

A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MARKETING

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Abstract

Tourism marketing focuses mainly on increasing tourism flows and further tourism development, something that has been criticized for, while contributing to the development of negative impacts, such as the natural environment, social, cultural and political environments. Integrating them would contribute to a more advanced approach to tourism marketing. This paper attempts an approach to the concept of sustainable tourism marketing, and seeks to demonstrate the feasibility of sustainable tourism marketing. Tourism management has adopted the concept of sustainability. On the contrary, the main objective in the traditional consumer marketing perspective is maximization of profit. Thus, according to Jamrozy (2007), a change of shape is required. That is why he proposes a sustainable tourism-marketing model (STMM), which will challenge the traditional tourism-marketing model. "This new sustainable marketing paradigm requires the integration of alternative approaches and radically moving towards more sustainable tourism marketing principles and practices". Otherwise, tourism marketing is an oxymoron.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Marketing

JEL Codes: Z33, Q56

Introduction

Van Dam and Apeldoorn (1996) rightly observe that for marketing to play a role in sustainable economic development, a critical re-evaluation of marketing theory is required. While tourism management recognizes all the positive and negative effects, tourism marketing focuses on micromarketing issues. That is why Haywood (1990) argues that in order to revise the idea of marketing as a guiding philosophy, fundamental changes in thinking and action need to be made. In addition, Walle (1998) argues, that the macro-marketing structure, as well as its functionality (the marketing objectives), the institutions involved and the commodities (what we market) in tourism marketing, should be examined. Jamrozy (2007) points out that, for some researchers, sustainable tourism marketing is an oxymoron in sustainable tourism, as it is identified with the promotion of tourism destinations. Therefore, activities for most researchers and practitioners are limited to creating destination images with well-known standardized marketing activities (brochures, campaigns, etc.) to sell them best. There are, of course, researchers who provide a more comprehensive marketing perspective on sustainable tourism. Middleton and Hawkins (1998) state very well that marketing sustainable tourism should be geared to managing corporate behaviors in a way that balances the interests of all stakeholders with long-term environmental interests of tourism destinations, while meeting the expectations and requirements of tourists / customers. Their approach, of course, remains within the bounds of financial marketing by balancing environmental and financial interests, without being able to offer more alternatives to sustainable tourism marketing. Some marketing researchers in the mid-1980s to mid-1990s questioned traditional economic theories and explored the theories and practices of green and sustainable marketing. The same is true of tourism marketing, with Haywood (1990) and Walle (1998) being critical of its concept and demanding a "broader and more balanced view of marketing". By this, they meant to consider

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holistic approaches to tourism and to develop similar marketing practices for tourist destinations.

1. Promotion and sustainability in tourism

1.1. Types of promotional activities in tourism industry

The tourism industry is one of the fastest growing industries of the world. In context of the role of promotional activities in the tourism sector, promotion is one of the important marketing mixes that play the vital role in marketing any product or service, the importance of promotional tools in this fastest growing tourism industry is not any exception. Thus, promotional activities in context to the tourism industry could be defined as the complex links between tourism and its potential beneficiaries and process which by the use of promotional and marketing tools aim at determining potential customers and then motivate them to purchase the specific tourism product. However, there are various dynamics of the promotional activities of the tourism industry. Firstly, the industry features intangible nature of services, which in turn makes it difficult for the customers to trail and track the quality of services until they purchase any tourism activity or gather any tourism related experience. Secondly, the customers of the tourism industry are scattered all over the world, and it often makes it difficult for the tourism service providers to tell every customer individually what they have to offer to them (Kostić, M., & Tončev, J., 2014). These features of the tourism industry make it imperative to implement promotional activities. Thus, the author talks about the digitized form of promotion as the newest and most effective form of promotional strategy that is used in the industry. In this, the internet plays the key role in facilitating information exchange internationally (Arionesei G., & Paul Ivan, P., 2012). The next form of tourism promotion is through the foreign tour operators who distribute brochure, souvenirs, and tourist maps of the destinations that they are promoting for motivating potential tourists to the specific tourist destination (Niñerola et al., 2019). The third way of promotion in the tourism industry is through the process of offering discounts and rebates. In this, destination tourism management companies offer several discounts in the form of options like discounts on air tickets fares, accommodation and transportation on group tours and long stay visits. Among the other forms of promotion prevalent in the tourism industry are promotion through public relations, direct selling of tourism products, print and electronic media advertising, direct marketing and personal selling through travel agents (Arionesei G. & Paul Ivan, P., 2012; Lai and Vihn, 2013).

1.2 The importance of sustainable tourism

In the context of sustainable tourism, it needs to be indicated that a unique feature of this industry is that tourism activities have significant impact upon natural resources, consumption patterns, pollution and socio-economic systems. It can further be said that this fastest growing industry of the world and the resources upon which it is primarily dependent are the natural resources. In addition, the tourism industry is also dependent upon the cultural and historical resources of a region as well. Thus, while on one hand the share of contribution of the tourism industry to the global economy is quite high, its negative enact upon the natural ecosystem could not be denied either (Kostić, M., & Tončev, J., 2014). In gist, the long-term environmental concerns of tourism can be summed up as pollution, degradation of the destination, damage to the biodiversity, negative impact upon the resident communities among others. Overall, in the longer-term extreme environmental impact owing of the tourism activities can hurt the future economic development of the destination (Niñerola et al., 2019). Thus, sustainable tourism emerged as a modern trend in tourism in 21st century with prominent organizations taking the lead load in promoting it (Kostić, M., & Tončev, J., 2014). For instance, in 1983 the Ceballos Lascurain of the International Union for Conservation of Nature

proposed this concept of eco-friendly tourism, which was further enriched by the World Tourism Organization in 1998. Further, during this time sustainable tourism was also promoted as a form of tourism development of the 21st Century in an official program of United Nations Agenda 21 (Kostić, M., & Tončev, J., 2014).

The sustainable tourism is broadly categorized into economic, environmental and social or socio-cultural dimensions (Castellani, V. & Sala, S. 2010; Torres – Delgado & A., Palomeque, F.L., 2014). Actually, these dimensions of sustainable tourism develop due to the close relationship of tourism development with social, economic and environmental development of a region. It implies that if the tourism sector of a region develops sustainable practices, it must be economically feasible, ecologically fragile and culturally suitable (Khuntia, N. & Mishra, J.M., 2014). Economic dimension is significant from the standpoint that encouragement of such tourism activities results in economic development of the region. Economic dimension of sustainable tourism refers to the net long-term economic development of the local economy of a region due to tourism promotion (Garrigos – Simon, J. et al, 2015). For instance, sustainable tourism management processes in a region results in the generation of a source of income for the local community through generation of additional number of jobs and eventual domestic capacity building of the locales. This in turn leads to poverty reduction in the local community largely.

The core concept of sustainable tourism is to set balance between the consumption of natural resources and regenerative capacity of natural systems that tourism exploits simultaneous with meeting the economic, social and cultural objectives of a particular community. Thus, while the fundamental principle of sustainable tourism is to promote tourism simultaneous with taking measures for limiting its harsh effect on the environment and ecology, it is not only limited to the proper utilization of the environment. Rather, sustainable tourism also implies attaining sustainability measures in cultural, social, and economic aspects connected to tourism.

2. The historical evolution of marketing

The historical evolution of marketing is recorded starting from a production and sales oriented towards a more consumer oriented marketing approach. The latter still dominates much of today's marketing activities. Merchants determine the needs and desires of customers and develop product and segmentation strategies accordingly. For years, the dominant definition of marketing has been; “The process of planning and executing the concept, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives”, (AMA 1985, in Keefe 2004). Which focused on the process of exchange between the customer and the organization and design of the marketing mix. Striving for a more social approach brought a revised definition: “Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders” (Keefe, 2004). Finally, the following definition were approved by the American Marketing Association Board of Directors: “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offers that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (AMA, Approved July 2013). This revised definition maintains the perspective of stakeholders and does not limit the scope of marketing to organizations. The roles of institutions and processes, as well as the impact of marketing on society, are clearly recognized. In addition, the revised definition avoids stating that marketing is about "managing" customers or relationships. It includes both the traditional promotion (exchange example) and the current (value creation example) (Sheth, J. & Usley, C., 2007).

Nevertheless, there are alternatives that have emerged because of other approaches, such as social, environmental, green, sustainable, etc. There is no conceptual consensus among researchers about this and they are used in research but practically different terminology at will. This resulted in options such as:

Societal marketing

Societal marketing has emerged as an extension of previous marketing approaches, extending beyond customer satisfaction to “society's well-being” (Kotler and Armstrong, 1990). Accordingly, the AMA (www.ama.org) defines social responsibility as “. . . the obligation of marketing organizations to do harm to the social environment and, wherever possible, to use their skills and resources to enhance that environment. Comment: Social responsibility of marketing is also called societal marketing”. Because of this, the term societal marketing is often confused with social or cause marketing, which states: “. . . the branch of marketing is concerned with the use of marketing knowledge, concepts, and techniques to enhance social ends. Consequences of marketing strategies, decisions, and actions. This type of marketing is designed to influence the behavior of a target audience in which the benefits of the behavior are intended by the marketer to primarily target the audience or the general public and not the marketer (www.ama.org)”.

However, it is concluded that to do no harm and enhancement of the social environment is the social responsibility of all organizations and consumers in the process, and applies to everyone, for-profit, public, and private non-profit organizations and individuals. All research studies investigating the social marketing approach to tourism examine the importance of social responsibility and the interaction of environmental and financial accountability for all social groups. Beyond the "no harm" approach, social tourism marketing can actively "communicate" the benefits of tourism to society and "promote an understanding" of social justice and issues through tourism.

Economical marketing

"Economical marketing" sounds superfluous as marketing pursues primarily financial goals. "Sustainable marketing" is regarded as an oxymoron, as marketing is perceived as inherently unsustainable. Both views recognize "marketing" as an activity to promote consumption and economic growth. Within the Western lifestyle's belief structure, "quality of life" is often measured as a "standard of living" which in turn depends on increased economic activity, income and growth. Therefore, marketing promotes exchange processes leading to higher living standards. Industry produces more products for a very consumer society. The quality of life of individuals and society seems to depend on consumption. Previous definitions of marketing focused on micromarketing activities to optimize these exchanges. The approach to financial marketing considers the physical, social and cultural environments as external influences, influencing but not guiding marketing strategies. Therefore, the search for solutions to the environment and environmental social problems occur within the context of the Western lifestyle. Examples of such approaches are the economic valuation of natural resources and the attitude, "if you make money, it makes sense to protect the environment". Most of the planning, development and implementation of tourism marketing strategies follow the economic example.

Environmental marketing

The concept of Environmental, Green or Ecological marketing gained momentum during the 1990s to intensify products and production methods that improve environmental performance, promote ecological causes or solve environmental problems. This has been due to the growing demand for environmentally friendly products and services. Therefore, supply had to respond by organizing production in an environmentally sensitive and responsible way, in order to protect the environment, according to the needs and desires of consumers.

Environmental, Green or Ecological marketing is part of new marketing approaches that increase change, enhance or expand the existing marketing approach and seek to offer a substantially different perspective (Banerjee, S., 2015).

The American Marketing Association (www.ama.org) does not specifically define environmental marketing, but concludes, "Environmental impact analysis is the assessment of the impact of a strategy or decision on the environment, in particular the ecological consequences of the strategy or decision». This statement underlines the producer's responsibility not to do harm to the environment. However, the efforts of Environmental, Green or Ecological marketing (terms used alternatively) are not only about protecting resources but also focusing on environmentally friendly products and on production, recycling and reuse.

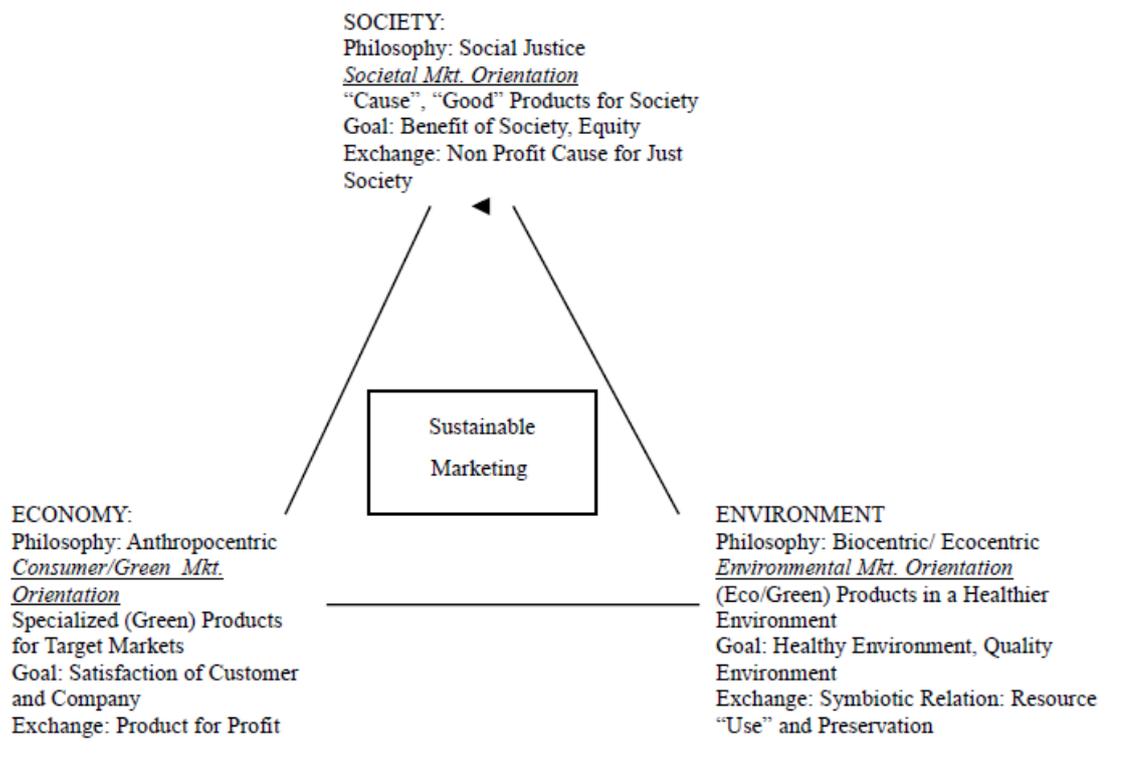
Middleton and Hawkins (1998) provide an overview of sustainable tourism industry practices and explain the philosophy, concepts and principles of a more sustainable marketing approach. Tourism is directly dependent on natural resources as they are necessary for the design of services, experiences and activities, so environmental marketing is directly related to them. It is also applied (environmental marketing) to the hotel industry as well, especially when businesses favor environmentally conscious activities (e.g., energy saving, recycling, etc.) but also trying to create an environmental consciousness.

One variant of environmental marketing is "green marketing", which also presents a consumer-oriented strategy. In this case, it makes "economic sense" by targeting the "green" consumer who needs "green" products. Often, ecotourism marketing adopts this approach, especially when marketing the "exclusive ecotourism". Eco-labeling then establishes the practice of branding in the context of financial marketing paradigm. In many cases, managers use ecotourism and sustainable tourism as alternatives because of their emphasis on environmental protection.

The sustainable tourism-marketing model

According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), the mission of sustainable development is to meet the needs of the present, without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. And to achieve this, environmental health, economic viability and social justice are essential. The fact is that tourism management has adopted the concept of sustainability, as opposed to the traditional consumer marketing perspective, in which profit maximization is the main objective. However, to be sustainable, marketing must also incorporate social, consumer and environmental perspectives. Thus, according to Jamrozy (2007), a change of shape is required. That is why he proposes a sustainable tourism-marketing model (STMM), which will challenge the traditional tourism-marketing model. "This new sustainable marketing paradigm requires the integration of alternative approaches and radically moving towards more sustainable tourism marketing principles and practices" (Jamrozy, 2007, p. 118). His model (Fig. 1) reflects the principles of sustainable development based on the Brundtland report (WCED, 1987) and "represents the three dimensions of sustainability, economic viability, social equity and environmental protection".

Figure No. 1 Sustainable tourism marketing triangular model



Source: Jamrozy, 2007, p. 124

Conclusion

The sustainable marketing approach of Jamrozy incorporates environmental, social and economic goals, as opposed to the traditional economic marketing approach that is limited to traditional consumption philosophy with a single focus on profitability and is obviously unsustainable. The model does not require a complete balance between the three dimensions, but recognizes that different situations require different focus and that focusing on only one dimension would limit the potential for sustainable tourism marketing. Thus, the unique features and needs of each tourist destination separately require a different approach, with necessary marketing involvement in planning, management and development. A marketing of course, the design, strategies and mixes have been redefined in accordance with the above principles.

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