646.

23 Graf, N. F. S & Rothlauf, F. (2011). "The Why and How of Firm-NGO Collaborations". Working Paper 04/2011.. Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz; Reyers, B., Roux, D.J., Cowling, R.M., Ginsburg, A.E., Nel, J.L., & O' Farrell, P. (2010). Conservation Planning as a Transdisciplinary Process. *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 24. No. 4, pp. 957-965.

24 Willis, K. (2011). "Theories and Practices of Development". Second Edition. London: Routledge.

25 Potter, R.B., Binns, T., Elliott, J. and Smith, D. (2003): *Geographies of Development*, Second Edition, Prentice-Hall: London and New York.

26 Goodwin, H. (2002): Local Community Involvement in Tourism around National Parks: Opportunities and Constraints, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 5, pp. 338-360.

decades, the industry has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. It is believed that tourism can contribute to considerable change and development for economically poor people in destinations²⁷. The sustainable development agenda has led to attempts to make the development of the huge tourism industry more environmentally friendly²⁸, leading to the term “sustainable tourism development”, which requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders and strong political leadership to ensure consensus building²⁹. It has also led to the concept of responsible tourism, which is tourism used for creating better places for people to live in and for people to visit³⁰.

The development of sustainable tourism approaches and market interest in nature-based tourism products converged in the phenomenon of “ecotourism”³¹. According to WWF-International³², ecotourism should be seen as a subset of responsible tourism and can be described as tourism to natural areas that is determined by, and benefits, local communities and the environment. It is pointed out that the concept of ecotourism is still much debated and contested³³: for instance there is anxiety that hordes of ecotourists to pristine areas might contribute to further deforestation and destroy more biodiversity³⁴. Within the tourism industry, meanwhile, ecotourism is often considered to be both a set of principles based on environmentally and socially responsible actions and a specific market segment³⁵. An all-encompassing definition is given by Fennell (2008), the result of a content analysis of 85 separate definitions:

“Ecotourism is a sustainable, non-invasive form of nature-based tourism that focuses primarily on learning about nature first hand, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented (control, benefits and scale). It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation of such areas³⁶.”

It is this definition which is used in this paper.

27 UNWTO (2010). “Manual on Tourism and Poverty Alleviation. Practical Steps for Destinations”. First printing WTO and SNV.

28 Butcher, J. 2007: “Ecotourism, NGOs and development: a critical analysis”. London: Routledge.

29 UNEP/WTO (2005). “Making Tourism More Sustainable. A Guide for Policy-Makers”. Published by United Nations Environment Program and World Tourism Organization.

30 Goodwin (2011). “Taking Responsibility for Tourism”. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.

31 Fennell D.A (2008). “Ecotourism”. Third Edition. London: Routledge; Willis, K. (2011). “Theories and Practices of Development”. Second Edition. London: Routledge.

32 World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (2001). “Guidelines for community-based ecotourism development”. WWF International.

33 Fennell D.A (2008). “Ecotourism”. Third Edition. London: Routledge; Willis, K. (2011).

34 Butcher, J. 2007: “Ecotourism, NGOs and development: a critical analysis”. London: Routledge.

35 Conservation International (2005). “Linking Communities, Tourism & Conservation. A Tourism Assessment Process”. Conservation International and The George Washington University.

36 Fennell D.A (2008). “Ecotourism”. Third Edition. London: Routledge; Willis, K. (2011).

Ecotourism as a conservation tool

Tourism as a multi-billion dollar industry has an enormous effect on destinations' economy and environment. A popular leisure activity is wildlife watching, with expansion in the diversity of the wildlife-watching offer, the number of tourism businesses operating these activities, and the volume of tourists that engage in them (UNEP 2006). Much of this activity takes place in protected areas, creating challenges for the conservation of biodiversity within them. It is argued that tourism contributes to biodiversity loss related to habitat change, overexploitation, pollution, invasive alien species and climate change³⁷. The creation of national parks has also interfered with local communities' use of natural resources³⁸, and conflicts over conservation, visitation, habitation and exploitation are well documented.

Nevertheless, it is stated that tourism can also contribute to biodiversity conservation³⁹. The value of tourism for biodiversity is generally positioned in two key ways: as a generator of finance to address conservation issues, which is the focus of this research, and as a vehicle to educate visitors about human impacts on biodiversity and wildlife habitat, in principle leading to increased awareness and behavioural change⁴⁰. Generating the economic means to address conservation is directly connected to one of the most important stakeholders in conservation and tourism: the local population.

It is pointed out that conservation is not primarily about biology but about people and the choices they make, and is therefore influenced by an array of socioeconomic and political constraints and opportunities such as opportunity costs, funding, incentives, willingness to participate, modes of governance and institutional capacity⁴¹. More of the benefits of conservation need to be delivered to local people by enabling them to benefit from the protection of the area⁴². If local people secure a sustainable income from tourism in protected areas close to their homes, they will be less likely to exploit natural resources in less sustainable ways such as over-harvesting of fuelwood, charcoal burning, over-fishing or poaching.

This philosophy has given rise to socio-economic programmes targeted on populations situated near protected areas, initiated in particular by NGOs and communi-

37 Gössling, S. & Hall, C.H. (2006). "Tourism and global environmental change: ecological, social, economic and political interrelationships". London: Routledge.

38 Roe, D., Mayers, J., Grieg-Gran, M., Kothari, A., Fabricius, C. & Hughes, R. (2000). "Evaluating Eden: Exploring the Myths and Realities of Community-Based Wildlife management". Evaluating Eden Series 8.

39 Hall, C.M. (2010). "Tourism and the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity". *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 5.

40 Hudson, K., & Lee, D. (2010). "Tourism and Biodiversity - a valuable relationship"p. *Social Alternatives*, Vol. 29. No. 3, pp. 39-43.

41 Balmford, A., & R. M. Cowling. (2006). "Fusion or failure? The future of conservation biology". *Conservation Biology* 20, pp. 692-695.

42 Goodwin, H. (2002): *Local Community Involvement in Tourism around National Parks: Opportunities and Constraints*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 5, pp. 338-360.

ty-based organizations. Internationally recognised strategies for operationalizing the interdependence of conservation with socio-economic development include ICDPs (Integrated Conservation and Development Projects) and REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) programmes.

Donor-Assisted Ecotourism Projects

As previously stated, conservation and development NGOs are principally donor-funded, meaning that actions are influenced by the donors. Several contributors argue that debt relief, environmental protection and infectious disease control have increasingly been emphasised by bilateral and multilateral donors⁴³. The same applies to conservation NGOs, which increasingly involve themselves in socio-economic development⁴⁴. One facet of this involvement is tourism - or ecotourism - as outlined above.

In an evaluation of the role of donors in donor-funded projects, business successes and the monitoring and evaluation of aid programmes, it was found that successful donor-assisted tourism project outcomes rely on taking account of the complexities of all stakeholders, while reporting on the status of livelihoods and biodiversity before and after the intervention is essential in order to judge success or failure⁴⁵. It was also concluded that good projects depend on having good leaders, being market oriented, and ability to access mainstream tourism flows. Similarly, other research argues that the three key elements of a resilient tourism system are associative working between stakeholders, good leadership, and the ability to harness market forces⁴⁶.

There are few case studies which evidence success in ecotourism funded by conservation organizations, while even for experienced tourism practitioners the tourism industry can prove competitive and demanding, and projects can take years to get off the ground⁴⁷. For many rural communities, these barriers are simply too great. It is also pointed out that for ecotourism to be successful the money it generates must be sufficient to out-compete the traditional livelihoods that are often at the expense of biodiversity⁴⁸. A further issue is the poor understanding of tourism processes by protected areas specialists, as found in a case study research of Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park, Indonesia. Tourism planning by conservation experts has often resulted in optimistic

43 Hicks, R.L., Parks, B.C., Roberts, T. & Tierney, M.J. (2008). "Greening Aid? Understanding the Environmental Impacts of Development Assistance". Oxford University Press.

44 Ohanyan, A. (2009). "Policy Wars For Peace: Network Model of NGO Behavior". *International Studies Review*, 11, pp. 475-501.

45 Font, X., Goodwin, H., & Watson, R. (2014). "Donor funded tourism projects: Factors for success". *Progress in Responsible Tourism*, 3:1, pp.7-30.

46 Cochrane, J. (2010). "The Sphere of Tourism Resilience". *Tourism Recreation Research*, 35:2, pp. 173-186.

47 Kiss, A. (2004). "Is community-based ecotourism a good use of biodiversity conservation funds?" *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* Vol.19 No. 5, pp. 232-237.

48 Kiss, A. (2004). "Is community-based ecotourism a good use of biodiversity conservation funds?" *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* Vol.19 No. 5, pp. 232-237.

assumptions of the potential positive impacts of nature tourism on the quality of life in host communities and environmental conservation⁴⁹.

Still, some attempts have produced minor successes. It was found that ecotourism in national parks in India was poorly managed because the Indian Forest Service had not been formally trained in the principles of ecotourism, although a few had been able to establish reasonably successful models of responsible ecotourism through NGO intervention by capturing more revenue from park fees and integrating community participation⁵⁰. Meanwhile, others reported on the successful use of ecotourism by WWF in a forest reserve in north-eastern Greece to enhance the conservation of threatened raptors through careful visitor management and the involvement of local communities, including a long-term vision of passing control over to the local community – although the authors express doubt that many NGOs have the financial resources to manage ecotourism schemes indefinitely⁵¹.

The few case studies available indicate that success in donor-assisted projects will depend on appropriate local conditions, reliable funding and good enabling circumstances. In addition to the need for monitoring, reporting and stakeholder involvement, as outlined above, the importance of working with the tourism industry from the outset in order to integrate the key element of market awareness has also been emphasised⁵². These factors will be used later in this paper to analyse the extent to which WWF-CK is able to achieve conservation and socio-economic development outcomes through donor-assistance.

The challenges of achieving successful ecotourism have not gone unnoticed: several international organizations have understood the challenges very well and have produced recommendations for implementation. These guidelines are reviewed below and will be used as a framework to evaluate ecotourism implementation in SNP.

Guidelines on Ecotourism Practices

The organizations and institutions included here were chosen because of their recommendations for ecotourism practices and their prominent position within the development sector. They are: Conservation International (CI), WWF, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the Convention on Biological

49 Cochrane, J. (2003). "Ecotourism, Conservation and Sustainability: A Case Study of Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park, Indonesia". Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Hull.

50 Banerjee, A. (2010). "Tourism in Protected Areas: Worsening Prospects for Tigers?" *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol 10, pp. 27-29.

51 Svoronou, E. & Holden, A. (2005). "Ecotourism as a Tool for Nature Conservation: The Role of WWF Greece in the Dadia-Lefkimi-Soufli Forest Reserve in Greece". *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 13. No. 5, pp. 456-467.

52 Tapper, R. and Cochrane, J. (2005) "Forging Links Between Protected Areas and the Tourism Sector", United Nations Environment Program.

Diversity (CBD) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). All have produced recommendations on enhancing conservation through nature-based tourism products. Mapping them can help evaluate whether WWF's practice of ecotourism in the field is influenced by or resembles these guidelines.

All the organizations mentioned offer recommendations from planning a sustainable tourism product to support during implementation and monitoring of the outcome. While WWF, TNC, UNEP and CBD⁵³ provide guidelines for both ecotourism and sustainable tourism, IUCN and CI⁵⁴ focus on the sustainable linkages between conservation and tourism. These guidelines and strategies can form an ecotourism management plan as a tool to guide the development of tourism in a protected area by synthesizing and representing the vision of all stakeholders while fulfilling the conservation objectives for the site⁵⁵.

One of the first steps covered is the need for baseline information⁵⁶, i.e. an assessment of the destination's resources, human capacities and its potential for tourism⁵⁷. The baseline review should take into consideration all sources of knowledge and the involvement of local people is essential in this⁵⁸. Funding to create an ecotourism management plan and implement agreed strategies is needed in most cases, and it is recommended involving stakeholders such as multilateral agencies, national companies, local governments and the tourism industry to create a participatory approach before applying for

53 World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (1992). "Beyond the Green Horizon. A discussion paper on Principles for sustainable tourism". WWF UK; World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (2001). "Guidelines for community-based ecotourism development". WWF International; The Nature Conservancy (2002). "Ecotourism Development- A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers". The Nature Conservancy; United Nations Environment Program (2002). "Ecotourism". Linking Principles, Practices & Policies for Sustainability. UNEP; Convention on Biological Diversity (2002). "Development of Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism in Vulnerable Ecosystems". Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal; Convention on Biological Diversity (2004). "Guidelines on biodiversity and tourism development". Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal 2004.

54 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2001). "Guidelines for Tourism in Parks and Protected Areas of East Asia". IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge; International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2002). "Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Guidelines for Planning and Management". IUCN, Gland, Switzerland, and Cambridge, UK, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Tourism Organization; Conservation International (2005). "Linking Communities, Tourism & Conservation. A Tourism Assessment Process". Conservation International and The George Washington University.

55 The Nature Conservancy (2002). "Ecotourism Development- A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers". The Nature Conservancy.

56 Convention on Biological Diversity (2004). "Guidelines on biodiversity and tourism development". Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal 2004.

57 Conservation International (2005). "Linking Communities, Tourism & Conservation. A Tourism Assessment Process". Conservation International and The George Washington University; The Nature Conservancy (2002). "Ecotourism Development- A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers". The Nature Conservancy.

58 Convention on Biological Diversity (2004). "Guidelines on biodiversity and tourism development". Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal 2004; Conservation International (2005). "Linking Communities, Tourism & Conservation. A Tourism Assessment Process". Conservation International and The George Washington University.

funds⁵⁹. The next step is to develop an overall vision, expressed as a set of economic, social, and environmental goals⁶⁰. Defining shared goals and objectives is an essential but challenging component. They need to be performance-based and can include clear targets in order to ensure that any tourism development has minimal environmental impacts⁶¹. The next step is a review of legislation and control measures, including those available for implementation of the overall vision, goals and objectives⁶². Ensuring that decision-making is transparent and accountable should underpin the other processes: as part of this, affected local communities and other stakeholders must be consulted and involved for informed consent⁶³. As described by IUCN: “successful planning [...] generally involves all groups in such a way that each can contribute constructively to the various components of the process, and thus feel ‘ownership’ of the plan”⁶⁴.

Impact management planning is necessary to avoid or reduce any potential damage to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use from tourism development⁶⁵. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) can be used to ascertain the sustainability of the planned activities⁶⁶. From this, visitor management strategies can be formulated. One of the last steps is the monitoring strategy, recommended both before and after the tourism intervention in order to determine whether changes are due to natural causes or human activities⁶⁷. Market research is also recommended in order to understand visitor trends and analyse visitor needs and expectations. This can enable park managers to provide satisfying experiences for the visitors⁶⁸, as well as the other stakeholders involved in

59 The Nature Conservancy (2002). “Ecotourism Development- A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers”. The Nature Conservancy.

60 Convention on Biological Diversity (2002). “Development of Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism in Vulnerable Ecosystems”. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal.

61 Convention on Biological Diversity (2002). “Development of Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism in Vulnerable Ecosystems”. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal; Convention on Biological Diversity (2004). “Guidelines on biodiversity and tourism development”. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal 2004.

62 Convention on Biological Diversity (2004). “Guidelines on biodiversity and tourism development”. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal 2004.

63 Convention on Biological Diversity (2002). “Development of Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism in Vulnerable Ecosystems”. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal; United Nations Environment Program (2002). “Ecotourism”. Linking Principles, Practices & Policies for Sustainability. UNEP.

64 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2002, p. 49). “Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Guidelines for Planning and Management”. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland, and Cambridge, UK, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Tourism Organization.

65 Convention on Biological Diversity (2004). “Guidelines on biodiversity and tourism development”. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal 2004.

66 World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (1992). “Beyond the Green Horizon. A discussion paper on Principles for sustainable tourism”. WWF UK.

67 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2001). “Guidelines for Tourism in Parks and Protected Areas of East Asia”. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge.

68 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2002). “Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Guidelines for Planning and Management”. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland, and Cambridge, UK, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Tourism Organization.

ecotourism. Interestingly, however, none of the guidelines specifically mentions linking with the private sector. In most cases they were produced earlier than the analyses referred to above which made plain that the shortcomings in donor-assisted ecotourism projects often lay in their weak market engagement.

In summary, the guidelines focus on carrying out a baseline review, accessing sufficient funding to initiate and maintain the project, cooperation and transparency between stakeholders, a shared overall vision, monitoring and management of visitor impacts, and market engagement through research. We will return to these guidelines as a framework to examine WWF-CK's involvement in ecotourism. Before this, we describe the specific context of Central Kalimantan and stakeholders involved in the ecotourism project.

The Case Study

In order to audit WWF-CK's cooperation with stakeholders and implementation of ecotourism in Central Kalimantan, a case study approach was identified as appropriate in that a detailed study backed up by knowledge of comparable situations elsewhere can produce generalizable findings. The detailed qualitative study of WWF-CK indicates how development and conservation projects such as ecotourism are being initiated and provides insights into the workings of conservation NGOs. The principal researcher spent six weeks in the field in 2012 working within WWF-CK's office and obtained the data through semi-structured interviews with key informants from WWF ($n=3$), government officials ($n=3$), tour operators ($n=2$), community representatives ($n=6$); focus group discussions ($n=3$) with 10-20 participants in villages where ecotourism was being introduced; and structured and participatory observation.

WWF- CK

WWF-CK works as a field office under the direction of WWF-Indonesia, an independent national organization able to raise funds and carry out work autonomously from the international umbrella organisation of WWF. Their strategy for linking conservation and development is therefore related to the context of Indonesia, for instance in 2008, they promoted a new conservation strategy called Ecosystem-Based Spatial Planning (EBSP)⁶⁹. This is based on several principles, including:

- Connectivity and ecosystem representation
- Understanding of the context including ecology, social factors and economics
- Framework for conservation and development
- Affording benefits to nature and people
- Respecting landowners and all other stakeholders.

⁶⁹ WWF-Indonesia (2009). "Annual Report Fiscal Year 2008-2009". WWF Indonesia.

EBSF requires long-term commitment from all parties involved, and takes into account the connectivity between protected areas and ecological services across administrative boundaries of districts and provinces⁷⁰. Under this strategy, WWF is pursuing success based on goals of improving conservation of Indonesia's forests and progressing livelihoods. Community participation is a major part of this strategy in order for conservation to succeed and to reduce illegal or environmentally devastating activities. As part of this effort, WWF-CK offers capacity-building support and facilitates ecotourism in conjunction with local communities. How this is manifested in one important field site is discussed below, starting with a description of WWF-CK's involvement in Sebangau National Park and the status of tourism there.

Tourism in Sebangau National Park

Biodiversity challenges and negative impacts resulting from long anthropogenic use are significant in SNP, a past concession site for logging, although after it was designated a national park in 2004, villagers were restricted from activities such as cutting timber and burning. To support the local people in overcoming the challenges posed by the new status of the area they formerly depended on, WWF-CK initiated several community development projects to create additional livelihood income. These projects sit within WWF-CK's Socio-Economic Development Program, of which ecotourism projects in three villages located on the west border of SNP form a part. The three villages are Baun Bango, Jahanjang and Karuing, located on the Katingan river and in Kamipang, a sub-district of Central Kalimantan (see Fig. 2).

WWF-CK has been present in the villages since 2004 and has worked to build trust with the inhabitants. Ecotourism development grew naturally out of this process. In 2007, WWF-CK hired a consultant for an ecotourism feasibility study in the area. The consultant's report subsequently disappeared, but in 2010 with funding from SIDA (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) and WWF-Sweden, a visitor centre in Punggu Alas was built regardless of the lost recommendations; additionally, some tourism capacity-building activities were introduced in the villages. However, according to the current director of socio-economic programmes at WWF-CK (WWF informant 1, 01/08/12), the only real training for ecotourism was in 2011, with facilitators from INDECON (the Indonesian Ecotourism Center). The funding agreement with SIDA involved a two-year plan in which ecotourism packages were to be designed and implemented.

WWF-CK facilitated the soft infrastructure needed by creating tourism committees and tourism packages in each village focusing on guiding, transport, handicraft, culture, and cooking, amongst others. The intention is that each village advertises its

70 WWF-Indonesia (2009). "Annual Report Fiscal Year 2008-2009". WWF Indonesia.

own unique selling point: Baun Bango focuses on culture, Jahanjang on nature viewing, and Punggu Alas on wildlife, in particular the opportunity to track orang-utans in the wild as opposed to viewing them at the rehabilitation centres generally visited by tourists. Jahanjang has had some tourism-related investment inputs, including a couple of simple guest-houses constructed on stilts over a lake, while Punggu Alas has the visitor centre mentioned above and in the early 2000s was the subject of a donor-funded partnership between the tour operator Kalimantan Tour Destinations (KTD), WWF-CK and researchers to create orangutan walks based on research and conservation. However when the donor evaluated the project, it disapproved of the choices made during the partnership and discontinued funding (WWF Informant 1, 01/08/12).

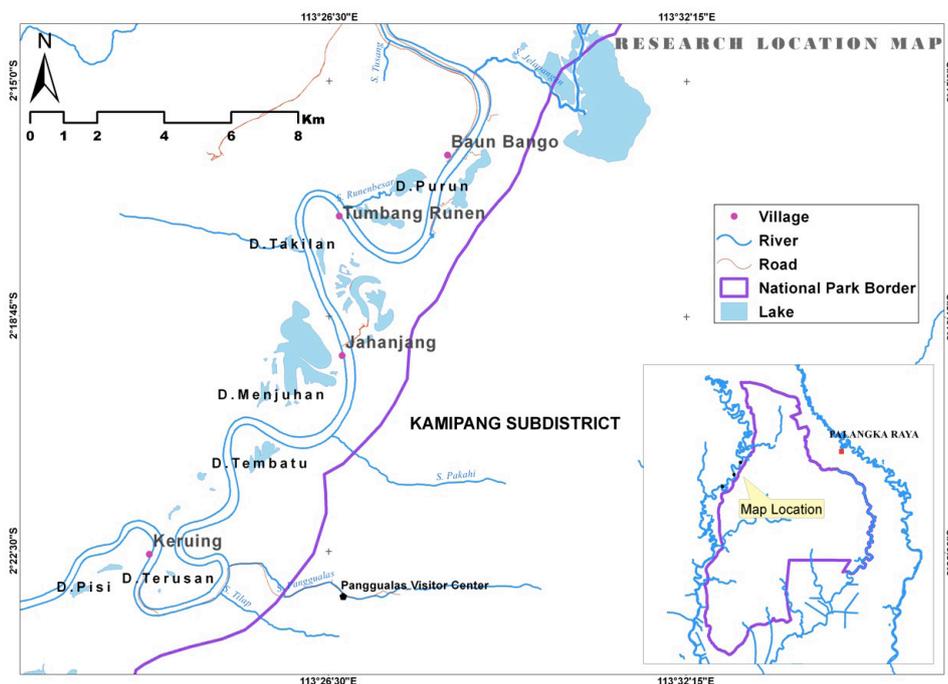


Figure 2: Map of villages involved in ecotourism projects in Kamipang. Purple line indicates SNP boundary (WWF CK 2012).

Unfortunately there is a significant obstacle faced by these projects, which is the low incidence of international tourism in Palangka Raya (the provincial capital of Central Kalimantan), and almost none in SNP. Tourism infrastructure in much of the province is absent, making it difficult to initiate tourism activities or attract tour operators. Reaching SNP first entails an almost two-hour flight from Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, to Palangka Raya, from where access to Baun Bango is via a 3-hour car journey on bumpy roads. Baun Bango is also the entry point for boat transportation to Punggu Alas and Jahanjang. It takes 30 minutes by river to Jahanjang, and an additional half-hour to Punggu Alas. This means that it takes a day to reach the villages, yet for most international markets the attractions there are out-competed by other, better-organised destinations in the wider Borneo (including Malaysian Sarawak and Sabah) and there are as yet few other attractions in Central Kalimantan with which the villages could be packaged.

The current situation of ecotourism in the three villages is typical of donor-assisted tourism in other places. Baun Bango had only received 50 visitors since 2010, including researchers. The villagers confused international or domestic tourists with foreign researchers and WWF visitors, mainly because their encounters with foreigners have mainly been with researchers, and their understanding of tourists' needs and goals was notably absent. Lack of confidence in their own capabilities was evident. Tourist numbers in Jahanjang were higher here, about 200 since 2010. Villagers were supportive of tourism and eager to make changes to enhance their tourism product, and had a better understanding of tourism and tourist needs than in the two other villages. Jahanjang is also supported by a government programme to create some tourism infrastructure, which may explain the villagers' enthusiasm. However, according to WWF-CK (WWF Informant 1, 01/08/12), the government programme is weakened by poor supervision of the local village coordinator. In Punggu Alas, the now-defunct partnership between Kalimantan Tour Destinations and WWF-CK reflects the lack of communication and cooperation amongst stakeholders, also evident in current ecotourism venture in all three of the villages. The visitor centre has seen about 200 tourists since it was built in 2010, but it transpired that all visitors were sponsors and WWF visitors except for four individual tourists; it is currently used by WWF research teams.

The next section explains the role of the stakeholders involved in the ecotourism projects.

Stakeholders in Sebangau Tourism

The key stakeholders in the tourism system of Sebangau are the local communities, WWF-CK, the provincial government, the local tourism board, the national park authority, and tour operators. The role and perspectives of these will now be explained.

First, the local communities. The focus group discussions indicated that people in all three villages expected that ecotourism would produce socio-economic benefits of increased income, cooperation, communication, education and cultural exchange, while they also identified benefits for the environment and conservation of nature and demonstrated increased interest in maintaining nature for tourism purposes, cleaner villages and more environmental hygiene awareness, and no more burning of the forest. They evidenced renewed interest in their own culture as well as a desire to cooperate to achieve common goals. Attempts to discuss negative outcomes such as environmental disruption led to confusion; these were clearly less well acknowledged by villagers, although they did mention uneven distribution of income as a negative impact. Overall, the advantages of tourism were considered to be stronger than the disadvantages. A key finding was the lack of readiness for tourism, evidenced by unstructured tourism products and weak knowledge of tourists' needs, the tourism market and business techniques.

The second key stakeholder is WWF-CK. Their main focus has been to communicate their conservation efforts and ecotourism possibilities to villagers, who should themselves be in charge of providing tourism services. They expressed concern about the villagers' excessive expectations regarding their ability to help with implementing ecotourism, and would prefer tourism service providers in the villages to have direct contact with tour operators in Palangka Raya. They are aware that tour operators would open up the market and bring tourists and guides to the destination, although contend that eventually the villagers should be able to provide guiding services themselves. It was evident that although WWF-CK positions itself as a facilitator of ecotourism by preparing villagers through communication and education, there are considerable contradictions in their role, as they also see themselves as the main driver of ecotourism in the Kamipang district. They acknowledge the need for partnership and cooperation amongst stakeholders, and attempted a collaborative approach long before the current funding from SIDA started in 2010.

The provincial government is also an important stakeholder. It channels central government funding for village tourism programmes, which Jahanjang has accessed. They believe the village have much potential for ecotourism, and understand the economic and social benefits and opportunities for cultural exchange. However, the current focus of government funding is on marketing and development of Tanjung Puting National Park, currently the biggest attraction in the province, while Sebangau will only be prioritised in 2014. Conversations and interviews with government officials of the principles of ecotourism and how it should be implemented for maximum benefit for all stakeholders seemed superficial, with the economic aspect the main priority rather than reconciling tourism and biodiversity conservation.

At the next administrative level down from the province, the Katingan Regency is also aware of the potential for ecotourism and intends to develop it in the future. Their understanding of ecotourism differed from the provincial government in that they expected an enhanced awareness of nature conservation to develop locally through ecotourism, but they had a similarly weak understanding of the complexity of tourism development, in that they expected local people to be able to manage and staff tourism products (such as a cruise along the Katingan river) at an early stage.

The Sebangau National Park Authority answers directly to the Ministry of Forestry and operates independently of the provincial government. In some areas of Indonesia tensions are evident between these stakeholders because of different policy objectives and the perception that resources in protected areas are being managed by distant national bodies rather than local ones, but here there appeared to be closer cooperation. SNPA acknowledges ecotourism as an economic activity in the area since exploitation of natural resources can no longer fulfil the needs of the community and employs local

people both as paid workers and volunteers to increase awareness of and participation in conservation programmes. The park managers are working with WWF to create a demarcation system for zones and boundaries, which will eventually benefit ecotourism within and outside the park.

The final key stakeholder in the Sebangau tourism system is the private sector, of which KTD is the most significant. Their strongest market is expatriates living in Jakarta, and the 'jungle cruises' to Palangka Raya and its hinterland are marketed specifically to this segment. They believe they are increasing socio-economic welfare in the villages through providing jobs, but admit that the tours lack of good-quality human resources and claim that they are not yet profitable (KTD informant 1, 30/07/12). Their approach to including local people differed significantly from WWF-CK's: while the latter informed the three villages of the benefits of ecotourism and introduced packages before establishing cooperation with tour operators, KTD visited selected riverine villages a month before the arrival of tourists to tell villagers about the cruise and to find people willing to work as guides, transporters and providers of entertainment. "We can then negotiate on a real basis of tourists coming soon. This has worked well for us" (KTD informant 1, 30/07/12). KTD wished to cooperate with WWF-CK but expressed concern regarding its role in ecotourism: for instance they felt the prices established through WWF-CKs engagement with the programme were too high. They considered that WWF-CK should uphold their role as conservationists and educators rather than attempting to act as tour operators, at which - according to KTD - they are inexpert (KTD informant 1, 30/07/12).

These findings and the evaluation of ecotourism projects based on best practice guidelines will be examined below. First, the guidelines described in the previous section will be compared to actual practice in the field to reveal the extent of their use and their relevance.

WWF CK in Practice

The research indicated that WWF-CK had not specifically used any of the best practice guidelines to plan and implement ecotourism, relying instead on The International Ecotourism Society's (TIES) definition of ecotourism, i.e. "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" as well as hiring INDECON consultants. The absence of guidelines was explained by drawing a parallel between the development of commercial businesses with development of the sustainable livelihood programme, on the basis that creating engagement, evaluating results and developing a business were similar in the two cases (WWF informant 1, 01/08/12).

However, an understanding of ecotourism principles is arguably quite different from the complex reality of implementing a step-by step ecotourism framework. Furthermore,

comparing tourism implementation with livelihood programmes demonstrates ignorance of the market-oriented product development needed for successful ecotourism. For example, as discussed above, KTD was not included in decision-making regarding Kamipang tourism packages; instead, WWF-CK facilitated the design of tour packages and pricing structure and only then invited KTD to take part (WWF informant 1, 01/08/12). Thus, KTD's role as practitioner and their connection to the market was undermined rather than supported by WWF-CK. KTD were keen to cooperate with WWF-CK but concerned about the conflict between their stated role as facilitators on the one hand and their manifested role as tour developers on the other; in addition, their inexperience in tourism resulted in excessively high village tour package prices (KTD informant 1, 30/07/12).

This conflict and other factors are described in the table below, in which each step in the best practice guidelines is compared with implementation in SNP.

Table 1: Ecotourism Frameworks and Sebangau National Park

Guidelines	Implemented by WWF-CK	Identified implementation around SNP
Baseline survey	✓	Workshops in local communities were held in Kamipang in 2003-04, but a tourism feasibility study was not undertaken until 2007; however this was lost. A destination review was therefore carried out but not stored safely. The research identified miscommunication and lack of partnership amongst the stakeholders, whose roots potentially lie in the lack of a baseline review accepted by all interested parties.
Funding	✓	Overseas governments, WWF country offices or the private sector are sponsoring WWF-CK projects. SIDA provided funding for the Socio-Economic Development Program in 2010-12 including the ecotourism projects in Kamipang. WWF-Sweden is also funding capacity-building activities within the villages. The portion of this funding allocated to ecotourism is minor, with most of it allocated to other socio-economic projects throughout Central Kalimantan. Separate funding for ecotourism was requested in 2010, but the proposal was rejected.
Overall vision		Ecotourism in Central Kalimantan and Palangka Raya is already facing challenges due to lack of tourism infrastructure and relevant knowledge within WWF-CK, which is the main agent for implementation. Several unproductive connections and different perceptions of ecotourism were identified amongst the stakeholders, which almost certainly accounts for the absence of an overall shared vision. For example, most villagers did not express an understanding of the benefits of conservation which underpins WWF-CK's vision.

Transparency and accountability in partnerships		The ecotourism projects in Kamipang require all stakeholders to be consulted and involved for consent in decisions taken. However, there was a significant lack of communication, cooperation and understanding of each other's roles amongst the stakeholders. The research revealed that WWF-CK has failed to prepare and facilitate the structure of partnerships and identify what roles stakeholders should have, including their own: for instance KTD were not included in decision-making regarding Kamipang tourism packages.
Market research		By failing to include tour operators in decision-making, WWF-CK has omitted a very important part of tourism implementation: namely market research and market-focussed adjustment of the product.
Review of legislation and control measures		As villages and tourism packages are located within SNP and in its surroundings, legislation from both government and SNPA must be considered. These can include the regulations and control measures available for implementation of the overall vision, goals and objectives for tourism and biodiversity ¹ . For tourism purposes, legislation concerning SNP should be updated, but the lack of a baseline review would make it difficult to create relevant legislation and control measures (even if the political will existed to do so). WWF-CK is planning zoning and land-use of SNP, but not in relation to the ecotourism product.
Assess and manage impacts		A thorough review based on negative outcomes and options for managing potential effects has not been carried out. The guidelines state that if information or assessment is not up to standard further studies may need to be undertaken, but due to financial constraints these have not taken place. The fact that villagers were unable to identify environmental negative impacts from tourism indicates that WWF-CK has not emphasized the negative impacts of tourism in their capacity building activities.
Monitoring strategy		In order to address the communication problems observed between stakeholders and detect 'triple bottom line' changes, a systematic monitoring and reporting framework is necessary.

It is clear from Table 1 that some similarities were found between the guidelines and the case study, especially regarding the first steps. How competently these have been carried out is however less clear, as evidence of lack of communication, trust and cooperation was found amongst all stakeholders. The two first steps are therefore questionable regarding their effectiveness. The findings show that WWF-CK did not follow any guidelines while starting the ecotourism projects, and initiated the projects without sufficient funding to bring their efforts to fruition. More significantly, WWF-CK has not been successful in establishing a well-thought-through collaboration between tour operators, villages and conservationists: this will be further discussed below.

Findings

WWF-CK works on several levels to preserve forest throughout Central Kalimantan, including using ecotourism to alleviate pressure on SNP. However, the field evidence shows that their interpretation of ecotourism has affected implementation, while they have been unable to prepare and facilitate structures and clarify stakeholder roles, including their own.

The case study of ecotourism in Kamipang is a microcosm of the themes discussed earlier in this paper, in which different perspectives on the nature of funding and relationships between donors and recipients were explored. The case of WWF-CK providing top-down funding to a bottom-up project supported the view that donor priorities affected project implementation at the expense of locals. SIDA and WWF-CK's agreement to develop ecotourism packages without providing sufficient funding to establish a coherent framework, networks, and partnership or even to prepare locals for the industry, was an inefficient relationship between donor and recipient. The supposed benefits for the community and conservation were limited and only affected a few local people. This has influenced relations between stakeholders and resulted in poor communication and lost opportunities.

The strategy for conservation through local inclusion by WWF-CK based on Indonesia's EBSP strategy is part of the current global philosophy which links conservation with development. However, the research demonstrated that WWF-CK has not been able to implement successful tourism products on behalf of conservation and development initiatives in this location, even though local communities and preservation of SNP are their main concern. Although the shortage of resources is certainly one factor in this failure, other matters have also impacted. Significantly, collaboration between stakeholders is vital to achieve successful ecotourism, but communication and collaboration amongst the stakeholders in the case study were not optimal. Furthermore, WWF-CK took on roles of implementation that should be controlled by stakeholders who have the knowledge and expertise in this area.

The analytical framework based on best practice guidelines evidenced that important strategies for positive implementation of ecotourism have not been considered by WWF-CK. Some similarities were found, such as local participation and efforts to engage stakeholders. Yet these attempts by WWF-CK would have been more effective if a thorough baseline review had been conducted with all stakeholders involved, together with a planned framework and construction of a common vision for ecotourism in Sebangau.

Overall, the goals and objectives of WWF-CK's implementation of ecotourism lack a performance-based character and clear targets for introduction of tourism products.

Since ecotourism is not providing expected results for conservation and development and important measures have not been implemented, a thorough impact analysis of applied ecotourism is difficult to conduct. The last steps of the best practice guidelines are therefore not applicable to ecotourism in Kamipang.

This report on WWF-CK supports researchers in indicating that conservation NGOs are unlikely to be able to develop ecotourism without creating direct links with the tourism industry, and the importance of projects being market-oriented, monitored, and having clear stakeholder inclusion⁷¹. WWF-CK did not communicate well with KTD nor recognise the importance of creating market-focused tourism products. As the products created are not reaching customers, tourism revenues are not generated and villagers are poorly incentivised to stop illegal tree-felling and other non-sustainable uses of SNP.

Our findings demonstrate that implementation of ecotourism in the villages of Kamipang has not yet achieved its aims in terms of creating additional livelihood income and incentives for local conservation of SNP. However, there are possibilities for improving the situation. Better results could be achieved with more funding, together with better understanding of the tourism market and the importance of utilizing tourism expertise. A new planning strategy based on recommendations provided by best practice guidelines should be considered for a thorough analysis of the destination's potential. The importance of market recognition is relevant to all conservation agencies involved in ecotourism. Recommendations for tourism planning strategies for conservation agencies and WWF-CK are given below.

Recommendations

The findings of this case study support findings by other researchers⁷², and therefore can be applied both to generic conservation organizations and to WWF-CK's renewed strategy planning.

■ Follow guidelines

Best practice guidelines for ecotourism implementation produced by international organizations should be used by conservation agencies as a step-by-step approach to introducing more organized ventures within the destination. If guidelines are used, challenges to the initiatives can be confronted at an earlier stage.

71 Font, X., Goodwin, H., & Watson, R. (2014). "Donor funded tourism projects: Factors for success". *Progress in Responsible Tourism*, 3:1, pp.7-30.

72 Font, X., Goodwin, H., & Watson, R. (2014). "Donor funded tourism projects: Factors for success". *Progress in Responsible Tourism*, 3:1, pp.7-30.

■ **Create proposals for funding**

Advice and strategies in the guidelines can be referred to when funding proposals are produced. Funding for stakeholder attendance at intensive capacity-building activities and for creating necessary strategies must be part of the proposal. Conservation agencies must prove their eligibility in terms of competence for implementing ecotourism projects.

■ **Introduce tourism expertise**

Ecotourism development requires tourism expertise from tour operators or consultants. Conservation practitioners must acknowledge the role of tourism professionals already in the destination and seek their advice before implementation and involved them at every stage of the project.

■ **Destination review**

A destination review carried out in accordance with local communities is essential to identify the best strategies for achieving social, economic and environmental benefits. A realistic assessment of the destination's potential will then form the baseline for further steps.

■ **Collaboration**

Conservation NGOs should collaborate with several sectors to create a multi-scalar knowledge partnership in order to achieve the best outcomes for conservation and development. For instance, WWF-CK could build networks between conservation organizations, tourism businesses and Palangka Raya University. Internships for students studying forestry, English, economy, and socio-economic development could be arranged to transfer knowledge between students and communities.

■ **Identify and separate roles amongst stakeholders**

A significant issue identified in Sebangau was the lack of support and clear roles associated with stakeholders. Conservation agencies should ideally not manage tourism themselves but focus on facilitating conservation and continue to bring stakeholders together. Tour operators should be acknowledged as an integral part of the implementation processes. Government and national park authorities should support conservation organizations and tour operators to increase livelihood income and protection of biodiversity.

■ **Framework and common vision for partnership**

All stakeholders must engage based on a common vision through an established framework, i.e. ecotourism based on protection of ecosystems and local livelihoods. All interested parties must acknowledge and support each other to increase successful results based on development and conservation initiatives.

■ **Encourage tourism understanding amongst public sector stakeholders**

National park authorities and other government officials should augment their knowledge of the realities of tourism and how to meet industry requirements. Conservation NGOs should encourage and facilitate protected area management to forge links with the tourism sector. This can benefit protected areas by raising awareness amongst visitors, as well as promote conservation of the area through tourism.

■ **Capacity building activities**

Local communities in the case study wanted more knowledge of the tourism industry and specialized capacity-building activities to enhance their product. Specific emphasis must be put on their roles within tourism, in the first instance based on hospitality, guiding, languages and cooking classes. Villagers should be given more understanding of market segments, especially in terms of their characteristics, motivation and needs. NGO workers should also be provided with more knowledge of tourism.

■ **Create market-focussed products**

An important missing component in Sebangau was the identification of markets based on thorough research into appropriate tourism products and market segments. This investigation should involve a tourism consultant and/or appropriate professionals, and thereby establish the destination's potential.

■ **Communication and reporting**

If a partnership is to succeed, good communication amongst stakeholders is essential throughout the process. Regular meetings updating on progress and identified issues throughout the programme must be held. Reports on step-by-step strategies, outcomes and follow-up commitments should be available to all stakeholders.

■ **Impact analysis**

The impacts of implementation must be analysed with particular emphasis on livelihood development and conservation. Tourism packages or projects should not begin until stakeholders and protected areas are ready. Once implemented, tourism must be managed with care to minimise negative social and environmental impacts from visitors. The economic benefits from tourism should benefit local communities to enhance their recognition of economic value from conservation efforts.

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Environmental, social and governance communication in investor relations: challenges and opportunities in the travel and tourism sector

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Abstract

The communication of environmental, social and governance information to investors is expected to have a positive impact on their perception of reduced risk and greater willingness to invest. However for this it is necessary that companies report more transparently, systematically and credibly, and that investors value more strongly non-economic performance corporate disclosure. This paper reports on semi-structured interviews with investor relations professionals in European and US companies showed that sustainability departments play a crucial role in relation to ESG, be it the collation, the understanding, the disclosure or the active communication. Likewise, interviewees seem to see it as a given that sustainability departments are involved to a very high degree. Some of the ESG work is happening in isolation within sustainability departments. IR departments are only superficially involved, or not at all. A lack of demand for ESG issues and information from mainstream investors and the financial market emerged as a key challenge for IR departments. When this information is asked, it is not as ESG per se but as part of the categories of 'corporate governance', 'travel and tourism specific' and 'regulation'. Strengthened legislation, integrated reporting, investor and business coalition initiatives as well as improved metrics all will help mainstream ESG integration into corporate reporting and overall investor relations.

Keywords: Socially responsible investment, shareholders, sustainability accounting, reporting, transparency.

Introduction

The idea that the financial market, and investors in particular, play a pivotal role in addressing social and environmental challenges and in financing a sustainable future is not new. It has been around for decades in different forms and under names such as socially responsible investment (SRI), responsible investment (RI) or ethical investment¹. Throughout, the aspiration and aim has always been the same: taking responsibility for wider society and the environment whilst generating positive financial returns.

¹ Eccles & Viviers, 2011; Gorte, 2008; Sandberg, Juravle, Hedesström, & Hamilton, 2008

In recent years, the consideration and integration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues has climbed up the corporate as well as the investors' agenda². This is due to a number of factors. The global financial crisis and its associated loss of credibility for financial market mechanisms and their short-term focus is surely one of them. It provoked a re-thinking of current systems and logics and facilitated (at least partly) a shift towards a more long-term orientated and comprehensive investment approach. An increasing number of conventional investors are interested in information which goes beyond traditional financial key performance indicators³.

However, SRI and, crucially, the consideration of ESG issues in conventional investment decision-making are still occupying a niche⁴. To move beyond this niche and to 'mainstream' ESG integration, conventional investors play a critical role. At the same time, listed companies need to disclose and supply investors with relevant and required ESG information.

Traditionally, quoted companies communicate and provide investors with information through various channels. One of the main objectives of corporate communication efforts to the financial market is to gain access to capital. As a result of the crucial relationship between a company and its investors, companies nowadays run dedicated Investor Relations (IR) departments. IR departments are considered the primary point of contact between a quoted company and the investor⁵.

Given the increased financial market demand for ESG issues on the one hand, and the crucial role IR departments play in communicating with investors on the other hand, this study aims at analysing the challenges and opportunities of IR departments' ESG communication. The study also examines how IR ESG communication can contribute to a 'mainstreaming' of ESG integration and if increased market demand for ESG issues is reflected in and reaches daily interactions between investors and companies.

Studies specifically analysing the role of IR departments in relation to ESG communication are very limited⁶. What distinguishes the present study from previous specific studies on the role of the IR department is a clear focus on its communication with mainstream investors (as opposed to SRI investors). This is because ESG consideration and, critically, ESG integration need to move beyond the still relatively small niche. Moreover, this study facilitates an understanding of how investors and IR professionals communicate with each other in one specific sector, i.e. the travel and tourism sector. This focus illustrates and exposes current practices in and challenges and opportunities for the IR profession and the tourism sector.

2 Gifford, 2012; UN Global Compact & Accenture, 2010

3 Cossette, 2011; Eccles, Krzus, & Serafeim, 2011; Hummels & Timmer, 2004; Thomson Reuters, 2012

4 ROBECO & Booz and Company, 2008; UN PRI, 2011

5 Investor Relations Society, 2011; NIRI, 2012

6 cf. Hockerts & Moir, 2004; DVFA & akzente, 2009

The significance of ESG for Investor Relations

The communication between quoted companies and the financial market about ESG issues is increasingly important and has attracted widespread attention in recent years⁷. On the one hand this is due to increased public scrutiny regarding non-financial issues, legislation and/or voluntary frameworks prescribing the disclosure of ESG information (e.g. Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)). On the other hand, and linked to the above, it is due to the increasing number of conventional and SRI investors interested in information beyond financial key performance indicators.

A growing number of studies and scholars stress the importance of ESG information for investors. They suggest solutions for investors on how best to use and understand ESG information⁸ as well as guidance on how corporate disclosure can be improved⁹. Although these studies underline improved and more active corporate disclosure as a key success factor, to date, the analysis of the specific role of IR departments has been limited¹⁰.

ESG and the capital market

When discussing the origin of ESG, it is essential to reflect back on the concept of Socially Responsible Investing (SRI). At the heart of SRI was - and still is - the premise that investments are not favourable if socially harmful or unethical. This premise resulted in the well-known umbrella term of 'negative screening'. Traditionally, investors screen possible investments against criteria such as tobacco, alcohol, gambling or weapon manufacture to ensure investments are in line with ethical, social or religious beliefs. Another example is the screening of listed tourism companies against their involvement in organising and packaging holidays to Burma.

The institutional side, such as pension funds, mainly drove the shift from SRI towards ESG and 'positive screening'. On the one hand because institutional investors were uncomfortable with terms like 'ethical' or 'responsible'. "They wanted an acronym that stripped away the moral aspects of what we do and made it a function of data and information. Institutions are largely phobic about values, and there is a belief that you might violate your fiduciary duties if you applied moral as opposed to investment values to the process."¹¹ On the other hand because of the appreciation that environmental, social and governance issues can have massive negative/positive impacts on the (long-term) value and performance of investments.

⁷ Ceres, 2010; Hummels & Timmer, 2004; KPMG, 2011; UN Global Compact & Accenture, 2010

⁸ Allianz Global Investors, 2011; CA Cheuvreux, 2011; CFA Institute Centre for Financial Market Integrity, 2008; Federation of European Accountants, 2011

⁹ Arthur D. Little, 2003; CA Cheuvreux, 2011; CSR Europe & INSEAD CMER, n.d.; Gitman, Chorn, & Fargo, 2009; IFC, FDFA, & UN Global Compact, 2006; The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, 2010

¹⁰ Fieseler, 2011; Hockerts & Moir, 2004

¹¹ Drucker, 2009, p.74

2011 research from YouGov demonstrates how the green and ethical investment market and its public perception has evolved in recent years. Nowadays, about 25% of British adults holding investments want more information on ownership practice¹². Similar trends can be observed in other countries¹³. The European SRI Study 2010 conducted by UKSIF estimates SRI Assets under Management (AuM) in the UK at £938.9 billion¹⁴. The outlined growth is encouraging and demonstrates that investors are seeking alternative channels to deploy their capital. However, a report by ROBECO and consulting firm Booz and Company¹⁵ suggests that by 2015 SRI will reach only up to 15-20% of global AuM. Hence, to date, SRI can still be described as a relative niche market¹⁶.

In recent UN PRI (United Nations Principles for Responsible Investing) figures on the ESG integration for different asset classes as outlined in Table 1, the percentage of assets subject to integration ranges substantially. Listed equities – in the focus of this study – represent only 5% to 9% relative to total market size. CA Cheuvreux¹⁷ arrive at a similar assessment and questions the progress of integration given that UN PRI signatories currently represent one fifth of global capital. Thus, ESG integrated global market share could potentially be much higher.

Table 1: AuM subject to ESG integration via PRI signatories¹⁸

2010 AuM (per asset class)	Assets subject to integration via PRI signatories (in US\$ billions)	Total market size (in US\$ billions)	Share of total market
Listed equities (developed markets)	3,679	39,867	9%
Listed equities (emerging markets)	729	16,087	5%
Fixed income (sovereign and others)	2,815	34,922	8%
Fixed income (corporate issuers)	2,275	7,859	29%
Private equity	209	2,517	8%
Listed real estate or property	171	799	21%
Non-listed real estate or property	711	10,511	7%
Hedge funds	33	1,920	2%
Infrastructure	105	28,900	0%
Total	10,727	143,382	7%

12 Shepherd, 2011

13 Sandberg, 2010

14 UKSIF, 2010

15 ROBECO & Booz and Company, 2008

16 Fieseler, 2011; Sandberg, 2010

17 CA Cheuvreux 2011

18 UN PRI, 2011, p.16

One prominent debate amongst practitioners and academics explaining the lack of ESG integration is about fiduciary duty. The question is to what extent do fiduciaries such as pension funds have a responsibility or the right to consider extra-financial factors in their investment decisions¹⁹? If they do not, it would provide one explanation for the still limited demand. A 2005 report by law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer commissioned by UNEP FI, however, can be considered as a paradigm shift as it recommended the integration of ESG issues into investment decisions²⁰. "Taking ESG concerns into account is argued to be obligatory when such concerns are financially relevant – that is, when a certain company's or industry's ESG performance reasonably can be expected to have an impact on its financial performance or valuation"²¹.

Investor Relations and mainstream communication

The fact that IR departments have not played a major role in communicating ESG to investors is in contrast to their purpose. IR departments are considered the primary link between a quoted company and investors. This link can be described as "the communication of information and insight between a company and the investment community. This process enables a full appreciation of the company's business activities, strategy and prospects and allows the market to make an informed judgment about the fair value and appropriate ownership of a company"²². The following activities can be identified as key communication channels between the IR department/the company and the financial market/investors. Although this list is not comprehensive it provides a good overview of how companies communicate and interact with the financial market:

Table 2: IR mainstream communication channels²³

IR communication channels	Comments
Analyst call	E.g. with sell-side, buy-side
Annual general meeting	
Annual reports & accounts	
Bespoke media communications	E.g. newsletters, mailing lists, website postings, social media (Twitter, Facebook)
Conference presentations	
Corporate website	E.g. IR sub-section
Individual meetings	E.g. between CEO/CFO and investor/analyst

19 Sandberg, 2010

20 Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, 2005

21 Sandberg, 2010, p.147

22 Investor Relations Society, 2011

23 Davis, 2010; Laskin, 2010, own research

IR communication channels	Comments
Investor calls	
Mass media communications	E.g. editorials, interviews, advertisements
One-to-one communication	E.g. telephone conversations or written communication with individual investors / analysts
Ownership and shareholder structure reports and analysis	
Proxy statement	
Quarterly reports	
Responses to requests	E.g. from existing or potential investors, ad-hoc
Roadshows	
Trading updates	

Investor Relations and ESG communication

Since the increase in ESG interest, a broad range of academic and practitioner research has been published in the field²⁴. Only a limited number of studies address the specific role of IR departments²⁵. However, a body of research and reports highlights the importance of corporate ESG communication in general, or at least comments in passing on the role of the IR department²⁶. Likewise, a substantial number of reports and academic articles analyses the specific role and demand of investors and analysts in relation to ESG²⁷. Apart from Henle²⁸ none of these studies focus on one specific sector.

As outlined above, only a limited number of studies have analysed the role of IR departments in communicating ESG (or sustainability in general) to investors, or what role IR departments can play in further fostering stronger consideration of ESG issues. Hockerts & Moir state that, "To date studies researching CSR make only passing comment on the role of IR professionals of which only a small number have examined specifically the link between corporate responsibility and investor relations"²⁹. In their 2004 study they interviewed 20 IR professionals about their perception of ESG and sustainability in general (then CSR), the role they played in managing ESG, and how they believed their profession would develop with regards to ESG.

24 Amaeshi & Grayson, 2009; UNEP Finance Initiative, 2007

25 CSR Europe & INSEAD CMER, n.d.; DVFA & akzente, 2009; Hockerts & Moir, 2004; NIRI, 2009

26 Arthur D. Little, 2003; EABIS, 2009; Gitman, Chorn & Fargo, 2009; IFC, FDFA & UN Global Compact, 2006; Laskin, 2010

27 CFA Institute Centre for Financial Market Integrity, 2008; EABIS, 2009; Eccles, Krzus & Serafeim, 2011; Fieseler, 2011; Henle, 2008; IFC, 2005; Sullivan, 2011; The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, 2010

28 Henle, 2008

29 Hockerts & Moir, 2004, p. 87

It is important to note that none of the studies included an IR representative from a listed travel and tourism company, nor do any make specific reference to the ESG risks and opportunities within the travel and tourism industry. Nonetheless, specific reports on the ESG issues of the sector have been published in the past³⁰ and recent projects on the identification of specific ESG issues per sector have taken travel and tourism into consideration³¹.

As a response to the request for non-financial information, quoted companies nowadays produce costly and time-consuming sustainability reports, submit data to voluntary initiatives such as the CDP³² or respond to third-party data provider surveys such as the FTSE4GOOD index or the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI). In many cases, SRI investors or investors interested in ESG issues are dealt with by a cross-departmental function that sits between IR and sustainability³³.

ESG what...? Speaking the same language!

The discipline of sustainability and its associated researchers and practitioners still face a terminology problem. The ESG market is no exception³⁴. Eccles & Viviers³⁵ study analyses 190 academic papers all using names describing investment practices that integrate a consideration of ESG issues. It revealed a lack of clear understanding and a broad use of terms. Consistent definitions of ESG, SRI, and other related terms such as responsible investment (RI) are still lacking and make it hard for professionals on both sides (IR departments, investors, and analysts) to speak the exact same language, let alone differentiate ESG from SRI or other terms.

Recent studies have attempted to establish a clearer understanding of distinctions between ESG and associated terms, with mixed success. In many cases, these studies refer to the term SRI, as outlined by Sandberg: "Whereas conventional or mainstream investment focuses solely upon financial risk and return, SRI thus includes social or environmental goals or constraints as well as more conventional financial criteria in decisions over whether to, e.g., acquire, hold or dispose of a particular investment"³⁶.

As the above discussion of terminologies illustrates, both in practice and in the academic literature, the terms ESG, SRI and RI have tended to be used interchangeably. This study acknowledges the difficulty of clear separations. It uses ESG as a term to describe the consideration of environmental, social and governance issues in investment decisions with a focus on financial impact and risk mitigation.

30 Bank Sarasin & Cie AG, 2012; Eurosif & Vigeo, 2005

31 EFFAS & DVFA, 2010

32 KPMG, 2011

33 DVFA & akzente, 2009

34 CA Cheuvreux, 2011; Drucker, 2009; Fieseler, 2011; NIRI, 2009

35 Eccles & Viviers, 2011

36 Sandberg, 2010, p. 143

Methodology

The lack of previous empirical research on how IR professionals communicate on ESG issues with conventional investors suggested the value of an exploratory approach. This study understands exploratory research as a qualitative method designed to maximise the discovery of information. It is in line, therefore, with existing attempts to describe exploratory research approaches, which “usually aim to develop an initial understanding of a phenomenon under investigation” and address “a question, a problem, or an area of concern that has previously been unresearched or under-researched.”³⁷

The fact that none of the previous research had focused on one specific sector – alongside the economic importance and substantial exposure to ESG issues – encouraged me to select the travel and tourism sector as my empirical setting.

The aim of the study was not to test prior hypotheses but to approach this relatively unexplored field openly with regard to its communicative discourses. To that end I chose to carry out semi-structured interviews with relevant market participants of listed companies in the travel and tourism sector. In its design the research follows the main steps in qualitative business research³⁸.

The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with relevant market participants of the travel and tourism sector. The interviewees were predominantly IR professionals. The seniority of those IR professionals interviewed differed from company to company (e.g. director level, IR manager). The majority of the interviews with European and UK companies were face-to-face. All interviews with US company representatives took place via telephone conversations. All interviews were carried out in a 4-months period between February 2012 and May 2012. Interviews lasted on average between 30 and 45 minutes. Table 3 provides a list of the companies interviewed, their geographic location, line of business, and stock exchange listing.

37 Mason, Augustyn, & Seakhoa-King, 2010, p.434

38 Bryman & Bell, 2011, pp.389

Table 3: List of interviewed travel and tourism companies³⁹

Company	Country	Line of business	Listing
Carnival Corporation and PLC	UK / US	Cruise ships	FTSE/ NYSE
KUONI Travel Holding Ltd.	CH	Tour operator	SIX
Thomas Cook Group PLC	UK	Tour operator	FTSE
Travelzest PLC	UK	Tour operator	FTSE
TUI AG	DE	Tour operator	DAX
TUI Travel PLC	UK	Tour operator	FTSE
MyTravel PLC	UK	Tour operator	FTSE ¹
Wyndham Worldwide	US	Hotel and resorts	NYSE

1 MyTravel PLC traded as a separate entity until it merged with Thomas Cook Group PLC

Using an interview guide, all interviews were split up into seven broad sections: (1) 'Confidentiality, anonymisation, consent', (2) 'Basic data', (3) 'SRI/ESG background and existing knowledge', (4) 'Current investor base', (5) 'Current and previously used tools of IR communication', (6) 'Current demand from the financial market' and (7) 'Final remarks and comments'. All interviews were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed⁴⁰. In addition, hand-written notes were taken. Where a quotation was later used within the research, the approval of the interviewee was sought prior to inclusion.⁴¹

In order to allow for a manageable, feasible and defined sample this research excludes 'transportation only' providers such as airlines. Instead it focuses on companies combining tourism and travel elements in their products and services.

By analysing 'blue chip' indices in Europe, the UK and the US, a sample of listed travel and tourism companies was composed. Subsequently, these listed companies were selected and invited to participate in the research. In addition to 'blue chip' listed companies, industry relevant mid- and small-cap companies were added to the sample, applying the principles of convenience sampling.

A coding process in line with exploratory research principles enabled me to identify concepts, categories and hypotheses from the interview transcripts. Taking into consideration findings from the literature review and comparing results from both elements of this research I eventually arrived at a number of theoretical outcomes and practical recommendations.

³⁹ Own table, 2012

⁴⁰ One interview was not recorded and instead notes were taken

⁴¹ Sources of quotations in the findings are indicated in brackets. They are labelled Company A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H without any reference to Table 3 to ensure confidentiality.

The research aims to address reliability and validity through the criteria of trustworthiness⁴². However, as the interview sample covers different organisations and individuals in different locations and different environments with different backgrounds and different levels of seniority, the results and findings of the study are not generalizable or directly transferable to other sectors. Nonetheless, I consider some aspects of my research and findings to provide a more general idea of the status of IR ESG communication that go beyond the sample of this research, as well as beyond the travel and tourism sector.

It is important to highlight a potential response bias based on social desirability which might impact on the results and findings⁴³. This is particularly the case in relation to interviewees answering questions guided by what they believe is socially expected to be the morally appropriate answer.

The fact that the interview guide included defined and open questions minimised the risk that the researcher's values, experience and opinion would influence the course of the interview. However, a small researcher bias cannot be excluded.

Findings

Strategic approach, scope and boundaries

Throughout the interviews many companies reported a clear division of responsibilities and tasks in relation to the collation of ESG-related data as well as to the communication and disclosure of such data. In the majority of cases sustainability departments or sustainability managers control the issue. What becomes apparent is that the resources available differ depending on the company size. *"In small companies it is very different because we don't have the same pressure, that's the right word. And we small companies are at the bottom end of investor interest. And so, the requirement for those boards to have a standing item for example would be very limited."*⁴⁴ None of the respondents of larger companies reported a dedicated ESG function within the IR department.

Where in-house resources are available there seems to be a trend of IR departments drawing on the expertise of sustainability departments. Although the IR department might not be involved in detail in the collation and disclosure of ESG issues, they are aware that someone within the company is taking care of it: *"I really don't know how he [the sustainability manager] collects his information. I know that we have a CSR section on the website where he does inform anyone who is interested about what we do in that respect, but that's all I know."*⁴⁵ Surprisingly, responses to questionnaires from third-party data providers such as FTSE4GOOD and DJSI are in most cases managed and administered

42 Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1994, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.395ff.

43 Randall & Fernandes, 1991

44 Company A, 2012

45 Company B, 2012

by sustainability departments. In some cases the IR department is not involved at all or not aware of the questionnaires: *"I haven't seen [these questionnaires] for, I would say, five, six, seven years. Maybe these are the type of things that go directly to the [sustainability department] today and I don't even see them."*⁴⁶

In some cases a closer relationship through regular communication and meetings between the IR department and the sustainability department can be identified. As one respondent described it: *"A number of central functions are involved [...]. These are the group sustainability team, the group fuel-hedging manager which also deals with carbon trading and EU ETS. And then the group company secretary who deals with all issues in relation to corporate governance. So it's like a small team of experts. Group sustainability plays the key role though."*⁴⁷ Another interviewee underlined the importance of IR involvement from a messaging point of view: *"Because we [the IR department] have so much and different contact with investors and analysts and also researchers, we want to make sure that we speak with one voice when we communicate with the financial market. It all needs to go hand in hand and be consistent."*⁴⁸

Respondents did not give the impression that these arrangements with the sustainability departments are necessarily something that needs restructuring or reviewing. This may be due to the fact that they are aware of the time and resources required to respond to such questionnaires but also the underlying understanding that ESG issues are primarily dealt with by sustainability departments.

Altogether the interviews showed that sustainability departments play a crucial role in relation to ESG, be it the collation, the understanding, the disclosure or the active communication. Likewise, interviewees seem to see it as a given that sustainability departments are involved to a very high degree.

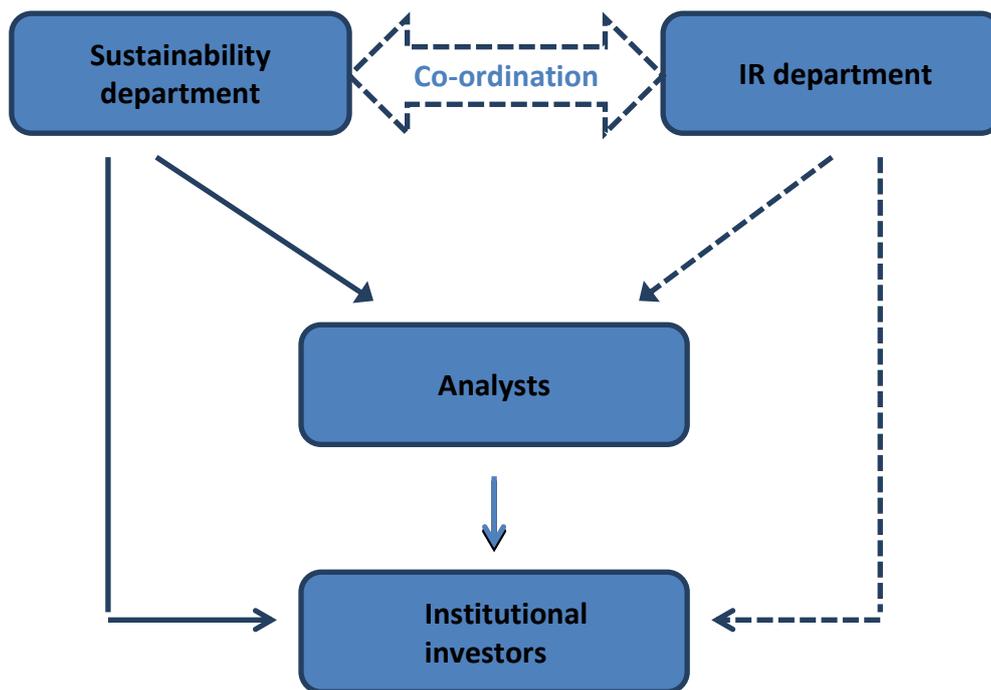
The responses indicate that some of the ESG work is happening in isolation within sustainability departments. IR departments are only superficially involved, or not at all. However, the IR departments are well aware that the sustainability department is dealing with these issues and they see it as their responsibility, almost as an unwritten rule. *"I suppose in terms of our role in IR, the communication with that [sustainability] team as far as I understand has been infrequent. Typically once or twice a year, in terms of formal sit-downs. But I think that's something that you know we are looking to change."*⁴⁹ Figure 1 below illustrates how corporate ESG disclosure to investors is structured in the travel and tourism companies interviewed. The dotted lines represent a less frequently observed process, highlighting a lack of co-operation and a lesser involvement of the IR department.

46 Company B, 2012

47 Company C, 2012

48 Company D, 2012

49 Company F, 2012

Figure 1: Lack of co-operation in corporate ESG disclosure⁵⁰

An exception is the issue of corporate governance. This is managed and administered by either the IR department or the company secretary or similar functions depending on country and existing legislation.

ESG communication

When asked about the integration of ESG into IR communication and the use of tools, respondents provided a number of interesting results. These tools are very much in line with what the literature review revealed (see Table 2: 'IR mainstream communication channels'). Respondents indicated that to a limited degree, a number of mainstream IR communication tools already include some form of ESG reference or at least make passing comments on ESG. In addition, IR departments (and sustainability departments) make use of specific communication tools to disclose ESG issues to the financial market and primarily SRI/ethical investors. As mentioned above, these tools are not necessarily controlled, managed or administered by the IR department. However, the IR department is aware of its use and ownership. Finally, specific and active ESG disclosure to and communication with mainstream investors is almost non-existent.

The following Table 4 illustrates interviewees' responses with regards to what communication tools are used to disclose ESG information. It aims at providing a broad overview of where practitioners currently apply integration of ESG. 'ESG specific' communication tools are specifically and exclusively focused on ESG and/or wider sustainability issues, and are aimed at investors with an interest in ESG. 'ESG integrated'

⁵⁰ Own figure, 2012

communication tools are considered mainstream IR communication tools but they contain elements of ESG.

Table 4: Integration of ESG into IR and corporate communication⁵¹

IR tool	ESG specific	ESG integrated	Comments
Analyst/investor calls		○	E.g. included into CEO/CFO presentation; Q&A
Annual general meeting		○	E.g. included in CEO speech, appendix to AGM slides
Annual report		●	E.g. included in the Chairman's letter, CEO statement, Directors' report
Carbon Disclosure Project	●		If company meets requirements for inclusion in CDP questionnaire target group
Corporate website		●	E.g. in strategy section, business overview
Corporate website: IR section		○	E.g. downloadable ESG-related documents such as corporate governance or ethics policies
Corporate website: Sustainability section	●		
Direct contact/ queries/ meetings with company secretary		○	E.g. as part of a wider investor engagement
Direct contact/ queries/ meetings with IR team	○	○	E.g. specific questions on ESG as part of a wider dialogue
Direct contact/ queries/ meetings with sustainability team	○		E.g. specific questions on ESG issues
Earnings reports (e.g. quarterly)		○	E.g. quarterly earnings report
ESG questionnaires	●		E.g. FTSE4GOOD, DJSI if company meets requirements for inclusion in questionnaire target group
Integrated reporting		○	Annual reporting that combines both the standard annual report and the sustainability report
Investor 1-to-1's		○	E.g. specific questions on ESG as part of a wider dialogue
Investor webinars/ teleconferences		○	E.g. as part of a wider dialogue
IR conference presentations		○	E.g. specific slides on ESG issues
Media communications/ press releases	●	○	E.g. communication about a company's strategy, specific ESG achievements
Proxy statement		○	E.g. if ESG issues are on the AGM agenda or if prescribed by listing regulations
Roadshows: ESG specific	○		E.g. Targeting the SRI/ethical investor
Roadshows: Mainstream		○	E.g. specific slides or annex on ESG issues
Sustainability report	●		
US SEC 10-K		●	If listed in the US

51 Own table, 2012; ● = frequent use; ○ = used, but less frequent

ESG questionnaires are seen as an important tool but the time and resources required to respond to these questionnaires is widely criticised. Additionally, respondents indicated the lack of focus or specificity of the questionnaires. What is material to one industry might be immaterial to another industry, and currently a broad range of sectors is covered by the same questionnaire. As one respondent summarised: *"They are lumping us with other categories like restaurants and media."*⁵² Specific industry metrics have not been included into questionnaires which hinders comparison and makes clear differentiation difficult.

IR departments are sceptical about another communications tool used to disclose ESG information: Sustainability reports. They indicate that mainstream investors are not very likely to read these reports. This is in contrast to perceived corporate practice and industry assumptions. Investors are nowadays normally described a key target audience for sustainability reports.

Usability and timing of communications has been brought up as an additional issue. *"It's on the day [of the results] or the week following that people will actually really have a lot of focus in terms of seeing the key message. And this will form their opinions, that may change the numbers, that may move us in terms of recommendations [...] By the time the annual report comes out there are very few analysts that will actually flick through that again to work out what's different."*⁵³ That in turn leads to a question as to whether some IR communication tools are better suited to include ESG information than others. If practitioners' experience is to be believed, an inclusion of ESG information on results days is key to reaching mainstream investors and analysts. The same might then also apply to sustainability reports and explain why investors and analysts are only interested to a very limited degree: *"I don't think they [investors, analysts] are reading the sustainability report."*⁵⁴

When asked about future plans for a more active communication of ESG issues, respondents' opinions were divided. On the one hand, and predominantly, there was a clear statement that only demand from the mainstream financial market would enable a change of practice. Hence arguments for an investor 'pull'. On the other hand, some respondents mentioned the responsibility of corporations to 'push' out information, thus contributing to change through active communication and potentially 'education'. A more active communication of ESG issues is seen as a *"good idea."*⁵⁵ *"Having a small statement, a small paragraph in the earnings release and even just one page on a presentation, I don't think there is any harm."*⁵⁶

52 Company G, 2012

53 Company F, 2012

54 Company C, 2012

55 Company H, 2012

56 Company F, 2012

Investor demand

A lack of demand for ESG issues and information from mainstream investors and the financial market emerged as a key challenge for IR departments. Put simply, mainstream investors do not regularly ask or communicate about ESG with IR departments. If they do, it is very rarely, and happens on the periphery of other financial market communications. Respondents' statements underline the issue: *"Generic investors, it's not really something that would normally perk their interest or they would be, you know, inquiring about."*⁵⁷ Another opinion states that: *"So in my daily business I rarely get confronted [with ESG]. It's negligible - apart from the time and energy intense questionnaires."*⁵⁸ Although interviewees broadly agreed that demand is very limited, some mentioned some form of consideration. It seems, though, that this is – at least for the moment – a very 'light' consideration. The two following quotations put such considerations into context: *"It's always a bit of a side topic. I mean it's there, but at the end of the day, if it really comes to taking a decision, this is not one of the pillars they are looking at. I mean, it's nice to have and you have to show it. Let's put it that way."*⁵⁹ *"If you are not having it at all, I would say, they would maybe look a little closer to it. But, I would say, it's not a deal-breaker."*⁶⁰

Market failures and wrong incentives were identified as an issue that hinders investor to focus on long-term issues such as ESG, particularly the focus on the short-term and short-term results: *"I think the focus has to change completely. But as long as we have that quarterly thinking I don't really think that in the short-term that it is going to change."*⁶¹

Material issues

As discussed in the previous chapter, overall, respondents were very clear about the lack of mainstream investor demand for ESG information. Nonetheless, occasionally investors do discuss ESG issues with IR departments. In the majority of cases, however, it does not happen as a specific discussion about ESG.

When asked about ESG issues those can be attributed to the categories of 'corporate governance', 'travel and tourism specific' and 'regulation'. As one respondent described it: *"Corporate governance and carbon trading are the main issues which fall under sustainability from an IR point of view. It's mostly about regulation and issues which have a real impact on the business."*⁶²

Under the category of travel and tourism specific, respondents indicated the following issues:-

⁵⁷ Company H, 2012

⁵⁸ Company D, 2012

⁵⁹ Company H, 2012

⁶⁰ Company B, 2012

⁶¹ Company B, 2012

⁶² Company C, 2012

- Employee satisfaction, treatment of employees, labour standards e.g. in destinations or in in-house operated call centres
- Customer satisfaction scores
- Carbon and carbon equivalent emissions
- Efficiency and environmental performance of operations, in particular company-owned airlines and cruise ships, e.g. the introduction of Boeing 787 'Dreamliners' to the fleet of aircrafts.

Sporadically, respondents also brought up issues such as:

- Efficiency and environmental performance of company-owned and/or company-controlled hotels and ground transport
- Impact on local communities and destinations, e.g. the impact of a new-built port on local communities, businesses and environment
- Accidents
- Biodiversity, e.g. impact on and damage to the tourism product itself
- Child protection – and related – sex tourism, e.g. the sphere of control and responsibility in hotels especially when not owned
- Animal welfare.

The question about material issues led in turn to a discussion about investors' and analysts' requirements for figures, data and quantifiable information. Overwhelmingly, respondents gave the impression that issues become material for investors and analysts once the company manages to translate them into 'hard' figures such as monetary value: *"And the bottom line is: Investors are trying to figure out what is material to a company. What is material within ESG and what can you actually place value on."*⁶³ Once this challenge is overcome, ESG issues could then be integrated into financial models and other tools to establish the impact on company value or share price. Interviewees stressed that *"we must never lose sight that the primary communication requirement with investors is how much profit we [as a company] are going to make."*⁶⁴ and *"it's the naked figures that matter."*⁶⁵

Terminology

One result of the interviews is to suggest that corporate practitioners have a general understanding of and appreciation for ESG issues. However, the terms they use to describe these issues can differ from company to company. All respondents have an agreed in-house term they apply to describe their activities and engagement. This can range from simply 'sustainability' to 'corporate responsibility' or 'CSR'. All respondents are aware of ESG issues and how they impact on their company, and believe that taking

63 Company G, 2012

64 Company A, 2012

65 Company B, 2012

them into consideration is – at least to some extent – important for the company and its relationship with investors.

The interviews confirm a lack of common and widely agreed definitions. As one interviewee indicated: *“With all the terms it’s a bit of an ‘alphabet soup’ and it’s not really clear how they [the terms] are defined or how they can be differentiated.”*⁶⁶ Another respondent comes to a similar conclusion: *“I think it’s a part that is blurry in my view. ESG and SRI. And many people can view that as being something very similar in many respects. You know, ESG, SRI, sustainable investment, I think people have a broader understanding but I think probably many people don’t really understand what the clear differentiation between each of them are.”*⁶⁷ The message is that intrinsically they understand the subject of sustainability and its impact on the company, despite the fluidity of terms.

Altogether the interviews showed that companies themselves apply different terms depending on whom they are talking to. What is key from their point of view is to use the right term for the right audience: *“We understand that it depends on the forum that you are speaking in.”*⁶⁸

Discussion

The interviews have disclosed a number of challenges and opportunities with respect to IR ESG communication. Terminology surrounding ESG is one of them. However, there is shared belief that eventually investors and corporate practitioners will arrive at a suitable term. In the light of the overall research question terminology seems to be a more minor challenge.

The far more important challenge is an overwhelming perception of a lack of investor demand. Even if the interviews confirmed that the issue of ESG communication and ESG integration is becoming more and more important, this does not reflect corporate experience. As illustrated in the findings, respondents were very vocal about the minimal exposure to ESG inquiries in their daily jobs. Whether this is a phenomenon unique to the travel and tourism sector needs to be further analysed. Previous research by Hockerts & Moir⁶⁹ and DVFA & akzente⁷⁰ suggests otherwise. Both come to similar conclusions and highlight the limited exposure to ESG in IR daily practice. This demonstrates a contradiction between actual corporate practice and a wide number of academic literature and practitioners’ reports. The common claims on the importance and the demand for more disclosure⁷¹ require critical examination.

66 Company C, 2012

67 Company F, 2012

68 Company E, 2012

69 Hockerts & Moir, 2004

70 DVFA & akzente, 2009

71 Allianz Global Investors, 2011; Arthur D. Little, 2003; CSR Europe & INSEAD CMER, n.d.; Gitman, Chorn & Fargo, 2009; Hummels & Timmer, 2004; KPMG, 2011

Although companies do already disclose ESG information, the results question whether the location, timing, and format are tailored to the needs of the financial market. In order to succeed, the current co-operation and involvement of IR departments in the collation, disclosure and messaging of ESG information needs to be improved. IR departments have the potential to demonstrate to investors how the consideration of ESG issues can positively impact on a company's financial performance.

It also emerged that the travel and tourism sector lacks bespoke metrics. It hinders a detailed and true analysis of the sector and its companies' performance. More work is required to provide the travel and tourism sector with key metrics and key non-financial performance indicators that reflect the fundamental and crucial ESG challenges it is facing.

Another driver for improved disclosure and consequently a more active investor consideration is an increase in legislation. Although voluntary initiatives such as the CDP and sustainability reporting against GRI guidelines have changed practices across many sectors, they do not reach the entirety of the market as effectively as legislation. This is why investor and business coalitions are increasingly calling for a stronger integration of ESG reporting.

This in turn leads to the emergence of integrated reporting, which has been mentioned by a number of respondents albeit applied very sporadically. Integrated reporting strives towards a corporate reporting which merges financial and non-financial reporting in order to provide stakeholders of a company with a true view, performance and value of the firm⁷².

Strengthened legislation, integrated reporting, investor and business coalition initiatives as well as improved metrics all help achieving a mainstreaming of ESG integration. Likewise, they throw into question whether current structures of corporate ESG disclosure and the involvement of IR departments in particular are fit for purpose.

The above suggest that the current strategic approach and structures need to change when it comes to co-ordination and mutual consulting between the IR departments and other corporate departments, especially the sustainability department. The developments and initiatives described above would require a substantial increase in involvement of IR departments.

Although IR ESG communication faces numerous challenges, an increased involvement of IR departments seems indispensable going forward. It would create a huge opportunity for improved corporate ESG disclosure, the provision of information to investors as desired, and, finally, a substantial contribution of the IR profession to mainstreaming ESG integration.

72 Eccles & Krzus, 2010

Conclusions

The study confirmed that ESG issues and information have climbed up the corporate agenda. IR professionals in the travel and tourism sector are very aware of the importance of ESG. Likewise, academic and practitioners' literature stress the role of corporate ESG disclosure. Although encouraging growth can be observed, figures from UN PRI and other organisations suggest that ESG integration is still in its infancy. It accounts for only a small part when compared to total market size.

Interestingly, this growing importance of ESG for investors and IR professionals alike is not reflected in the day-to-day routine of IR professionals interviewed. Demand for ESG information in IR-investor dialogues is overwhelmingly described as limited. The research revealed that, although day-to-day communication about ESG issues is occurring only rarely, companies have found ways to communicate ESG issues to the financial market.

While these positive developments can be observed, bold steps are required to achieve a mainstreaming of ESG integration in investment decisions.

IR departments - the major subject of this study - have to play their role in actively communicating ESG issues to their mainstream investors. Even if demand is limited, they are in a position to 'push' investors towards more integration and consideration of ESG issues. This is especially the case for a sector as exposed as travel and tourism. These steps can and will raise awareness amongst investors. It is at the same time an opportunity to demonstrate leadership; leadership by corporate function, i.e. the IR department or even leadership by sector, i.e. the travel and tourism sector. This, in turn, will help corporates and investors alike to finance a sustainable future.

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Dialogic communications: A content analysis of the Australian and Costa Rican official tourism websites

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Abstract

National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) employ official tourism websites to present the values of national culture which are central to sustainability and promote tourism services. Using the theory of dialogue, this article explores whether NTOs are embracing dialogic communications via official tourism websites and sheds light on the role of public relations as cultural intermediaries and the capacity of computer-mediated communications to give voice to more people than before. The official Australian and Costa Rican tourism websites were used as objects in a comparative content analysis following the five dialogic features proposed by Kent, Taylor and White: ease of the interface, usefulness of information, generation of return visits, conservation of visitors and dialogic loop. The study used a 41 dialogic item questionnaire and personal online interviews with the countries' public relations practitioners involved in the website communications strategy. The main results were: a) both practitioners view their role as cultural intermediaries beyond marketing and promotional tourism. b) although the Australian dialogic features rate is higher than that of the Costa Rican site, a striking result lies in the Costa Rican superiority in key dialogic features to embrace dialogue with users and c) computer mediated communication is giving a greater voice to people to whom NTOs did not have access before. This was particularly identified in the Australia analysis and the employment of social networks. Although both NTOs stated a belief in the huge potential of their websites to enter into dialogue with worldwide users, they are not fully employing the dialogic capacity of this channel.

Keywords: Dialogue theory, communication, marketing, consumer behaviour, tourism, culture

Introduction

Back in the 1980s, before the proliferation of the internet, National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) focused their promotional function on advertising and promotional material. The intended targeted were agents and information providers. In the 1990s and 2000s, these trends changed drastically. A more participative public was motivated

by the development of official tourism websites that served as the gateway to what the countries had to offer. Tourists became the targeted public via the web. The theme for this article emerged from reflecting on the communication systems that have been put in place by NTOs this decade. Although tourism is recognised by some scholars as an increasingly relevant and interesting field for public relations, it has not received much attention, either within the public relations theory or the research field¹. Rather, it has mainly been researched following marketing and business models in which public relations is merely seen as a marketing tool². In addition, no research has been conducted applying dialogic communications in the field of tourism. Hence, the findings of this study attempt to fill this gap and to contribute to the research on dialogue in public relations.

Tourism literature overview

The role of National Tourism Organisations (NTOs)

The level of a government's involvement in tourism policies depends upon the economic and political situation in each particular country. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) distinguishes two levels of tourism management within a country. The first is the National Tourism Administration (NTA); which is the central government agency that serves as a coordinator of broad tourism policies among various local and regional activities. The second is the National Tourism Organisation (NTO), which depends on the tourism establishment and its economic importance within the overall industry. NTOs are usually separate, semi-autonomous governmental agencies or quasi-governmental corporate structures that are responsible for the formulation and implementation of promotional strategies. They are often in charge of relations with the private sector and industry associations³.

Contrary to this NTO/NTA nomenclature, Choy⁴ does not differentiate between the term NTO and NTA but instead draws an interesting point in relation to the stage of development of the destination in question. The priorities of a destination may change according to its stage of development, so an NTO's team may have to adjust and undertake alternative roles, for example, from developmental to marketing to management to innovation with each successive product life cycle. Destinations will succeed if they are adaptable and able to respond to new visitor needs. It could be argued that NTO, as a semi-autonomous government agency, can provide more flexibility in changing environments than a governmental body, which usually operates using lengthy bureaucratic processes.

1 L'Etang, Falkheimer & Lugo, 2007

2 L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006

3 UNWTO, 1979

4 Choy, 1993

Private sector involvement in NTOs

Bearing in mind the stage of a country's development, the degree of private sector involvement in NTOs varies. In some countries, private industry may only provide funding or be part of the management team. In other countries, the private sector is strongly involved in creating and implementing promotional strategies. Western countries from North America and Europe, for example, have undergone a drastic change; from a traditional public administration model, which sought to implement government policy for the public good, to a more commercialised, privatised model⁵.

An important issue related to the level of private sector involvement is funding. Traditionally, NTOs were dependent on public funds, so they had to operate under limitations, especially during times of economic recession. However, NTOs are developing a mix of public and private sector sources. Some NTOs receive a large proportion of their budget from private funds and other sources, e.g. 46% for Maison de la France⁶ in 2005 or 36% for the Netherlands Board of Tourism⁷ in 2005. This tendency changes in developing countries, where a greater degree of intervention is needed from the government, due to the lack of a consistent and developed private sector⁸.

NTOs and the impact of the internet

From the 1980s to the 1990s trends shifted to less reliance on brochures and a greater requirement for providing market-based information. The tourist him/herself is now the targeted public and plays a more active role in the decision-making process⁹. Depending on the degree of development of tourism and its importance within the economy, some countries opted to set up two distinct websites: One, a governmental site containing policies and strategies and a second website, more tourist or consumer oriented, where information was provided with the ultimate goal of enticing tourists to travel. Hence, design and imagery played and still play a prominent role as marketing tools for promoting a destination¹⁰.

NTOs realised that they could better promote their tourist attractions and services, present associated organisations more equally and, most importantly, their role could

5 Pearce, 1992

6 Maison de la France, a public/private NTO, is a "grouping of economic interests", so the State, the local tourism authorities and the private sector are united in one public/private organization, to promote together France abroad as a tourism destination. *Structures and Budgets of National Tourism Organisations, 2004-2005*. Madrid. World Tourism Organisation. (UNWTO. 2006).

7 In the Netherlands, the NTO is a wholly private organization. The Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions (NBTC) is a non-profit-making foundation under Dutch law that serves both Government objectives and the interests of the national tourism industry (Ibis). An updated version of this publication will be published in the next couple of months according to the UNWTO Communications Manager as reported in August 2010.

8 Jenkins & Henry, 1982

9 UNWTO, 1997

10 Sigala, Mich & Murphy, 2007

change from the simple distribution of information materials towards global marketing and management of a destination¹¹. During 1990s and 2000s Internet became the ideal medium for promoting travel and tourism. But it was very beneficial for the tourist too who faced the problem of making a costly purchase without being able to see the product. The internet offered the means to gain immediate access to relevant information of greater variety and depth that has been available before which in turn, encouraged to book quickly and easily¹².

Public Relations literature review

Public relations practitioners as cultural intermediaries

The increasing economic significance of tourism to our contemporary society may explain why business and marketing approaches predominate within tourism research and academia. Although the author understands the critical economic importance of tourism for certain countries, especially developing ones, this article attempts to view the subject from a multidisciplinary approach based on culture and communication. Tourism and public relations are related through these two components.

The second component of analysis, communication, is directly involved with the public relations practitioners' responsibilities within a NTO. Their role may vary - from the creation and implementation of an overall communication strategy to media relations or being mainly responsible for discourse content, printing and digital material. Official tourism websites, the area of analysis in this article, have become a communication channel which reflects how a country chooses to translate its culture under the conviction that it will be meaningful to worldwide audiences. It is in this process of the provision of symbolic goods and services as Bourdieu mentioned¹³ that public relations practitioners have been referred to as cultural intermediaries¹⁴.

Two critiques can be deduced from this point. First, bearing in mind the profitability of tourism, it could be argued that public relations practitioners are taking part in the commercialisation of a nation's culture, by employing aggressive advertising campaigns, contentious promotional techniques and marketing methods- how these organisations take responsibility for this issue is importance to this paper. Second, the risk associated

11 Sheldon, Wöber & Fesenmaier, 2001

12 As an example, the official tourism website in China was developed by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) in 1997, for the purpose of marketing and promotion, providing destination information on accommodation, accessibility, attractions, catering, shopping and entertainment. However, the Chinese' level of Internet adoption was far behind that of Europe or the US. While the Internet boom, from 1998 to 2000, did not bring any revolutionary changes to the structure of China's tourism industry, as it had done in other developed countries, it did influence the sector and attracted attention (ibis). Government's intervention and, particularly in this case, Chinese "social culture" were key factors in the impact of the Internet. Xiaoqiu, Buhalis & Song, 2003

13 Nixon & du Gay, 2002

14 L'Etang, Falkheimer & Lugo, 2007; Curtin & Gaither, 2007; Hodges, 2006

with the impact of tourism on a nation's culture should be also noted. While this multi-faceted sector can be a powerful positive force for change in developing countries, it can also be seriously damaging for the local culture and environment.

Opposed to these two arguments, the ideal role of public relations practitioners, in avoiding the manipulation of information, would be to bridge the distance between production (companies or organisations providing tourism services) and consumption (tourist) and make a real connection between them. In this manner, commoditisation would not destroy the meaning of cultural products, although it may change them or add new meanings to old ones¹⁵. Furthermore, public relations can play an important role in the contemporary world, as they contribute to the broadening of an individual's knowledge and worldviews on other cultures.

Dialogue from a communications perspective

There has been a recent upsurge of interest in dialogue and dialogism. This movement has taken place in various disciplines, including philosophy, literary studies, anthropology, linguistics, social psychology and communication studies. This article will lean mainly towards the studies of dialogic scholarship from a communication perspective, which traces back to the 1960s¹⁶. The origins of dialogue from a communications perspective concludes that our points of view and relationships are not static; they are entirely realised in the process of dialogue through a constant interaction with other individuals.

Dialogue in the public relations domain

During the last ten years, an ideological change of opinion has been taking place in the public relations academia. Of particular note is the emphasis that scholars have been giving to relational approaches to public relations that include dialogic theory, interpersonal theory, intercultural theory, and a number of other rhetorical/critical approaches to examining and making sense of the practice of public relations¹⁷. This study recognises the concept of dialogue in public relations as the most adequate framework to understand how NTOs can build relationships that serve both organisational and public's interests¹⁸. Highlighting the component of culture within the tourism field, the theory of dialogue is the adequate communication framework capable of contributing to deeper meanings beyond purely marketing commercialisation. How can dialogic communications enhance NTOs' relationships with their public in our society? The

15 Cohen, 1988

16 Johannesen, 1990

17 Heath & Coombs, 2006

18 Kent & Taylor, 1998; 2002

challenge here, as Botan¹⁹ and Heath²⁰ point out, is to view the public and organisations in a dialogic perspective, not only theoretically but also practically. Before exploring the practicality of dialogue through official tourism websites (or computer-mediated communications), it is necessary to develop a framework for thinking about dialogue.

The five theoretical components of dialogue in public relations²¹

- 1 **Mutuality:** the recognition of organisation–public relationships or the recognition of the other members of the public that are involved. Mutually beneficial relationships (an organisation and its public) will help professionalise public relations and will contribute to more collaborative cultures and societies²².
- 2 **Propinquity:** or the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with the public. Dialogic propinquity means that organisations take the public into consideration before a decision is made, and participants are involved in communication in the present.
- 3 **Empathy:** or the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests. Organisations should facilitate dialogue with their public by providing proper and effective channels of communication; a common place where they can access each other; either face-to-face or through mediated channels²³.
- 4 **Risk:** “Otherness”, or the unknown, means that a dialogue participant assumes not only that the other person can bring different views and thoughts to the table but can also lead to unfamiliar or unpredicted results²⁴ or even “dangerous outcomes”²⁵.
- 5 **Commitment:** For any approach at dialogue to be effective there needs to be an organisational commitment and an acceptance of the value of relationship building. When practiced appropriately, they may both gain benefits.

However, we need to recognise that achieving this kind of dialogue can sound unrealistic and can be subject to temporal, social and interactional contingencies. Since dialogue involves risk and vulnerability, its participants are open to being manipulated by organisations or the public. Gunson and Collins²⁶ remarked that, just because an organisation and its public create “dialogic” communication structures, does not mean that they are behaving dialogically.

19 Botan, 1997

20 Leitch & Neilson, 2001

21 Kent & Taylor, 1998; 2002

22 Grunig, 2000

23 Anderson, Baxter & Cissna, 2004

24 Cissna & Anderson, 2002

25 Leitch & Neilson, 2001

26 Kent, 2001

Dialogic possibilities of computer-mediated public relations

The complicated task for NTOs these days is how to maintain certain markets since the media that is used to communicate with them is “de-massifying”. Public relations teams functioning within NTOs may be seeking for new interpersonal communication channels to reach and listen to more publics²⁷. Some public relations scholars like Kent, Taylor and White have explored the dialogic possibilities of computer-mediated communication in our current web-based society. They affirm that computer mediated public relations remains the essence of public relations; building and maintaining relationships between an organisation and its public²⁸. Websites, the units of analysis in this study, are tools that NTOs can use to enter into dialogue with millions of users or tourists, with whom it is impossible to communicate personally, via the WWW²⁹. The Web can be used to communicate directly with the public by offering real-time discussions, feedback loops, places to post comments or sources for organisational information³⁰.

Public relations practitioners could have a great opportunity within our information society to better define their role in society³¹. Capps noted that new technologies need to be learned and applied by public relations professionals to make using them easier and in a way that stimulate contact among individuals³². Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg³³ even see that it is impossible to practice effective public relations today without using the Internet. As has happened with any other traditional communication channel, the key issue with computer-mediated communication is to make ethical use of these channels but also count on organisational resources and adequate training, so that interaction with worldwide users can be mutually beneficial³⁴. Only under these parameters can a website function dialogically rather than monologically.

The dialogic public relations approach involves creating organisational mechanisms for facilitating dialogue. For this reason, and having the five components of the dialogic theory in public relations as a theoretical framework (i.e. mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk and commitment), Kent, Taylor and White identified five dialogic website principles (to be explained further in the Methodology section):

- 1 Ease of the interface: for relationships to develop, interactions must occur
- 2 Usefulness of information: dialogue first involves attraction, whereby individuals or groups desire to interact with each other
- 3 Generating return visits and

²⁷ Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 1997

²⁸ Kent & Taylor, 1998; 2002; Kent, Taylor & White, 2003

²⁹ Kent & Taylor, 1998

³⁰ Kent & Taylor, 2002

³¹ Botan, 1997

³² Kent, 2001

³³ Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 2000

³⁴ Kent & Taylor, 2002

- 4 Dialogic loop: for relationships to thrive, maintenance and satisfactory interactions must occur
- 5 Conservation of visitors: for relationships to grow, dialogue must occur³⁵.

The author recognises that a multidisciplinary approach, based on culture and communications, is appropriate for relating the domains of public relations and tourism. A culture component underpins the study in two ways: First, a polycentric model of public relations is advocated, in which each case of public relations is shaped and influenced by national cultures and other particular country-specific factors³⁶. Second, the role of public relations practitioners as cultural intermediaries encompasses the process of the production and circulation of information about national culture, to facilitate consumption³⁷.

The communications component is framed by the theory of dialogue in public relations. As a moral and ethical approach, dialogue is considered to be the most appropriate framework for understanding how NTOs can build relationships that serve both organisational and public interests. Official tourism websites, the units of analysis in this study, are tools that NTOs can use to enter into dialogue in the absence of face-to-face communications³⁸.

Methodology

A mixed-methodology research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, is described in depth. It is worth noting that the focus of empirical attention is the website (the medium), not its audience. "English International" was the language selected for analysing both websites. Websites, as computer-mediated channels of communication, are potential sources of data in their own right, as indeed is any other written information channel, such as a brochure or travel guide³⁹.

Quantitative research was undertaken to assess the number of dialogic web items that are present in the tourism websites, through a 41 dialogic items questionnaire. A qualitative approach employing online personal interviews with the Australian and Costa Rican public relations practitioners complemented the website findings. These interviews were conducted to gain a greater understanding of their online communication strategies, their role as cultural intermediaries and the challenges ahead. Furthermore, this study will be associated with an interpretative worldview (or qualitative approach) on the assumption that each case of public relations should be understood in its historical and socio-cultural context⁴⁰.

35 Taylor et al. 2001 cited in McAllister-Greve, 2007

36 Culbertson & Chen, 1996

37 Cohen, 1998 cited in L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006

38 Esrock & Leichty, 1998; 2000 cited in Kent & Taylor, 1998

39 Denscombe, 2007

40 Jones, 1997 cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2005

Why Australia and Costa Rica?

The fact that governmental tourism websites are the objects of analysis implies a non-biased and unequivocal sample when seeking out appropriate websites. The main benefit for future research is that it can be assumed that these websites will always be available online, with changes though due to new communication or marketing tourism national strategies. This is not the case with commercial sites; which can appear or disappear from one year to the next⁴¹.

Based on the member states list of the UNWTO⁴², the selection of these two countries was undertaken according to the following criteria: a) public relations practitioners who were in charge or involved in the communications strategy and had their contact details posted on the web and b) that they were willing to collaborate in this article. Among the first fifteen scanned websites (Australia, Austria, Germany, Peru, China, The United Kingdom, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Indonesia, New Zealand, Canada, North Korea, Rwanda, Rumania), four (Australia, Mexico, Indonesia and Costa Rica) had a public relations department or public relations practitioner responsible for communication and information management. Only the Australian and Costa Rican public relations practitioners readily agreed to participate in the online personal interview.

Coding scheme – 5 principles of dialogic relationship building and 41 items

Certain changes and the addition of items were pursued, in order to adapt a pre-existing scheme to a new area of study, the tourism field⁴³. In total, 41 items were identified and coded in the form of a questionnaire – available from the author. Changes and new items are described in each of the five following features:

- 1 **Ease of the interface:** Ease of interface is a prerequisite for web-based dialogue. The importance of a user-friendly and non-complicated website is such that it will either lead the user to return or seek for information elsewhere. Features that facilitate the ease of interface use include: a site map, major links to the rest of site being clearly identified, a search engine box, minimal reliance on graphics, simplicity in naming links, an average loading time of less than 4 seconds⁴⁴. The new additions to this study are: general information about the NTO, major links on the homepage should work, downloadable information on the country should be easy to find,

41 Bryman, 2008

42 UNWTO, 2010

43 The dialogic principles have been applied to research exploring organisation types such as: nonprofit activist organizations (Kent et al. 2003; Reber and Kim. 2006; Seltzer and Mitrook.2007; Taylor et al. 2001), Fortune 500 companies (Esrock and Leichty. 1999. 2000), Colleges and Universities (Kang and Norton, 2006; McAllister-Spooner. 2008; McAllister and Kent. 2007; McAllister and Taylor. 2007), congressional Web sites (Taylor and Kent. 2004), and litigation public relations firms (Reber, Gower and Robinson. 2006) (cited in McAllister, S. 2008).

44 Association of Internet Researchers, 2010

a contact link on the homepage should be easy to find, events should be clearly posted, there should be an option to receive updates or a corporate e-newsletter.

- 2 **Usefulness of information:** This research does not consider the media to be targeted public, as was the case with Kent and Taylor. The reason for this lies in the fact that Australia relies on five different websites, and among them is the media center site. Costa Rica only provides one site for everything. New or adapted features for this study are: the country's historical and cultural information, how to plan your visit, health and safety measures, downloadable information on routes or itineraries; an events calendar - including brief descriptions or clear posting of a corporate site and a different research area (when NTOs set up different websites, as is the case for Australia).
- 3 **Conservation of visitors:** If the goal of public relations in web-based environments is "to create and foster relationships with the public, and not to entertain them, web sites should include only essential links with clearly marked paths for visitors to remain in the site"⁴⁵. A particular item added to this study is "language". If a potential tourist finds the Australian or Costa Rican website in her/his original language, it is likely that she/he will spend more time surfing the website.
- 4 **Generation of return visits:** This principle sets up the conditions upon which relationship building can take place. NTOs want potential tourists to visit their official website repeatedly. A longer-term process, supported by key dialogic tools, is necessary for NTOs to attract returning visits. Among others, providing links to other official regional tourism websites, or tourism associations; explicit invitations or statements to return; encouraging visitors to bookmark the page to facilitate easy return or providing visitors with question and answer forums.
- 5 **Dialogic loop:** Dialogic websites feature the kind of platforms and mechanism employed to create dialogue with the tourist. The new items incorporated in this study were, firstly, to provide an opportunity for the visitor to share tourism experiences publicly, either through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter or through other user-generated content - like consumer reviews, forums or blogs. The idea is not to analyse any social media networks in particular, but to learn whether countries are considering these channels to complement the traditional ones and, if they do, what benefits they encounter. Secondly, the visitor should be given the possibility to lodge a complaint, or be provided with an external link in order to do so. NTOs usually treat the tourist as a consumer, so their legal rights as a consumer should be available publicly.

45 Kent & Taylor, 2002, pp.341

Findings and conclusion

As part of the findings, the author undertook some research on the role, mission and function of the Australia and Costa Rica NTOs. Issues drawn from the tourism literature review, such as private funding and the degree of tourism development guided this primary research. The findings will be presented according to the research questions included in this study:

RQ1 - Does a country's cultural and social environment shape the public relations practitioner's role as a cultural intermediary?

The findings show that a unique configuration of national factors, along with the NTO's structure and vision, affects how public relations teams translate and communicate their national culture to worldwide audiences. The Costa Rican Tourism Board's website clearly transmits the social and cultural role of their tourism policies; something that was also corroborated in the personal interview with their practitioner. The concept of educating the tourist about Costa Rican history and people has become part of their communication strategy. In the same way, the concept of sustainability is a fundamental axis of the tourism activity in this country and is considered to be the main factor characterising the national tourism product, as well as its promotion via the WWW – the microsites include a link to the site *Certification of Sustainable Tourism*.

Although the Australian Government is also committed to “fostering a tourism industry that promotes the principles of environmental responsibility and sustainable development” this message is not explicitly stated on the promotional site but is evident on the Corporate and Tourism Research sites⁴⁶. The promotional site is a consumer-oriented website including motivational content and with the ultimate goal of enticing travellers to visit Australia. Furthermore, the fact that Australia's private funding allows more promotional activities globally, and through various channels, could give the impression that the public relations function within a marketing framework, for purely economic reasons, is reduced to a commercialisation of the national culture⁴⁷. In a global context, developing countries are not capable to compete with countries like Australia due to the lack of public funding and a well structured private sector.

However, the other side of the coin should also be considered. Before the Internet arrived in our society, the provision of symbolic goods and services in the tourism sector was undertaken through intermediaries like agents and other information providers⁴⁸. Now, there is place for public relations practitioners to bridge the distance between tourism services (production) and users (consumption), as NTOs can present associated

46 Tourism Australia, 2010b

47 Wernick, 1991; Negus, 2002

48 UNWTO, 1997

organisations and private industries more equally on the site⁴⁹. This means, for example, that the user can directly contact any of the more than 26,000 tourism operators through the vast Australian data base “Warehouse” that is posted on the official Australian tourism website, as the practitioner remarked (Interview. App.IV, p. 77).

In view of the above results, the author cannot affirm that a nation with strong governmental intervention will incorporate a more social and cultural dimension within its communications strategy than a country with major private funding for promotional activities. It would be a mistake to generalise based on a two country sample. Particular country’ vision on the role of tourism and external factors (e.g. Costa Rica’s regarded as a pioneer in environmental conservation or Tourism Australia long commitment with new technologies) will determine the message communicated to global audiences.

RQ2 & RQ3 - how effectively dialogic principles are being employed and through which tools? Which factors are impeding dialogic communication?

Comparative findings

The table below summarises the number of dialogic items present on the two countries’ websites.

Dialogic feature & no. of items	Ease of interface (13 items)	Usefulness of information (9 items)	Conservation of visitors (5 items)	Generation of return visits (9 items)	Dialogic feedback loop (9 items)	Total items (41)
Country						
Australia	11	9	3	5	5	30
Costa Rica	9	7	2	4	3	25

Figure 1: Website dialogic items present in the Australian and Costa Rican official tourism websites

The Australian and Costa Rican official tourism websites do meet some the prerequisites of dialogue, in that they are easy to use and contain useful information which is more associated with technical and design proficiencies, according to Taylor et al⁵⁰. These features provide the necessary foundation for dialogic communication, because they facilitate users with clear and easy website navigation and content information. Nevertheless, the relationship-building capacity of encouraging users to return and allowing for user interaction could be better embraced, to achieve a real dialogic communication. An interesting outcome emerges from the Costa Rican findings for the dialogic feedback loop rating being higher (3 out of 5 items are present) than the Australian one (2 out of 5): Although the Costa Rican Tourism Board did not achieve the highest rate, this was an unexpected result since the ICT’s internet adoption level has been lagging behind that

49 Cohen, 1988

50 Taylor et al. 2001 cited in McAllister-Greve, 2007

evident in Australia. The Australia's employment of new channels of communication since 2008 (social networks) and use of the latest technologies (iphone applications or interactive map tools) show the Australian superiority in terms of their communications strategy via the WWW.

While the mechanisms facilitating dialogue on the Costa Rican website are more conventional (e.g. a visible invitation to the user to give feedback on the new site or a noticeable contact link displaying a complete directory), the findings also reveal that they are bringing in new channels, such as social networks, to reach certain audiences and promote certain campaigns. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the intention of this article is not to analyse the scope and impact of the social networks employed by NTOs. However, what is relevant here are the findings from both countries, and more specifically from Australia in this matter. They suggest that these new channels are being integrated within NTO's communications strategies to facilitate interaction with and among users. This issue will be further discussed in the next RQ.

The above analysis should be also framed within the *five components of the theory of dialogue in public relations*: mutuality, empathy, propinquity, risk and commitment. NTOs are recognising the *mutuality or value of the other*, or worldwide users, in order to learn about their preferences and experiences in the tourism field⁵¹. However, the fierce competition between destinations, and the tough economic times, leads to arguments about "otherness" as a means to achieving marketing objectives. It could be argued that the level of private funding within the NTO's budget may raise issues of power and influence which constrain dialogic communications with the user. In other words, the degree of independence of an NTO as a public governmental organisation can be open to question⁵².

The high level of involvement of the private sector, however, could be regarded as a collaborative orientation of an NTO with its key public. In this respect, private tourism companies may have a great knowledge of their customers' interests via the WWW⁵³. Facilitation of more interactive platforms will stimulate *the propinquity or spontaneity* of conversations with users, so that the current communication system advances to a more dialogic one. Here it is interesting to highlight the Australia's employment of social networks which is helping identify new issues or sentiment among users.

In terms of *commitment*, a NTO will gain more support and an enhanced image of the country through its official tourism website. For a tourist, dialogue will lead to a better perception and image of the country, increased organisational accountability, and increased satisfaction⁵⁴.

51 Buber, 1985 cited in Cissna & Anderson, 2002

52 Hayes, 2007

53 Cissna & Anderson, 2002

54 Ledingham & Bruning, 2000

Considering the asymmetry of knowledge on a destination among users and, assuming that a feeling of risk is significant in some of them, the author suggests that a dialogic approach, through traditional and new channels, would diminish levels of uncertainty and risk.

To conclude, computer-mediated communications have allowed NTOs to evolve from a one-way communication structure to a more *emphatic and responsive approach*; where the public's views are being considered⁵⁵.

RQ4 - Can communication via the WWW give a greater voice to more people than ever before?

The findings of this study reveal that computer mediated communication is giving a greater voice to people to whom NTOs did not have access before. This was particularly identified in the Australia analysis. Since 2008, Tourism Australia has realised the huge potential of new communications channels for connecting with global audiences. New people are emerging from platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, consumer reviews and fora – all of which have been deemed to be key elements of its digital communications strategy until 2013. Interestingly, around one third of their Facebook fans are based in Australia and they are sharing their passion for their country with fans based all over the world; providing advice to travellers who are either in Australia or considering a visit⁵⁶.

In the case of Costa Rica, their initiation in social networks is quite recent (July 2010) just one week before the site was analysed for this study. Nevertheless, the practitioner acknowledges the WWW as a medium that linked user and Costa Rica but also sees new channels of communications as a great potential to expand their communication network.

Two main conclusions can be drawn. Social media platforms have been proven, by NTOs like Tourism Australia, to be an effective way for people to connect instantly by means of their shared interest. A communal, or community, value can be identified, not only in social networks but any other platform encouraging user's participation. This value is related to Arnett's assertion of community, and not the individual self, as a source to opening up conversation⁵⁷. However, opening up conversation among thousands or millions of users via the WWW could imply certain risk for a NTO, as the Costa Rican practitioner stated. NTOs can be accused of content manipulation, since they can delete negative comments⁵⁸. In this case, an ethical and proper strategy for unpredicted

55 Anderson, Baxter & Cissna, 2004

56 Tourism Australia, 2010a

57 Arnett, 1986 cited in Arnett, Grayson & McDowell, 2008b

58 Heath & Coombs, 2006

results should be set in place⁵⁹, to successfully tackle differences and disagreements among users. Nevertheless, there is place for further research on social media networks and dialogic community building via the WWW.

The second conclusion is that, regardless of the particular communication tool that is employed, what is relevant here is that new technologies are being learnt and applied by public relations professionals in their daily operations⁶⁰. Especially in a global, and one of the most involving industries as it is the tourism field, public relations could not have succeeded without the use of the WWW⁶¹.

Conclusion

Although the communication systems, via the WWW, of both countries is not fully dialogic, it should be noted that they have both evolved from a monologic structure to a more emphatic and responsive approach. Nevertheless although an organisation and its public create 'dialogic' communication structures, this does not mean that they are behaving dialogically⁶². A moral and ethical commitment of the organisation, together with organisational resources, will result in official tourism websites that function dialogically.

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59 Anderson & Cissna, 2002

60 Capps, 1993 cited in Kent, 2001

61 Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 2000

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Attitudes of Polish owner-managers of agritourism farms and small accommodation businesses towards environmental engagement

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Abstract

This paper explores attitudes towards environmental engagement amongst owner-managers of agritourism farms and small accommodation firms located in Opolskie region in southern Poland. The results of semi-structured interviews conducted with ten owner-managers indicate that they all were knowledgeable about environmental issues. They admitted to reducing their firms environmental impact by installing resource-efficient appliances and practising waste management, but highlighted the high costs of such measures. Some were also committed to raising green awareness among their guests and schoolchildren. Complicated regulation and difficult access to credit were seen as serious constraints on environmental performance improvement. None of the interviewees cited busyness or lack of human resources as the reasons for reluctance to carry out environmental practices. The small size of the sample, however, makes any generalization highly problematic. Nonetheless, by providing evidence from an eastern European country that does not have a reputation for environmentalism, the study advances our understanding of the mechanisms that underlie environmental engagement in small lodging establishments.

Key words: Agritourism farms, small lodging businesses, environmental engagement, Poland.

Introduction

The necessity of protecting the environment is, arguably, one of the greatest challenges facing humanity in the 21st century¹. Fortunately, there has been a noticeable shift in attitudes towards nature². Pressurised by international bodies, non-governmental organisations and grass-roots activists, more and more governments and companies³ across the world have (belatedly) acknowledged the need to tackle such fundamental

1 Buchholz (1998) and Sachs (2013)

2 Duncan (2013) and *Economist* (2013b)

3 Post & Altman (1994), Wolfe & Shanklin (2001), Kates *et al.* (2005), Kelly *et al.* (2007) and Sloan *et al.* (2009)

problems as biodiversity degradation, large-scale deforestation, air pollution, water contamination and, last but not least, climate change. The challenges of environmental protection have particular implications for the hotel industry, which, as part of hospitality, is one of the main pillars of tourism⁴. This is because an unspoilt environment is, alongside frontline employees' work engagement⁵, a key element of service quality and a major determinant of the attractiveness of a tourist destination⁶.

Hotels, construed both as commercial buildings and business entities in their own right, produce considerable environmental impacts due to high energy and water consumption as well as to above-average waste and emissions generation⁷. Indeed, it is estimated that, over the last decade, electricity consumption in many facilities has increased by up to 30%⁸. Given the existence of a direct link between resource consumption and operating costs, such inefficiencies are bound to affect financial performance. It follows that the entire industry has compelling reasons to green its operations and that, equally importantly, the competitiveness of particular hotels will depend, to a large degree, on how effectively they deal with broadly-understood environmental issues⁹.

But there is more to the question of green competitiveness than that. A growing number of customers, who are concerned with the state of the planet, exhibit a preference for environmentally responsible hotels. This trend is particularly visible in Scandinavia – a region justifiably famous for its profound commitment to environmentalism. It is also increasingly manifest in other parts of the world, most notably in the USA and Asia¹⁰, and, as such, is likely to favour those hotel companies that seek to enhance their green credentials (even if the gap between customers' professed environmental values and actual behaviours persists¹¹). And, although facilities belonging to international chains continue to reduce their environmental footprints¹², it is independent (often medium-sized) hotels that are in the vanguard of corporate environmentalism in general and green innovativeness in particular.

Nevertheless, relatively little attention has been paid to the environmental engagement of small lodging businesses¹³, which account for a sizeable share of hospitality employment¹⁴ and thus, as a group, produce non-negligible environmental

4 Bohdanowicz and Zientara (2012) and Hotel Analyst (2012)

5 Karatape (2013)

6 Høyer (2000) and Huybers & Bennet (2002)

7 Erdogan & Baris (2007) and Kasim (2009)

8 Hawkins & Bohdanowicz (2011)

9 Martínez and Rodríguez del Bosque (2013)

10 Han *et al.* (2009), Han *et al.* (2010) and Kim & Han (2010)

11 Scott (2011) and Weaver (2011)

12 Bohdanowicz & Zientara (2012)

13 Kasim, 2009

14 Thomas (1998) and Thomas (2000)

impacts. The implication is that they also ought to green their operations. It is argued, however, that small lodging facilities face more obstacles to environmental change than large hotels¹⁵. Some researchers point to lack of financial and human resources, inadequate environmental awareness (or eco-literacy) and owner-managers' busyness¹⁶. Fundamentally, a convincing case is made that formalized approaches to environmental management are not particularly well-suited to the small-business idiosyncrasies¹⁷.

It is within this context that the present study, which builds on the qualitative research framework¹⁸, explores attitudes towards environmental engagement amongst owner-managers of agritourism farms and small lodging firms in Poland. In so doing, it aims to find out, among other things, whether they are informed about environmental issues and how they go about greening the operations of their businesses. The specific technique chosen for data collection was semi-structured interviews¹⁹. It is true that there are several studies investigating the mechanisms that underlie environmental engagement in small lodging enterprises²⁰, but the fact remains that relatively little of this research work has drawn on data collected in eastern Europe²¹. As regards Poland, a paper by Bohdanowicz²² focuses on large hotels whereas other related studies²³ were not published in English. Therefore, by filling this gap, the present paper makes a number of contributions to the existing literature, thereby deepening our understanding of environmental engagement in small accommodation businesses.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The next section offers a theoretical framework. In it, we first focus on the issue of environmental protection in the hotel industry. We then examine the specificity of small lodging firms in the context of green engagement and provide an overview of the Polish tourism industry. Subsequently, we present our method and discuss the empirical findings, placing emphasis on their practical implications. The paper concludes by highlighting its limitations and suggesting further research directions.

Theoretical framework

Environmentalism and the hotel industry

As mentioned in the introduction, environmental protection has implications for the hotel industry. Given the links between nature and the attractiveness of a tourist

15 Chan (2011) and Sampaio *et al.* (2012)

16 Hilary (1999)

17 Sampaio *et al.* (2012)

18 Gillham (2000a), Patton (2002) and Walsh (2003)

19 Gillham (2000b)

20 Kasim (2009), Chan (2011) and Sampaio *et al.* (2012)

21 Lebe & Zupan (2012)

22 Bohdanowicz (2006)

23 Majewski (1999), Drupka & Krupa (2003) and Kasprzak (2006)

destination as well as between resource consumption and operating costs, generally-understood environmental issues should figure high on hotels' lists of priorities²⁴. To reiterate, hotels, operating 24/7, consume above-average amounts of natural resources and turn out substantial quantities of waste²⁵. In the words of Kasim:

Hotels, like other buildings, use electricity for lighting, cooling, appliances and fuel for heating. However, hotel structures or individual units that have their own appliances, heating and cooling sources, combined with hospitality standards and piles of fresh towels and linens, are turned into more wasteful units than traditional buildings. A lodging property is a small community that purchases goods and services, creates and disposes waste, uses electricity and water, and just like any individual, leaves a distinct environmental footprint²⁶.

All this underscores the significance of environmental management, which refers to "the processes and practices introduced by an organization for reducing, eliminating, and ideally, preventing negative environmental impacts arising from its undertakings"²⁷ and emphasises the value of "eco-efficiency", which "prescribes reducing the amount of energy and natural resources used, as well as wastes and pollutants discharged in the production of goods and services"²⁸. Pertinently, typical environmental issues in the hotel industry bear on – to refer to the categorisation proposed by Hawkins and Bohdanowicz²⁹ – waste management ("the throw-away culture"), energy consumption and carbon emissions ("the carbon challenge"), water efficiency and waste-water treatment ("the wet stuff"), ecological education of employees and customers alike, maintenance of green supply chains, preservation of the natural environment, green building design and construction and provision of locally-sourced food. It follows that hospitality is a sector with ample scope for improvement in environmental performance³⁰.

Accordingly, over the last two decades there has been growing regulatory and popular pressure on large hotel companies to practise environmental management. This has been based on the assumption that, considering their financial potential and global reach, they are well-placed both to green their operations and to propagate corporate environmentalism³¹. Central to environmental management are guidelines, standards and reporting standards – both industry-specific and of general character. Thus guidelines can be found in *Environmental Reference Manual for Hotels – the Industry*

24 Hawkins & Bohdanowicz (2011), Bohdanowicz & Zientara (2012) and Hsie (2012)

25 Hawkins & Bohdanowicz (2011)

26 Kasim (2009: 710)

27 Cooper (1998: 112)

28 Kelly *et al.* (2007: 377)

29 Hawkins & Bohdanowicz (2011)

30 Font *et al.* (2008), Sloan *et al.* (2009) and Hawkins & Bohdanowicz (2011)

31 Bowen (2000) and Bohdanowicz *et al.* (2011)

Guide to Sustainable Practice (ITP, 2008), Global Best Practices and Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative or *Sustainable Hotel Siting, Design and Construction*³². The ISO 14001, the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme or the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economics Roadmap for Sustainable Development specify standards. The Global Reporting Initiative³³ and Carbon Disclosure Project Reporting offer reporting standards. Albeit differing in terms of scope and rigorousness, these provide companies with standardized frameworks and detailed guidelines for the effective practice of environmental management³⁴.

Also worth mentioning is the introduction of assorted eco-labels and certification programmes³⁵, such as the Green Tourism Business Scheme, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), Green Globe or Green Key. The GTBS, for example, is a sustainability certification initiative available in the UK and Ireland which requires a hospitality business to meet, *inter alia*, such criteria as: compliance with environmental legislation, dissemination of the effects of environmental activities, installation of efficient lighting and heating, use of renewable energy, minimisation of waste by glass, paper, card, plastic and metal recycling, and, last but not least, constant monitoring of environmental performance³⁶. Monitoring can be done by special computerized tools or systems (which, as such, are not required by certification procedures). They combine precise measurement (of environmentally-sensitive “inputs” and “outputs”) with industry-specific indicators (energy and water use per guest-night or waste generation and carbon-dioxide emissions per guest-night) and effective benchmarking (which shows, among other things, how a hotel performs against industry norms or with itself over time)³⁷.

Crucially, such systems have recently been introduced by most international hotel chains, usually within the framework of their CSR or sustainability policies. Hilton Worldwide’s LightStay, Marriott’s Green Hotels Global, InterContinental Hotel Group’s Green Engage, Scandic’s Sustainability Indicator Reporting and Wyndham Worldwide’s Green Toolbox can be held up as examples. These tools have allowed the hotel companies to make considerable progress in the domain of mitigation. Suffice it say that, thanks to LightStay, in 2009-2012 Hilton Worldwide reduced its carbon output by 10.9%, waste output by 23.3%, energy use by 9.7%, and water use by 7.5%³⁸. Furthermore, in 2007-2009 Intercontinental Hotels Group’s owned and managed hotels reduced their energy consumption by 9.3% per available room night, while

32 CI & IBLF (2005)

33 GRI (2002)

34 Hawkins & Bohdanowicz (2011) and Hsie (2012)

35 Font & Buckely (2010)

36 Sampaio *et al.* (2012)

37 Scott *et al.* (2004), De Grosbois (2012) and Hsie (2012)

38 Hilton Worldwide (2013)

Wyndham reduced its energy use by 9% over the July 2008-March 2009 period³⁹. Such improvements demonstrate that going green can be beneficial both to the organization and the environment.

This matters also because, as already indicated, a growing number of customers exhibit a preference for green lodging facilities. Put another way, while choosing accommodation, they increasingly take into account a particular hotel's commitment to environmentalism⁴⁰. And, fundamentally, a stay at an environmentally responsible hotel need not cost more and guests need not put up with certain minor inconveniences (as is sometimes argued in the literature). However, it is essential to point out that the question of customer behaviour is fraught with ambiguity. This is due to the existence of the gap between professed (environmental) values and actual behaviours – a phenomenon Weaver terms “veneer environmentalism” or “superficial environmentalism”⁴¹. In fact, there are still many travellers and tourists who – despite declaring themselves concerned with the environment – are reluctant to change their travel patterns and, while choosing accommodation, pay scant regard to whether a hotel of their choice is environmentally-friendly or not⁴². Still, Scott argues that “the environmental values-behavior gap is not merely the result of insincere concern or hypocritical behavior but also a function of a range of individual and societal constraints”⁴³. Besides, there is anecdotal evidence that people adopt an *à la carte* approach to environmentalism. Thus, even though most individuals are indeed unlikely to modify their travelling habits in the near future, they may well – not at all paradoxically – behave responsibly in other respects. This suggests that the gap is likely to narrow rather than to widen.

Small lodging businesses and environmental engagement

Even though the entire hospitality industry, with large hotel companies to the fore, has been encouraged to go green, relatively little consideration has been given to the environmental engagement of small lodging firms⁴⁴. As a group, such businesses constitute the majority of entities functioning in the whole sector⁴⁵ and account for a sizeable (and rising) share of overall hospitality-generated employment⁴⁶. In consequence, albeit individually operating on a micro scale, they *collectively* leave non-negligible environmental footprints⁴⁷. In view of what has just been said about the

39 Bohdanowicz and Zientara (2012)

40 Han *et al.* (2009), Han *et al.* (2010) and Kim & Han (2010)

41 Weaver (2011: 9 and 13)

42 Dalton *et al.* (2008), Lee *et al.* (2010), Scott (2011) and Weaver (2011)

43 Scott (2011: 25)

44 Kasim (2009)

45 Thomas (1998) and Favre (2013)

46 Thomas (2000)

47 Lebe & Zupan (2012)

significance of environmental protection, it is fair to say that there are strong reasons to urge small lodging firms to go green. This is all the more so if one remembers that hotel size and resultant resource availability, among other things, were found to be a vital factor behind the introduction of environmental practices; accordingly, large hotels are far more likely to practice environmental management than their smaller counterparts⁴⁸.

Researchers adduce several explanations for the limited involvement of small lodging businesses in environmentalism⁴⁹. In particular, some authors highlight the busyness of owner-managers, suggesting that they tend to regard dealing with environmental issues as a tedious distraction (if not a waste of time). Others, pointing to owner-managers' low levels of environmental awareness, argue that they have an inadequate understanding of how to go about greening the operations of their firms⁵⁰. Indeed, poor eco-literacy sometimes makes it hard for owner-managers to identify major business operations or practices that are detrimental to the environment – a first and fundamental step in the process of the implementation of environmental change (generally, inadequate knowledge is seen to impede small-business development⁵¹).

Lack of – or limited access to – human and financial capital are also cited as a serious barrier⁵². In this sense, it is claimed that even though certain owner-managers may well be inclined to engage in environmentalism, they do not possess sufficient resources to do so properly. In fact, going green entails, for example, installation of energy-efficient appliances, whose initial cost might act as a deterrent to many a cash-strapped small firm (by contrast, utilization of expensive computerised systems for monitoring of environmental performance is less of an issue as small lodging businesses do not actually need them). Since the vast majority of small enterprises are run by the owners and their spouses (assisted – depending on the size and sort of the facility – by their children and two or three hired hands), performing (extra) environmental tasks might prove burdensome. Another problem concerns the unclear formulation of environmental standards. Sometimes, inexpensive professional support from outside experts is hard to get by.

All this has led some researchers to argue that, as such, environmental practices do not necessarily have to be universal in character and thus are not easily transferable from large companies to smaller businesses. It follows, to take the argument to its logical conclusion, that formal approaches to environmental management may well be incongruous with the specific idiosyncrasies of small lodging businesses⁵³. Therefore, if small firms are to green their operations effectively, a different – less formal and more

48 Jacob *et al.* (2010)

49 Hilary (1999) and Chan (2011)

50 Sampaio *et al.* (2012)

51 Lundberg & Fredman (2012)

52 Hilary, 1999; Peters and Buhalis, 2004; Lebe and Zupan, 2012

53 Sampaio *et al.* (2012)

commonsensical – approach is needed. Another argument in favour of this approach is that *informality* is one of the major aspects characterizing small firms, with tourism and hospitality enterprises to the fore⁵⁴.

In practice, this means that they rarely set themselves formal long-term objectives or pursue well-thought-out strategies⁵⁵. Rather, owner-managers, while relying on informal practices and ad-hoc solutions, focus on the everyday running of their enterprises. Arguably, this reliance on informality can have a dual impact on business performance⁵⁶. On the one hand, by rendering a firm's *modus operandi* more flexible, it is likely to boost its capacity to rapidly react to fast-changing circumstances (smaller companies, compared to their larger counterparts, are generally regarded as less bureaucratic and hence more agile, which often allows them to capitalize on niche-like business opportunities). On the other hand, a less formal approach to management risks hampering a firm's functioning by affecting compliance with both regulatory standards and in-house procedures (sometimes, in the absence of strategic thinking and long-term planning, an aura of directionless re-activity may set in, too).

But there is far more to it than that. Environmental engagement – be it on the part of a large company or a small enterprise – necessitates, in the first place, a mental shift in attitudes towards the environment⁵⁷. This is of critical importance since going green usually entails modifying, to a smaller or greater extent, an organization's existing operational mode. This holds true for corporate senior decision-makers and small-business owner-managers alike. Still, it is the former who face, from a certain point of view, more difficulties while introducing environmental change and honouring their green long-term commitments. That is because they have to balance the tensions arising from conflicting priorities and interests of different industry-specific actors. Indeed, shareholders emphasize short-term returns, customers expect high-quality service, owners of hotel properties do not always see eye to eye with hotel operators on resource utilization and necessary modernization of the building systems⁵⁸. By contrast, owner-managers, who are (usually) in possession of the facility and who do not experience shareholder pressure, are not confronted with such contradictory tensions. In other words, it is generally only up to them to resolve to go green (or not). Thus what really matters is *individual sensitivity* to environmental issues.

54 Thomas (2000), Getz & Carlsen (2000) and Tzschentke *et al.* (2008)

55 Beaver (2002)

56 Peters & Buhalis (2004)

57 Post & Altman (1994) and Wehrmeyer & Parker (1996)

58 Zientara & Bohdanowicz (2010)

Environmentalism and tourism in Poland: background information

All this is of relevance to Poland, which does not have an exceptional environmental record, but increasingly relies on tourism as one of the main drivers of regional development⁵⁹. It is true that Poland occupies a relatively high place (30th) in the Environmental Performance Index (out of 178 countries), but the fact remains that it compares unfavourably with other EU countries⁶⁰. Its environmental performance is dragged down by a combination of factors. First, the country generates more than 80% of its electricity from coal⁶¹, the dirtiest fossil fuel (the carbon footprint of an average Pole stands at 9 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year). Second and related to this, little thought is given to developing renewable sources of energy, which is indicative of the influence of the coal-mining lobby⁶². Of course, failure to reform the entire energy sector goes against the European Union's increasingly ambitious decarbonisation efforts. Indeed, in January 2014 "the European Commission invited EU countries to reduce their greenhouse-gas emissions by 40% by 2030, after planned cuts of 20% by 2020 (all relative to 1990 levels). It also wants a 'binding' EU-wide target of at least 27% for the share of renewables in the overall energy mix"⁶³. Third, Poland suffers from weak enforcement of environmental legislation (waste segregation, for instance, is a good case in point).

Besides, Poles, collectively, do not have a reputation for environmentalism. However, it needs to be noted that attitudes towards the environment in general and climate change in particular are changing. For instance, according to a CBOS opinion poll that came out in November 2013, 89% of Polish people wish more energy were produced from renewables and that the government were more committed to fighting global warming⁶⁴. Generally, the responses to other questions were strongly pro-environmental, too. That said, the results might well have been different if the respondents had been asked about whether they were prepared to pay far higher electricity bills (a likely short-term effect of the shift from coal-based generation towards green energy) or to live in the vicinity of wind turbines (which are known to produce disturbing noise and to mar the landscape). Nonetheless, the findings can be seen – with a measure of caution – as confirming a mental shift on the part of Polish society.

At the same time, it is argued that tourism should constitute the centrepiece of regional development strategies. In fact, many local policy-makers see tourist activity as a chance to transform the fortunes of Polish rural and less industrialised regions (or *voivodships*). Indeed, such areas as Lubelskie or Warmińsko-Mazurskie in the pristine east of the country, while suffering from high unemployment and above-average

59 Zientara (2012b)

60 EPI (2014)

61 *Economist* (2014: 24)

62 Zientara (2007)

63 *Economist* (2014: 24)

64 *srodowisko.pl* (2013)

poverty levels, abound with forests, lakes and other natural attractions. These, coupled with clean air, uncontaminated waters and regional cuisine based on locally-produced food, might act as a draw for nature-loving (foreign) tourists. Not coincidentally, Poland is increasingly viewed abroad as an attractive tourist destination⁶⁵. And this is notwithstanding its relatively low place (42nd) in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report⁶⁶. In 2012, for instance, 15m foreign tourists visited the country⁶⁷. Granted, this compares unfavourably with the 83m foreign tourists who visited France or the 58m tourists who went to Spain in the same year⁶⁸. That said, given the fast-growing popularity of nature-based tourism and agritourism⁶⁹, many Polish regions, thanks to their unspoilt environment and vast swathes of countryside, are set to attract ever greater numbers of tourists.

In this study data were collected from Opolskie region in southern Poland, which stands out among other Polish areas for a number of reasons⁷⁰. Above all, its distinctiveness is due to the presence of a large German minority. In this context, there needs to be a recognition that, before 1989 many local inhabitants of German descent decided to emigrate to the Federal Republic (some of them have retained double citizenship). All this suggests the existence of strong cultural, commercial and familial ties between Opolskie and Germany (facilitated by well-developed road infrastructure). Besides, as part of the historical region of Silesia (not to be confused and equated with today's Silesia *voivodship*), it is less industrialised and more agrarian than Upper Silesia to the east-south and Lower Silesia to the north-west, which means that its environment and bio-diversity are relatively well-preserved.

This, coupled with the above-mentioned links to Germany, has recently lain behind a noticeable increase in cross-border tourism activity and led to a proliferation of small lodging facilities, with agritourism farms to the fore. While some of these micro firms are run by German citizens of Polish origin (or with Polish spouses) or with Poles with German citizenship, virtually all of them champion local (Silesian) cuisine and serve locally-sourced food. All that constitutes a unique cultural mosaic that adds to the region's tourist attractiveness. Hence it might be particularly informative to find out local owner-managers' attitudes towards environmental engagement.

65 Polish Tourism Organisation (2012)

66 World Economic Forum (2013)

67 Institute of Tourism (2013)

68 *Economist* (2013a: 73)

69 Duncan (2013)

70 Opolskie Regional Tourism Organisation (2013)

Method

As mentioned in the introduction, this study builds on the qualitative research framework⁷¹. Qualitative methods allow researchers to investigate multidimensional or nuanced problems that are beyond the reach of quantitative methods⁷². What is more, scholars should employ them in order “to view the case from the inside out: to see it from the perspective of those involved”⁷³. Given that a study’s focus and aim should determine the choice of the main research technique⁷⁴, we decided to employ semi-structured interviews⁷⁵, which offer “high validity of the linguistic and social categories used by protagonists in order to make sense of their situation”⁷⁶. They should also be used whenever the study has a “fairly clear focus”⁷⁷, which is the case here.

In the absence of clear evidence regarding Polish owner-managers’ attitudes towards environmentalism, but staying with the theoretical considerations and prior evidence laid out above, this paper seeks to find answers to the following research questions: (1) are manager-owners of small accommodation businesses informed about green issues in general and environmental standards in particular?; (2) are they able to identify those business operations that are most detrimental to the environment?; (3) do they try to reduce the environmental impact of their firms and, if so, what measures do they adopt in order to green their operations?; (4) what are typical constraints on environmental performance improvement?; (5) do they attempt to raise their guests’ green awareness?; (6) do they intend to improve their environmental performance by means of extra investment outlays?

To that end, we created an interview sheet containing questions that directly bore upon the (1)-(6) problems. Then, we randomly selected 30 small lodging businesses from the regional database⁷⁸. We subsequently sent their owner-managers emails with official letters attached, which explained the purpose of the study and asked for permission to conduct interviews. In the event, 20 refused to participate in the study or did not reply to our emails. We then contacted by phone those who agreed to be interviewed and fixed the date of an interview. Altogether, our sample was composed of ten owner-managers. We conducted interviews in person on the premises in September and October 2013. The interviews were recorded, transcribed *verbatim* into text and translated into English. The transcribed interviews were then examined and particular statements were matched with corresponding items that related to the above research questions. On this basis, a table was created to present a summary of the empirical findings (see Table 1).

71 Marshall & Rossman (1999), Patton (2002) and Walsh (2003)

72 Gillham (2000a) and Walsh (2003)

73 Gillham (2000a: 11)

74 Yin (2009)

75 Gillham (2000b)

76 Mueller *et al.* (2003: 79)

77 Bryman & Bell (2007: 479)

78 Opolskie Regional Tourism Organisation (2013)

Table 1: Summary of the findings from the interviews with the owner-managers.

Name of enterprise	informed about environmental issues and ecological standards	able to identify business operations that are particularly detrimental to the environment	taking measures to reduce the environmental impact of their businesses	serving locally-sourced or their own food	raising green awareness amongst their guests and others	willing but unable to improve environmental performance due to problems with financing
GRÓD RYCERSKI (tourism co-operative)	+	+	+	+	+	+
JABŁONIOWY SAD (ecological agritourism farm)	+	+	+	+	+	+
EKOSTYL (ecological agritourism farm)	+	+	+	+	+	+
SŁOCIAK & SŁOCIAK (brewery, confectionary and hotel)	+	+	+	+	+	-
LEOKADIA and JÓZEF FELIS (agritourism farm)	+	+	+	+	-	+
UROCZYSKO (agritourism farm)	+	+	+	+	+	+
PETERS (holiday camp)	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-
AGRO-RANCHO (agritourism farm)	+	+	+	+	+	+
AGROCHATKA (agritourism farm)	+	+	+	+	+	+
STARKA (restaurant and hotel)	+	+	+	+		-

Source: Interviews; + yes or available; - no or unavailable; +/- to some extent/partially.

Discussion of the findings from the interviews

It transpires from the interviews that all the owner-managers were informed about green issues in general and environmental standards in particular (some of them, like Andrzej Kościuk from GRÓD RYCERSKI have significant experience in environmental management). In this context, it is worth quoting Iwona Frasek, boss of JABŁONIOWY SAD, who said: “We act in line with environmental standards [...] because in our opinion, environmentalism is not only an approach to land cultivation, but, above all, it is a way of life”⁷⁹. Also of interest is the comment by Leokadia and Józef Felis, bosses of the eponymous agritourism business, who noted that “we’ve heard about the norms and we know where to find them [...] but we’ve adopted a common-sense approach [...] we simply know what’s good and how to take care of our environment”⁸⁰. In a similar vein, Iwona and Jan Wajrach, owner-managers of UROCZYSKO, said that “We know the [environmental] norms and regulations, but we follow our experience and common sense”⁸¹.

This emphasis on the commonsensical rather than the formal runs through most of the interviews, thereby lending substance to the claim that small-business owners prefer less formalized approaches to greening the operations of their enterprises. Still, all the interviewees came across as fully aware that the success of their businesses relied on an unspoilt environment (and some of them – for instance, EKOSTYL and JABŁONIOWY SAD – considered their environmental commitment to be “profound”). It follows that, by and large, the level of their eco-literacy can be deemed high, which somehow contrasts with the findings from some studies based on data from western Europe. Likewise, given that Poles have hardly been known for their environmentalism, this finding, while heartening in its own right, seem to confirm the shift in societal attitudes towards nature.

Related to this, all the owner-managers declared themselves capable of pinpointing those business operations that were particularly harmful to the environment. These ranged from high resource consumption to excessive waste generation (with liquid waste to the fore). To cite Dariusz Jasiniak from AGRO-RANCHO, “failure to manage waste is probably most environmentally-unfriendly”⁸². At the same time, they acknowledged greening the operations of their firms by taking typical measures that result in reduced operating costs. In the event, all the firms installed resource-efficient appliances (motion-sensor operated lights, low-flow shower heads, energy-efficient lights, etc.) and tried to manage waste (JABŁONIOWY SAD and EKOSTYL had their own sewage-treatment plants). Interestingly, some of the businesses went as far as using

79 Interview on 27 September 2013

80 Interview on 15 October 2013

81 Interview on 22 October 2013

82 Interview on 18 September 2013

renewable energy sources. For example, the owner-managers of GRÓD RYCERSKI and SŁOCIAK & SŁOCIAK installed solar panels. Besides, all the agritourism farms converted food waste into compost. The owners of PETERS used rainwater to water the garden.

Some of the interviewees also went to great lengths to monitor the environmental performance of their enterprises: they constantly monitored resource use by means of sophisticated electronic devices (which was the case of SŁOCIAK & SŁOCIAK and STARKA). But this was the exception rather than the rule: the vast majority of the owner-managers limited themselves to taking monthly standard electricity- and water-use readings. In this context, Elżbieta Gałczyńska pointed out that she was “dreaming of a modern monitoring system”⁸³ that could allow her to keep track of – and constantly control – resource use.

As regards the barriers to environmental engagement, all the interviewees, as might have been *a priori* expected, pointed to high costs related to the introduction of environmentally-friendly measures. At the same time, they highlighted lack of financial resources and difficult access to credit. In the words of Iwona and Jan Wajrach, “we are authentically willing to get far more engaged, but lack of money for green investment dampens our enthusiasm. We can’t afford to carry out considerable investments, but at least we’re doing what does not necessitate costly outlays”⁸⁴. Dariusz Jasiniak, while also drawing attention to financial issues, pointed to complicated, burdensome regulation (especially, concerning renewable energy generation) as one of the main constraints on environmental engagement. This is in line with evidence from western Europe, where, as mentioned earlier, small accommodation businesses are also facing similar problems. What should be stressed in this context is the fact that none of the interviewees cited busyness or lack of human resources as the reasons for failure to carry out environmental practices – a finding that stands in contrast to evidence from analogical research conducted in the West (and is positively surprising *per se*).

Crucially, enquired about whether they did anything to raise the green awareness of their guests, most of the interviewees answered in the affirmative (it has to be said that some of the owner-managers – for instance, Andrzej Kościuk – regarded inadequate eco-literacy as a serious obstacle to environmental commitment⁸⁵). For instance, guests (and especially their children) staying at the SŁOCIAK & SŁOCIAK hotel are invited to plant trees. Iwona and Jens Frasek talk to their guests about the need to live in harmony with nature and the benefits of eating healthy food. And they place great emphasis on the ecological education of children, organising specialised workshops for them. The following passage illustrates their philosophy:

83 Interview on 29 October 2013

84 Interview on 22 October 2013

85 Interview on 1 October 2013

We prefer a hands-on, out-of-classroom approach. Kids get to know basic ecological concepts by means of direct contact with the environment [...] The idea is to make them realise and experience the interrelationship between man and nature. The focus is on environmentally-friendly behaviour as well as on the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. In German, such an approach to education is called *Natur er-fassen*. *Natur be-greifen*. It is a play on words that perfectly expresses what should be the centrepiece of ecological education. The verbs *erfassen* and *begreifen* mean “to realise” and “to comprehend” and hence, by extension, “to learn” and “to acquire knowledge”. But the words *fassen* and *greifen*, which colloquially signify “to grasp”, “to touch” and “to get hold of”, assume new significance. You touch something in order to feel it and to remember it. So the idea is not only to know a given matter but also to feel it. And this is likely to help kids interiorise the need to live in harmony with nature, to live wisely⁸⁶.

In a similar vein, EKOSTYL and AGROCHATKA, which set themselves the goal of promoting environmentalism, hold ecological workshops and other educational activities. In the words of Elżbieta and Jerzy Woźniak, bosses of AGROCHATKA, “kids learn how to segregate waste while teenagers – how to lead a healthy lifestyle”⁸⁷. Interestingly, EKOSTYL was designed to function as a model ecological agritourism farm with a view to raising societal green awareness. It obtained ecological certificates back in 1993, when few Polish firms were engaged in greenery and general eco-literacy was truly low. Apart from organizing workshops for school children, it provides training on how to practice environmental management and how to comply with environmental regulation. In addition, it produces certified ecological (organic) food, which is sold under the BioLife brand. In this context, Iwona Śliczna, owner-manager of EKOSTYL said that they also propagated “cultivation of old types of cereals”⁸⁸ and produced bio-degradable husk-filled pillows.

And this brings us to the question of food. Indeed, all the owner-mangers served locally-sourced food and emphasized the importance of traditional cooking and wholesome eating habits. What is more, most of them produced and served *their own* food (including, as just mentioned, organic food). Symptomatically, some of the interviewees viewed the food they served as a sort of magnet for guests and hence as a tourist attraction in its own right. To quote Iwona and Jens Frasek once more, “aware that our food is both healthy and delicious, many people are willing to pay extra for a stay at JABŁONIOWY SAD”⁸⁹. Similar claims were made by the other interlocutors. But there is more to the issue of food than that. As a matter of fact, the food was seen – and used – as a tool for promoting a specific philosophy of life conceptually embedded in the

86 Interview on 27 September 2013

87 Interview on 9 September 2013

88 Interview on 15 October 2013

89 Interview on 27 September 2013

harmonious coexistence between man and nature. This, by implication, reinforced the case for protecting the environment – however modest such efforts might appear – at the level of a single household.

As we can see, an unspoilt environment is central to the business models of the firms under consideration. In other words, nature is an integral part of the products they offer. The owner-managers are fully aware that success of their enterprises relies – to a far greater degree than in the case of other companies – on the state of the environment. Thus, from a certain point of view, one could convincingly argue that for such enterprises as EKOSTYL or AGROCHATKA going green is not even about preserving competitive advantage; it is about the very essence of their *raison d'être*. Equally important and related to the above, the choice of the type of economic activity reflected both the interviewees' attitudes towards nature and their lifestyles (or philosophies of life); in fact, as some of the quotations attest, most of the interviewees value – and believe in – harmonious coexistence with nature (which, by definition, precludes damaging the environment). Therefore, by founding their own enterprises that offer an “environment-related” product, they realized the dream of living off – and, simultaneously, in harmony with – nature. All this might go some way towards explaining their commitment to environmentalism.

Conclusions

The study has set out to explore the attitudes of owner-managers of agritourism farms and small lodging firms towards environmental engagement. It expands the existing body of knowledge by providing evidence from a distinctively attractive region situated in an eastern European economy that is not regarded as a paragon of environmentalism. The most important finding is that the owner-managers, while being well-informed about green issues, acknowledged reducing the environmental impact of their firms (let us reiterate that there is some evidence that eco-literacy is not a forte of bosses of small lodging firms). In doing so, they introduce typical environmental (cost-cutting) measures, such as installation of resource-efficient appliances or management of waste. Crucially, none of the interviewees cited busyness or lack of human resources as the reasons for reluctance (or failure) to carry out environmental practices – a finding that stands in contrast to evidence from prior research conducted in western Europe or Asia. That said, most of our interlocutors seem to follow commonsense and pragmatism rather than formalized approaches to environmental management (yet still complying with legislation). This adds substance to the claim that formal approaches to environmental management may not be particularly well-suited to the idiosyncrasies of small business.

The results also show that the owner-managers were able to identify both barriers to environmental performance improvement and those business practices that are most harmful to nature. Relatedly, all of them pointed out that high costs associated with the introduction of environmental measures and problems with financing made it hard to deepen their green involvement. These impediments, coupled with complicated regulations, were also found to be serious constraints on environmental engagement in the western context. Of special interest is the owner-managers' commitment to raising societal green awareness. Indeed, such enterprises as EKOSTYL or JABŁONIOWY SAD, with their well-thought-out workshops, can be held up as models of the effective promotion of environmentalism. Finally, what also deserves recognition is the emphasis on serving locally-sourced and often homemade food.

Of course, our sample is very small and geographically undiversified, and hence unrepresentative. This, while constituting the study's major limitation, means that any generalization is highly problematic. The only thing that can be said for certain is that in Poland there exist small lodging firms that share characteristics with similar businesses in western Europe. Equally importantly, the paper is based on self-reports, which again argues for a measure of caution. As is widely acknowledged, interviewees (and respondents filling out questionnaire forms) sometimes fail to reveal their authentic views or to tell the whole truth. Political correctness is one of the most frequently cited reasons for research-related insincerity – a flaw which concerns, above all, interviews that, as in our case, are not anonymous. And, environmentalism, which has come to be seen (at least in some circles) as a symbol of integrity and modernity, is nowadays particularly prone to political correctness (neither individuals nor firms want to be perceived as uncaring towards the environment). Accordingly, one needs to be particularly cautious about interpreting findings from interviews on environmental issues. The implication is that future researchers might wish to employ different research techniques and base their investigations on much larger and geographically diversified samples.

The above-mentioned limitations notwithstanding, we believe that the study advances our understanding of the mechanisms that underlie environmental engagement in small lodging firms. Crucially, it shows that also in eastern Europe, which lags behind the West in terms of environmental performance⁹⁰, there are entrepreneurs who value and attempt to protect the environment. Without doubt, much more research is required to ascertain the patterns and tendencies described in the paper. This is all the more so in view of the fact that the eastern Europe – thanks to its still largely unspoilt nature and locally-sourced cuisine – is likely to draw ever greater numbers of foreign tourists in the near future.

90 EPI (2014)

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The 2013 World Responsible Tourism Awards

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2013 was the 10th year of the Responsible Tourism Awards run previously with First Choice (2004-6) and more recently with Virgin Holidays (2007-2012). In their 10th anniversary year the awards came of age. They were rebranded as the World Responsible Tourism Awards, the headline sponsor's recognition no longer extends to their name being included in the Awards and in 2013 we had a much more extensive and diverse range of partners and sponsors.

The categories were substantially changed in 2014 to reflect changes in Responsible Tourism. For the first 10 years the Awards tended to focus on businesses (tour operators, accommodation, transport), environments (marine, mountains, cultures and architecture) and a limited number of issues (carbon pollution, poverty reduction, volunteering and conservation). In 2013 we maintained the Best Destination category, broadened the poverty reduction category of previous years to Best for the Local Economy, refocused the wildlife conservation category to look at the tourist experience and focused on two issues: water conservation and child protection. Also new in 2013 were the campaigning and photography categories – part of our purpose in organising the Awards each year is our intent to raise awareness amongst holidaymakers and travellers. The People's Choice category was introduced to provide an opportunity for "the people" to engage and they did in substantial numbers, this experiment is likely to become a permanent feature of the Awards.

Since 2004 there have been 12 Overall Winners, 113 winners and 179 Highly Commended across the globe. Details of the categories, winners and highly commendeds for each year since 2004 can be found on the Awards website.¹ As the Awards have grown in stature we have begun to receive nominations from more and more countries and we have seen the launch of other Responsible Tourism Awards, most recently the *Catalan Responsible Tourism Awards* which were launched part of the 7th International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations in Barcelona in October 2013.² The Catalan Awards were consciously modelled on the process used for the Awards organised by responsibletourism.com and they have acknowledged this.

As the Responsible Tourism movement grows Awards schemes based on the concept of Responsible Tourism will proliferate, something to celebrate. Responsible Tourism

¹ www.responsibletourism.com/awards/winners/

² <http://rtd7.org/awards>

recognises, indeed celebrates, the cultural and natural diversity of our world this will be reflected in the diversity of Awards generated by it. That diversity should be celebrated so long as Responsible Tourism Awards are genuinely competed for and that the judges explain their decisions. It is for this reason that each year the reasons for the judges' decisions are written up in some detail and are published here in Progress in Responsible Tourism.

The organisers of the Awards, with their partners, actively encourage nominations and this year we received just short of 1,000 nominations. The judges do not select the organisations which they regard as the most responsible, the judges are constrained to select from amongst those which have been nominated, although we expect the judges to encourage nominations. Colleagues from the staff, alumni and current students of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism³ work through the nominations undertaking some preliminary research on the internet and applying their specialist knowledge of both Responsible Tourism and the sector.

Under the supervision of the chair of judges and the organisers they then draw up a long list of between 15 and 25 organisations in each category. Inevitably some Award categories are less strong than others. The Judges' Questionnaire is then sent to all those organisations which have reached this stage of the process. In one case this year⁴ all of those nominated were sent questionnaires and the ICRT expert worked through 36 questionnaires to provide a long list of 11 for the judges to consider.

Table 1: Nominations, long listed and returned questionnaires by category

Category	Unique nominations	Long-listed	Shortlisted
Best for Responsible Wildlife Experiences	45	26	14
Best for Water Conservation	26	11	05
Best for the Local Economy	104	36	11
Best for Responsible Tourism Campaigning	23	07	05
Best Destination for Responsible Tourism	27	19	08
Best for Child Protection	30	21	09
Best Photography for Responsible Tourism	n/a	n/a	10

Source: organiser's records.

The judges, in pairs, then look at the long listed organisations and together agree on a shortlist for consideration by all the judges on Judging Day. On the judging day the recommendations of each pair of judges are considered and debated, often at length, until a consensus is reached, very rarely is a vote taken.

³ www.icrtourism.org

⁴ Best for the Local Economy

Box 1: Panel of Judges 2013⁵

Dr Harold Goodwin, Chair of Judges, Founder Director of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism

Justin Francis, Founder and director of the Responsible Tourism Awards, CEO of responsibletravel.com

Dr Rebecca Hawkins, Director of the Responsible Hospitality Partnership

Debbie Hindle, Managing Director Four bgb

Fiona Jeffery, Chairman of World Travel Market 2007-2013

Simon Press, Senior Exhibition Director, World Travel Market (WTM)

Michael Pritchard, Director-General of The Royal Photographic Society

Lisa Scott, Travel Editor of the Metro Newspaper

John de Vial, Director of the ICRT and ABTA

Dr Matt Walpole Head of Ecosystem Assessment at the World Conservation Monitoring Centre for the United Nations Environment Programme

Mark Watson CEO Tourism Concern

Nikki White, Head of Destinations and Sustainability at ABTA

Ian Reynolds retired because of ill health in 2012 from the Judges of the Responsible Tourism Awards. Educated at the London School of Economics, and with 25 years as a manager in IBM, Ian brought a grasp of the detail and his personal integrity to the judging process. He served as Chief Executive of ABTA from 1994 to 2005 and was one of the founding judges of the Awards contributing his wide knowledge of the tourism sector and his sharp mind to the judging process. Ian had a strong social commitment, he was Chairman of the Family Holiday Association from 1995 until his illness and untimely death in October 2013. Ian was greatly missed during the judging this year and will be for many years to come. He was involved in the selection of the winners from the last two years that we chose to be put before the public for the Public Choice.

There were two new judges this year. Simon Press the Exhibition Director for World Travel Market at Reed Exhibitions with a wealth of connections and Dr Michael Pritchard a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society joined the panel this year to strengthen the Judges' capacity in judging the Best Photograph for Responsible Tourism category.

⁵ More detail available online: www.responsibletravel.com/awards/about/judges.htm

The Awards are not an accreditation scheme; they are not about certifying an organisation as responsible. The judges seek to identify and celebrate innovation, to inspire change in the industry, and to recognise organisations that demonstrate best practice. The judges and the organisers want the Awards to be the place to share stories about those organisations leading the way in Responsible Tourism.

The judges can only consider those organisations which have been nominated and which take the time to complete the extensive questionnaire necessary to the judging process which needs to be returned along with details of two independent referees. The references are followed up and considered in the judging process. There are no site visits; it was one of the founding principles of the Awards that we will consider any business or organisation which is nominated and which returns the completed questionnaire and for which we can get the necessary references. To send at least one judge to visit all the shortlisted businesses would be expensive, precluding some more remote places from being considered. It would also mean that the essential parity of the judges would be jeopardised with some becoming advocates for the businesses which they had visited.

The judges look for examples of responsible practice which will excite interest and help us to drive the Responsible Tourism agenda forward, we particularly look for examples which will inspire and which are replicable. The judges look for examples of Responsible Tourism in practice that have some, or all, of the following characteristics:

- Demonstrate the application of Responsible Tourism in taking responsibility for making tourism more sustainable across the triple bottom line, addressing economic, social and environmental issues.
- Credible evidence of having exercised responsibility based on the questionnaires we send out to all those who make the long-list and the references that we take up.
- Novelty –we want organisations with original ideas, innovative approaches to solving problems in sustainable tourism, and unique initiatives that drive the Responsible Tourism agenda forward.
- A track record – proven results, demonstrable achievements illustrated with real data, well recorded metrics and detailed information about investment of time, effort and resources in Responsible Tourism initiatives.
- Replicability – practices and initiatives that are inspirational and have the potential to be applied elsewhere, adaptable concepts and ideas that could have an impact beyond their own business.
- Local focus – Responsible Tourism is not limited to a tick list of key requirements, we are interested in practices that address local issues and provide solutions with the local community in mind.

Previous winners and highly commendeds are required to demonstrate that something significant has been achieved since the last time they were recognised in the Awards, it is tough to win a second or third time.

The judges are independent volunteers, they have no knowledge of the sponsorship arrangements and they are not recompensed for their time and effort in judging the Awards. As Simon Press of World Travel Market commented: *“As a first time judge, for the World Responsible Tourism Awards, I found the judging process enlightening, uplifting and very thorough”*.

The debate around the judging table is extensive, it took seven hours this year to agree on the winners and highly commended. There is considerable expertise around the judging table from across the tourism industry and they deploy their experience and knowledge in a robust round-table debate to choose the most innovative and inspirational nominees as shining examples in Responsible Tourism. The range of knowledge and contacts amongst our judges is very broad many of the candidates are known to the judges and in a surprising number of cases to multiple judges. If all of the judges who know the candidates being considered leave the room there would, in some cases be very few judges left. More seriously the judges would be deprived of the knowledge of those who do know the candidates.

Before discussion of each category each judge is required to state openly any relationship with, and the basis of any prior knowledge of, each candidate being considered in the category. If any additional candidate is later suggested as a potential winner then the judges are again asked to declare their relationship and the basis of any prior knowledge. The judges then collectively decide who can vote, if the issue comes to a vote, and they have the opportunity to ensure that they are aware of any bias, in favour or against, any particular candidate by any judge. Everyone then takes part in the discussion and can be questioned about the candidates – only the non-conflicted can vote. This ensures that the judges have the benefit of all of the knowledge around the table and are able to take account of biases. It is not unusual for organisations with judges have close relationships not to be considered, it is arguably harder for those with which one or more judges had a relationship or close knowledge to win because of the additional scrutiny from other judges.

1 Best for Child Protection

The protection of children from labour and sexual exploitation in tourism is a serious problem, far too rarely mentioned in the press. This results in many holiday-makers lacking awareness about this issue. This year, we are trying to address this problem and this is why we have created the *Best for Child Protection Category* .

30 different organisations were nominated for this category reflecting the many groups, businesses, international and local NGOs, which are actively tackling this scourge. Unfortunately the travel and tourism industry can unwittingly facilitate child trafficking, the sexual exploitation of children and other abuses.

Winner: TUI Nederland⁶

The judges were impressed by the scale of TUI Nederland's response to the challenge of child protection and its holistic approach. They have developed policies and trained staff to identify child abuse, whether amongst the families for whom they provide holidays or abuse perpetrated by travellers in the destination. They have been working to protect children from abuse since 2002 when they signed the Child Protection Code with ECPAT Nederland. They have worked to embed child protection into the routine way the business operates and to extend this commitment through their network of supplier and partners.

Realising that child sex tourism is silently growing in the Northeast of Brazil, TUI, with local partners Childhood Brazil, RESPOSTA and Plan Brazil, and in the Netherlands with Dutch tourism association ANVR, Travel Counsellors, Fly Brazil Nederland, Plan Nederland and ECPAT Nederland launched a campaign to say 'A collective "NO" to child sex tourism in the Northeast of Brazil.' TUI Nederland has contributed over €100,000 since 2008 to the campaign. 80 adolescents aged between 14 and 17 years and studying in public schools, have been trained as 'youth mobilizers', for the prevention of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, reaching over 2,000 people. The vocational training programme designed to take vulnerable children out of poverty, and to reduce their vulnerability to sexual exploitation, already has 104 graduates of whom 39 were employed throughout 2012.

Highly Commended: Friends International⁷ for ChildSafe Network in Cambodia, Lao, Thailand & Indonesia

Friends-International (FI) is a social enterprise working with children and their families by providing education and training to assist them in becoming productive members of their society in Cambodia, Lao, Thailand & Indonesia and it works with NGO partners in Honduras, the Philippines and Egypt. FI works with families to provide vulnerable children with access to informal education, preparing them for a school environment, and then integrating them into their local public school system. And they offer vocational training for youths up to 24 years. The judges were particularly impressed by FI's ChildSafe Network, child protection programme involving grassroots community members, the tourism industry, and travellers. The programme

⁶ www.tui.nl/sustainabletourism

⁷ www.friends-international.org

provides advice about how best to behave with children, hotlines for emergency action, and training for local community members on child protection and what to do to protect a child at risk. Their regional campaign, “7 tips”, has been translated into more than five languages advising how to behave with children, the detrimental effects of giving money to children or buying from them, and the scams all too often hidden behind orphanage and school visits where children have become a tourism commodity.

*Intrepid Travel*⁸

The judges recognise the contribution which Intrepid has made since the 1990s in addressing child protection. When Intrepid first began advocating child protection and sharing information with tourism partners, there was resistance from some businesses who believed that these issues were nothing to do with them – that, for example, paedophiles would not book through their agency, use their airline, or stay in their hotel. Intrepid’s response was to redouble its efforts, and hope that other companies would see the benefits that action on child protection would bring to their business and the communities where they operate. Leadership is vital if the industry is to face up to its responsibilities. Intrepid has been actively engaged in ensuring that in its recruitment processes address child protection, providing training in child protection and supporting charities and NGOs working to counter child abuse in the wide range of destinations to which it operates.

2 Best for Responsible Wildlife Experiences:

This year we focussed on organisations that are committed to wildlife protection and to providing the memorable experiences that tourists will share with friends and family raising awareness of responsible approaches to wildlife experiences and providing replicable examples of good practise.

Winner: Nam Nern Night Safari,⁹ Lao PDR

The Nam Nern Night Safari has been designed to create direct incentives for conservation, it takes place in Nam Et – Phou Louey National Protected Area (NEPL) the last stronghold for tigers in Indo-China and the only place in the region where visitors can hope to seeing a tiger or its pugmarks is along the banks of the Nam Nern River. The Nam Nern Night Safari supports the conservation of tigers and their prey, as well as other wildlife, by placing a monetary value on tigers and other wildlife for local people. Each reported sighting of wildlife by a tourist results in financial reward for the villagers who live with the wildlife, including people who might otherwise poach. Since 2010 there have been 370 visitors in 142 groups, and the revenues have been shared by

8 www.intrepidtravel.com

9 www.namet.org/namnern.html

1000+ families in the 14 surrounding villages. The village development fund generated \$2,860 this year, roughly \$200 per village, it has been used by villages to improve their well-being through small projects such as purchasing medicine for a village medicine bank, building a bathroom at a primary school, or purchasing benches for community meeting halls. Although the numbers are small the initiative has been very successful in increasing the number of wildlife sightings per boat – the sighting have doubled from an average of two per boat trip to four, and visitor satisfaction is high averaging 4.4 out of 5. The judges felt that this approach should be replicable and would contribute to creating a more positive relationship between local communities, wildlife and tourism.

Highly Commended: ReefCI¹⁰, Belize

Reef CI has been in business for ten years based out of Punta Gorda town, a small fishing community. Reef CI offers experiences of the marine wildlife from the Caribbean Caye, 36 miles from the mainland on the Great Barrier Reef. ReefCI operates with a high ratio of staff to guests. The judges recognised the contribution which ReefCI makes to conservation both through the quality of the guest experience and the data which they collect on species and populations and their contribution to the local economy through employment and local sourcing. ReefCI are working with the department of Fisheries in Belize to help protect the marine life and sustain fisheries. The data they collect assists fisheries with their allocations of open and closed season regulations which helps to conserve commercial species such as Conch and Lobster.

Highly Commended: The Great Projects¹¹, Africa, Asia, South America & Europe

This is the third time that The Great Projects has been Highly Commended in the Awards, in 2009 for conservation of wildlife and habitats and in 2010 for volunteering. The judges wanted to recognise the success of The Great Projects in extending its range of volunteering holidays to four continents. People who volunteer on one of their projects have the opportunity to work with, and help the conservation of, some of the world's most endangered animals. Tourists have the opportunity to work up close with Orangutans, Cheetahs, Lions and each tourist makes a donation to conservation. Great Projects carefully manages the interactions between tourists and wildlife to ensure a good experience, and where they do not allow hands on contact or close encounters with animals they explain why so that it does not diminish the tourist's experience.

10 <http://reefci.com/>

11 www.thegreatprojects.com/

3 Best for Water Conservation

2013 was declared by the United Nations as the International Year for Water Conservation prompting the Awards to create the category. Although water consumption by the travel and tourism industry is of increasing concern amongst environmentalists and policy makers there is still very limited awareness of the issue. This category attracted the smallest number of unique nominations, a mere 26, of which only five completed the necessary questionnaire to be considered for an award.

Winner: Chepu Adventures Ecolodge,¹² Chile

Chepu offers lodging and kayaking at dawn, “in silence, surrounded by morning mist, the reflections of sun rays and the song of birds giving thanks to a new day”; and kayaking in “the sunken forest escorted by river otters.” One of the owners is an engineer and the lodge uses only rain water in the bathrooms and kitchen, harvested from the roofs of the lodge and stored in a well and large water tanks. Chepu uses solar water heaters to provide hot water for showers and the kitchen, its electricity is provided by wind and solar energy, Chepu offers “comfortable beds and soft white linens with the aromas of nature after they have been dried out to the fresh air, and our home cuisine with organic and natural products provided by local green houses and family farming.” Chepu demonstrates that the frugal use of water does not have to mean a Spartan experience.

The judges were particularly impressed by the way in which Chepu engages the visitor enabling them to monitor their own water consumption by providing them with electronic feedback on the amount of water they are using. If they keep within their “eco-limit” they can choose to have a tree planted in Patagonia or a reduction on their bill. There is sophisticated shower control, every time the button is pressed the shower starts and stops, allowing cycles to get wet, stop the shower, soap, rinse and so on for 3 effective minutes using 21 litres of water. Clients can prolong the shower time by reducing the water flow, the shower delivers at 39°C so that guest satisfaction remains high.

Highly Commended: Chumbe Island Coral Park¹³ off the coast of Zanzibar/Tanzania

Chumbe Island Coral Park is the first marine park in Tanzania; and the first private marine park in the world fully funded by eco-tourism. Water pollution is a direct threat to coral and the management of fresh and waste water has been a priority from the original conception of Chumbe. The judges were impressed by the care which has been taken to manage the whole water system in an ecologically benign way. Each eco-bungalow has its own rainwater catchment system, which collects the seasonal

¹² www.chepu.cl

¹³ www.chumbeisland.com

rains on all roof surfaces, feeds it through sand and gravel filters and then stores it in underground cisterns under each building. Sewage is avoided by the use of composting toilets; shower water and other grey water from the kitchens is filtered through a reed system and through garden plots using specialised vegetation to ensure that there is no pollution of the environment.

4 Best for the Local Economy

Much is made of the contribution which tourism makes to economic development globally, For this category the judges look for evidence of benefits to the local economy and people, through employment or local sourcing, benefits which exceed the normal.

Winner: Village Ways,¹⁴ India and Ethiopia

Village Ways was recognised in 2009 as the best tour operator for cultural engagement, this time the judges were impressed by their innovative and distinctive business model. In order to discourage out-migration and to create additional livelihoods in marginal rural areas Village Ways has developed a business model based on Village Tourism Enterprises, with tourists walking from village to village accompanied by local guides, eating locally grown and prepared meals and enjoying local traditional singing, music & dancing. Walking from village to village, guests travel like a local and have the opportunity to interact with villagers and, if they wish, to participate in village activities. Village Ways has brought significant income to rural households struggling against poverty.

The Village Ways Partnership¹⁵ is a social enterprise, established to support and benefit culturally rich, but economically poor rural communities through the development of viable village enterprises capable of generating both community and household benefits. The Partnership provides the technical expertise and the marketing and distribution support necessary for the development of a network of profitable village enterprises. The Founders' Charter commits Village Ways to its social purpose: Village Ways: "developing responsible tourism in partnership with poorer rural communities, in order to sustain village life and culture, improve livelihoods in remote rural areas and reduce the need for outward migration. Village Ways seeks to create self-reliant local Village Tourism Enterprises (VTEs), each of which is sufficiently profitable to benefit the wider community by creating additional sources of community, household and individual income." Fundamental to Village Ways are the principles that good businesses, to be sustainable, must be profitable and that "all business units are profitable from the grass roots up", this is ensured by providing a targeted route to market, offering travel experiences with a true essence of people and places.

¹⁴ www.villageways.com

¹⁵ <http://villagewayspartnership.com/>

Highly Commended: Basecamp Explorer,¹⁶ Maasai Mara in Kenya

Basecamp Explorer operates camps across Maasai Mara and they have won many awards for their work on wildlife and conservation. Basecamp Explorer was previously recognised in 2005 when it won the protected area category. The judges this year wanted to recognise two particular initiatives which are, in the opinion of the judges, highly replicable. The Basecamp Maasai Brand and the community managed micro-finance (CMMF) programme launched in 2010. The CMMF created seventeen savings groups of women, doing beadwork, bee keeping and livestock fattening. The CMMF now involves some 400 women and the programme has been replicated for example in the Olonana project. The Basecamp Maasai Brand creates livelihoods for 118 women; only recycled raw materials are used and the women themselves design and price the products.

5 Best for Responsible Tourism Campaigning

The judges were looking for examples of campaigns where a problem had been identified by an individual or group, where they have been successful in establishing that there is an issue which needs to be addressed by the industry, in originating markets and/or destinations, and that the industry's practise needs to change. Successful campaigns are those where an issue is raised and the first stage of the campaign establishes that something must be done about it, solutions are proposed and argued for, support is secured and practise changes. Both of the campaign organisations recognised here are small and they have achieved success with very few resources.

Winner: People & Places,¹⁷ UK

Highly commended in 2007 in the best volunteering category they won it in 2009. The judges were impressed by their campaign for responsible volunteering; they have also been active in campaigning for child protection whilst running their small business. Their campaign has been funded entirely by the business, making extensive use of the social media the two directors have given their time freely to fight for change in the industry. One of their independent referees wrote of them "setting the Gold Standard in Responsible Volunteering ... peopleandplaces are not an NGO that preaches from the rooftops – they are a frontline organisation developing best practice by mixed channels of communication, discussion, sensitive listening, and, most of all by practical application of the concepts in the field." Over the last few years practice in volunteering has improved, although there is still much to be done, peopleandplaces have been at heart of that movement tirelessly to raise awareness and demand action, working with many partners in the UK and abroad.

¹⁶ www.basecampexplorer.com/

¹⁷ www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

Highly Commended Snowcarbon,¹⁸ UK and the Alps

Snowcarbon was highly commended in 2010 in the best for low carbon transport & technology category. Owned by two travel journalists it campaigns to increase the sustainability of ski holidays by encouraging, enabling and inspiring skiers to travel to ski resorts by train instead of flying or driving. Snowcarbon's journey planner provides an easy means for skiers to book their journey to the slopes and they have partnered with the Ski Club of Great Britain to promote rail travel to ski resorts. The introduction of the Journey Planner and its associated iframes on other ski websites coincided with a 125% increase in visits to Snowcarbon over 12 months. Their plane versus train film¹⁹ has so far been viewed over 950 times on Rail Europe, 3,700 on Ski Club and 5,700 on YouTube. They avoided 'guilt mongering' about flying, some skiers have no viable alternative but to fly, instead, concentrating on the positives of rail travel and the idea of 'train whenever possible'.

6 Best Destination for Responsible Tourism

The Best Responsible Tourism Destination recognises a village, town, city, region or country that strongly promotes responsible tourism practices to tourists. Previous winners have included St Kilda in Scotland, Roros in Norway, Aspen in the USA, and New Zealand – each has something to offer that others might replicate.

Winner: Bonito²⁰, Brazil

Bonito was launched as a tourism destination when its natural beauty was revealed on Brazilian television in 1990, in 2012 it received 190,000 tourists. Bonito is located on a plateau in the Serra do Bodoquena, south of the Pantanal. Bonito is famous for its crystal clear waters, caves, mountain and forests with diverse wildlife to be found in a national park and ten private reserves. As tourists began to arrive there was concern about the impact that unregulated tourism might have on the environment and particularly the crystal clear waters; about the consequences of competition if each business sought to maximise its arrivals and the impact on Bonito's reputation if tourists travelled thirty miles to a ranch only to find that it was full.

The private sector businesses and the public authorities realised that tourism development in Bonito needed to be managed within the carrying capacity of the natural environment and the tourism facilities available. All the operators in Bonito use the same voucher system, known locally as "Vale cash". The voucher confers the services of a guide, the activity and the accommodation. The "voucher system" also ensures tax revenue for the municipality, businesses are unable to under-report their business

¹⁸ www.snowcarbon.co.uk

¹⁹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5OG8qj79fo

²⁰ www.bonito-ms.com.br

volumes. The judges were impressed by the voucher system and keen to recognise its contribution to ensuring the sustainability of the destination. As a successful tourism destination able to protect its environment and offer high quality tourism experiences, with a strong tax base, Bonito has good social indices and low crime.

Highly Commended: Nature Park & Glacier Region Kaunertal²¹, Austria

Kaunertal is the gateway to a glacier ski area, at 2,200-3,000 metres in the Tyrolean Alps. The judges were impressed by the work which has been done in Kaunertal to enable wheelchair users, people with reduced mobility, families with small children and strollers, unrestricted barrier-free active vacations throughout the year. Kaunertal has been working for over thirty years to make the destination accessible and the work continues, local entrepreneurs have managed to create a unique and comprehensive Alpine product accessible to all - starting with appropriate accommodations, cable cars, local attractions and transport, and extending to public facilities and accessible travel adventure facilities. The judges were impressed by the sustained commitment to make Kaunertal as accessible to people with limited mobility as it is to able-bodied people, 12% of overnight stays are by people with walking disabilities who are able to enjoy the same leisure facilities and to take an active holiday alongside the able bodied.

Mara Naboisho Conservancy²², Maasai Mara in Kenya

The Mara Naboisho conservancy, Kenya's first conservation social enterprise, was established in 2010 with, rather than for, the community. The Maasai word Naboisho means coming together and the judges were impressed with the transparency of the partnership arrangements between the tourism investors and Maasai landowners. The purpose of the conservancy was to secure livelihoods for local people. Tourism was not the purpose although it is a means. Naboisho became the first conservancy to get a 15 year lease from landowners with rent payable monthly directly to the owners' bank accounts. \$700,000 is paid annually as land rent by the tourism partners regardless of their occupancy. All the camps in Naboisho employ between 85%-95% local Maasai staff and 95% of the conservancy staff are local Maasai community members. Naboisho has set up a community development program which provides a range of benefits including clean water points, clinics, scholarships for girls, solar energy and classrooms.

Valleys Regional Park²³, Wales

There are other tourism ambassador programmes in the UK but the judges wanted to recognise the Valleys Community Tourism Ambassador Programme, for developing, what one of its independent referees described as "passion filled tourist destinations".

21 www.kaunertal.com

22 <http://maranaboisho.com>

23 www.thevalleys.co.uk

The referee continues “one can’t help but be moved by the warmth of the welcome and the feelings expressed by the Ambassadors when guiding visitors through the history and legends of the locations, including ancient castles and ruins, industrial heritage, modern activities and the natural beauty of the spectacular landscapes.” The Valleys Regional Park sits between the Brecon Beacons National Park and the coastal cities of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, home to one million people, a third of the Welsh population. Over 40 organisations including Natural Resources Wales, 12 Local authorities, Groundwork, wildlife trusts, Keep Wales Tidy and a host of others has come together to reverse the area’s recent history of economic downturn and neglect. Tourism has been used to contribute to community regeneration on a large scale.

7 Best Photography for Responsible Tourism

Communicating Responsible Tourism is one of the purposes of the Awards. We have previously recognised writing which has communicated the difference which Responsible Tourism can make for local communities and their environment; and the enhanced quality of the experience enjoyed by travellers and holidaymakers. This year we decided to look for examples of photographs which communicate the idea of Responsible Tourism. We invited Michael Pritchard, Director-General of The Royal Photographic Society since 2011, to join the judges. An active photographer with a particular interest in landscape and travel photography Michael kindly provided some top tips for those wanting to submit their photographs. We were looking for photographs which communicated something about the Responsible Tourism approach.

We knew that to capture the idea of Responsible Tourism in a photograph was difficult, many of us have tried. Part of our purpose was to have a range of photographs which could be used to promote Responsible Tourism. We received 215 photographs and Michael shortlisted 10 for the judges to consider. There was a long debate about the merits of the shortlisted pictures which demonstrated convincingly that people see very different things in photographs. We finally agreed on three which we wished to Highly Commend, none of which was thought by a substantial majority of the judges to communicate Responsible Tourism more than the others. There was therefore no overall winner. But there are three great Highly Commendeds.

8 People’s Choice for Responsible Tourism.

One of the purposes of these awards, perhaps our primary purpose, is to spread the idea of Responsible Tourism. We want to engage those involved in travel and tourism around the world, whether as producers or consumers, in debate about what makes for a better kind of tourism, in the words of the Cape Town Declaration²⁴ making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit.

24 <http://responsibletourismpartnership.org/CapeTown.html>

A panel of judges chose five previous winners for the People's Choice. We chose from amongst recent winners to ensure that the practices and achievements for which they were recognised were still current and we sought to present the diversity of Responsible Tourism. **Battlesteads**²⁵ is an English hotel, pub and restaurant which demonstrates the full-range of Responsible Tourism practices and delivers an enhanced guest experience. **3 Sisters Adventure Trekking**²⁶ trains and employs women as high-altitude guides and porters, a break from tradition in the male-dominated Nepalese trekking industry. **Whale Watch Kaikoura**²⁷, New Zealand, a Maori-owned whale watching operator which has demonstrated the ability, at scale to offer a very high quality whale watching experience from energy-efficient craft which have a very low impact on the marine environment, and provide ground breaking interpretation which enables passengers to understand what is happening below them. **Reality Tours & Travel**,²⁸ India uses tourism to raise awareness of the reality of slum life, good and bad, and to raise money from its business and its customers to assist the communities it works with.

*Winner: Huilo Huilo,*²⁹ *Chile*

Huilo Huilo addresses all three pillars of sustainability. It works to conserve the forest and endangered species including the Patagonian Huemul and the Darwin Frog; it has worked with local people to ensure that those who used to make their living from logging and timber are now able to earn a living from tourism and it has been a catalyst creating opportunities for local people to create their own businesses, fostering music and poetry workshops and the Ethno-Mapuche Route.

Huilo Huilo won the best for conservation of wildlife and habitats category in 2012, the same year that Reality Tours and Travel was the overall winner. This demonstrates that the People's Choice may well differ from that of the experts; that businesses which are not in significant UK outbound destinations can win; and that the People's Choice also recognises the prowess of the Responsible Tourism businesses in the use of social media. Huilo Huilo got twice as many votes as Reality Tours and Travel which also got twice as many votes as the next business.

9 Overall Winner: TUI Nederland

TUI Nederland³⁰ was chosen as the overall winner because of the scale of its achievement in child protection, an area of Responsible Tourism which many businesses are reluctant to address. The judges were impressed by TUI Nederland's willingness to

²⁵ www.battlesteads.com/

²⁶ www.3sistersadventure.com

²⁷ www.whalewatch.co.nz

²⁸ www.realitytoursandtravel.com

²⁹ www.huilohuilo.com

³⁰ www.tui.nl/sustainabletourism

campaign on the issue of child protection and its holistic approach. Increasing numbers of businesses are raising awareness amongst their staff and working with their suppliers to engage them in addressing all forms of child abuse but in the main they do it without engaging their clients. In 2011 TUI initiated with the Ministry of Safety and Justice, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the Dutch tourism association ANVR the NGO's ECPAT and Plan Nederland a very public campaign at the three main Dutch airports to raise awareness about the child protection issue.

The campaign was targeted at departing passengers to raise their awareness of the prevalence of child sex tourism and to encourage them to report if they suspected that children were being sexually exploited. The judges were impressed by the willingness of TUI Nederland to raise the issue with their clients, and Dutch travellers in general, and to urge them to take action: to report their suspicions. The campaign was launched in October 2012 and ran over six months. The campaign resulted in 27 reports of suspicious activity, five of the reports contained sufficient details for a full investigation; three are being followed up in The Netherlands and two abroad. . In 2013 the campaign has continued with adverts in destination booklets and 40.000 campaign folders in brochures. That is leadership. The judges felt that this approach was highly replicable and that operators were too rarely willing to raise the issue with travellers and holiday-makers. They hoped that others would emulate TUI Nederland's example.

If you are reading this and thinking that you know of other, or better, potential winners of the Awards please nominate³¹ them next year, only those which are nominated and do the paper work, can be winners.

31 www.responsibletravel.com/awards/ | Awards normally open in April each year

Contributions are welcome in three categories

Practitioner Papers

Written by those actively engaged in managing tourism or implementing Responsible Tourism approaches – 2,000 to 4,000 words with references primarily to grey literature.

Academic Papers

Traditional papers with full academic referencing 5,000- 8,000 words

Work in Progress - Notes from the Field

Reports on new initiatives, work underway or brief comment pieces. Limited referencing, 400-1,500 words.

We anticipate that there will be a section listing new publications and sources relevant to Responsible Tourism.

Progress in Responsible Tourism also carries each November a report on the winners and the highly commended in the annual Virgin Holiday Responsible Tourism Awards.

Progress in Responsible Tourism will be published annually in November to coincide with World Travel Market, this reflects our intention that the journal should be of interest to the industry, academics and policymakers. Referencing: traditional footnotes, not Harvard, this is to make the papers more accessible to a non-academic readership.

Practitioner Papers will be reviewed by the editors. Academic Papers will be peer reviewed. Work in Progress and Notes from the Field will be reviewed by the editors. The Journal has an advisory board which has the same composition as the ICRT's Advisory Committee.

If you would like to contribute to the next edition to be published in September 2014 please write with a brief abstract to Harold Goodwin or Xavier Font.

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