



Editorial

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This edition of *Tourism and Hospitality Research* (*THR*) features papers drawn from the annual conference organised by the Business Enterprise for Sustainable Tourism Education Network (BEST EN). BEST EN is an international consortium of educators committed to furthering the development and dissemination of knowledge in the field of sustainable tourism. To that end, each year, BEST EN brings together tourism scholars and industry participants for three days of knowledge creation and the sharing of best practices. Innovation for Sustainable Tourism was the theme for the think-tank held from 21st–24th June, 2007 at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, USA.

Tether (2003) describes innovation within service industries as having a Cinderella status — marginal and neglected. The traditional approach to thinking about innovation has been to concentrate on manufacturing and within that, the role of research and development to produce technological invention that can lead to product innovation (Miles, 2005). The slow recognition that services occupy an increasingly important part of the world's economic development, however, has forced researchers into considering how innovation works outside manufacturing. Empirical research by von Hippel (1988) and Lundvall (1992) shows that sources of innovation often lie outside the organisation, leading Fagerberg (2005: 20) to argue 'A central finding of the innovation literature is that a firm does not innovate in isolation, but depends on extensive interaction with its environment'. For an industry dominated by small- and medium-sized enterprises such as tourism, links with research and development centres are rare and also there are fewer resources within the organisation to bring together. As a result, we know that there is a strong correlation between the size of

an organisation and its ability to innovate because of this ability to draw disparate parts of the firm together and create new ideas (Hipp *et al.*, 2000). Given this, it is essential for tourism organisations to be well networked and to be able to tap into the expertise that gathers for conferences, such as the one organised by BEST EN.

Research presented in this edition begins with a paper by Dr Gianna Moscardo, entitled 'Sustainable tourism innovation: Challenging basic assumptions'. For an edition on innovation in sustainable tourism, this paper takes the provocative stance that one option to develop new ways of thinking and innovation in tourism is to argue that there is no such thing as sustainable tourism. Dr Moscardo argues that recognising tourism's inability to be sustainable in its own right can potentially lead to new approaches to tourism development that promote sustainable development. Such a holistic approach would support stronger links between tourism and other economic activities and development options. This paper presents a range of examples to support the argument and this leads to the development of a set of alternative sustainability performance indicators criteria that could be used to evaluate sustainable tourism. This paper concludes that better knowledge management systems are needed to support innovation in tourism.

The second paper in this edition of *THR* is from the author of the best paper award from the conference, Dr Pierre Benckendorff, who presents his research 'Envisioning sustainable tourism futures: An evaluation of the futures wheel method'. Pierre's paper identifies the need for innovation in research methods if we are to be able to anticipate, and respond to future challenges. Terrorism and disease are two obvious examples that have struck the tourism

industry and given urgency to the need to think about the future. Demand forecasting and Delphi techniques are two traditional approaches utilising quantitative and qualitative methods to this attempt at divination, while the currency of scenario planning has strengthened recently. Benckendorff, however, argues that innovation within the field of futures methods will allow for the development of sustainable strategies that minimise risks and reduce the impact of crises.

The third paper, 'Tourism sustainability, resiliency and dynamics: Towards a more comprehensive perspective' is by Dr Tim Tyrell and Dr Robert Johnston. The paper builds on the growing body of literature on the topic of resiliency and its application to tourism. Resiliency is the ability of social, economic and ecological systems to recover, and adapt from stresses, which could be tourism-induced. The paper presents a more quantitative approach towards tourism sustainability and resilience and in so doing, lays the theoretical groundwork for future empirical implementation of this kind of quantitative models. Such a quantitative approach will not be accepted by all, but this paper also has the firm aim to stimulate debate regarding the potential role of such approaches in guiding tourism policy.

THR has the goal of combining theoretical academic papers with papers by practitioners. The BEST EN think-tank fits comfortably with this approach as it seeks to attract participants from the local tourism industry and to tailor the theme of the conference to its location. This edition of *THR* is therefore able to include a paper from Dr Robert Billington, Natalie Carter and Lilly Kayamba who work at the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, New England, USA. Their paper provides 'The practical application of sustainable tourism development principles: A case study of creating innovative place-making tourism strategies'. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was presented the Ulysses Prize from the UNWTO in 2006, and the case study of their work offers

an insight into their efforts and innovation in making their destination work for the benefit of the destination. The Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory (STPDL) focuses on place-based tourism development through an educational platform concerned with supporting whole communities through creative and innovative sustainable tourism development practices. It operates as an experiential, community-based learning opportunity that offers tailor-made solutions to communities seeking to create a tourism programme using sustainable, resilient and place-making strategies. The STPDL is also home to a growing network of members seeking to understand and apply new approaches to sustainable tourism development.

Three more industry case studies are presented from the BEST EN think-tank. These were written by Dr Jack Carlsen and Dr Deborah Edwards, based on presentations given by the industry practitioners. The first of the cases discusses innovations in using local food to provide a 'Taste of Arizona' as presented by Patty West, Freerange Botanical Consulting and Design Flagstaff, Arizona, USA. The second case was presented by Gina MacIlwraith, Environmental Health and Safety Director of Xanterra, USA, who provided insights into innovation in the environmental performance of the largest concession operator in US National Parks. The final case was presented by Mandy Roberts Metzger, President of the Diablo Trust, Flagstaff, Arizona and Bill Towler, Community Development Director for Coconino County, Arizona, USA, who described their innovative approach to land protection in the Diablo Canyon Rural Planning Area. These cases all discuss the key drivers of innovation; the decision process for implementing innovation; the barriers to innovation; and the importance of networks for innovation?

The BEST EN think-tank format includes the presentation of research papers and keynote speakers, but also the engagement of participants in sessions to create a research agenda for innovations in sustainable tourism. Two parallel sessions addressed innovations in socially

sustainable tourism and innovations in sustainability for tourism small and medium enterprises. The research agenda that emerged is published in this edition of *THR*.

Finally, it just remains to wish readers a successful 2008 and to hope that you enjoy this, and coming editions of *THR*. For more information about the BEST EN network, readers should contact the chair, Dr Janne Liburd of the University of Southern Denmark. She can be contacted on liburd@sitkom.sdu.dk, or through the BEST EN website <http://www.besteducationnetwork.org/>. Details of the forthcoming BEST EN think-tank on the quality of life and sustainable tourism, to be held at Izmir University of Economics in Turkey from the 24th to 28th June, can be found at the end of this edition of *THR*.

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