



Research Agenda

Research agenda for innovation in sustainable tourism

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INTRODUCTION

During the BEST EN Think Tank, academics and industry representatives met over two days to identify the key themes that could or should be included in this research agenda. While different interpretations of the term 'innovation' were discussed initially to clarify the terminology and purpose of the discussions, the goal was not to provide a universal or formal definition of 'innovation'. It was decided to defer the definition of this term to those who will be engaging in relevant research, as appropriate to their specific contexts. Common to all implicit or explicit definitions, however, is the claim that innovation is not only about the creation of new ideas but that it also involves the implementation of those ideas in practice in ways that add value (however defined).

Participants at the conference split into two groups: the first to consider innovation in the private sector, the second to consider innovation in social sustainability. The results of these groups are presented below.

INNOVATION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Acknowledging that certain practices in tourism need to be adapted to emerging challenges such



as climate change, demographic shifts, growing competition and customers' preferences, values and needs, it is necessary for the private sector to explore how it must manage these challenges and meet the changes by which they are confronted. In this context, the Think Tank VII Session on Innovation in the Private Sector posed the following question:

'What are the important issues of sustainability that should be included in a research agenda for innovation in the private sector?'

In all, 62 issues were identified. Following lively discussions about how these individual issues could be grouped into broader contexts, five key areas were identified:

1. Private Sector
2. Knowledge Creation and Diffusion
3. Socio-cultural
4. Consumer
5. Government

It was agreed that the above categorisation was only one of many that could be applied in this context.

Each of the 62 issues/topics identified have significant research potential. Environmental responsibility is an underlying assumption for all issues identified. The Private Sector category was broken into three sub-topics: factors influencing innovations in sustainability, process of innovation, and small business. From these 62 issues 14 were voted on as the most important and listed after the key areas and issues. What is presented here is solely meant to guide research, not to dictate it. Any of the issues listed is envisioned to have significant research potential.

Private sector

Factors influencing innovations in sustainability

1. What are the most important issues of sustainability that drive the private sector to innovate?

2. Issue of competition vs cooperation (sharing information).
3. Examine the ability of firms to define/articulate — vision, mission, goals and objectives in embracing the principles of TBL reporting (profit vs wider set of criteria).
4. Identify aspects of the private sector that create barriers to innovation.
5. Identify the motivators for supply-driven innovations.
6. Identify factors that influence sustainable priorities of commercial organisations.
7. Identify external and internal factors that challenge, impede, encourage, influence the take up of innovations by enterprises.
8. Does innovation always result in competitive advantage? Examine the relationship between innovation and competitive advantage.
9. Evaluate the attitudes and values of top management.
10. Examine the role of free market dynamics vs state intervention in developing sustainable tourism.
11. Identify the influence of business culture.
12. Evaluate the implications for reporting business performance — instead of driven by the bottom line.

Process of innovation

13. Examine the relationship between innovations and the new product or service development strategies.
14. Undertake comparisons of tourism enterprises to non-tourism enterprises... to distinguish features of top innovators.
15. Identify the key points in the cycle of an organisation that can facilitate innovation.
16. Undertake comparisons of successful and failed innovations in enterprises.



17. Develop techniques for the measurement or evaluation of services (does it fit into sustainable paradigm)?
18. Define the mechanisms of risk management in innovation.
19. Identify the cost of 'green' conversion by enterprises.
20. Identification of different networks that can facilitate innovation in the private sector.
21. Identify and evaluate the recent private sector innovations that contributed most to environmental sustainability (best practices).
22. Identify the role of certification in business understanding and application of sustainable tourism practices.
23. Examine the importance of corporate culture to successful innovation.
24. Undertake comparisons of rural regional enterprises and the extent of innovation and their influences.
25. Identify ways in which to reach consumer markets that want green experiences.

Small business

26. Understand the motives of SME owners and how this creates barriers to innovation Corp.
27. What stakeholder groupings could increase the innovative capacities of SMEs?
28. Issues related to environmental scanning for the private sector particularly SMEs.
29. Retaining SMEs through innovation and sustainable practices.
30. SME's barriers to sustainable tourism or greening.
31. Importance of networking/user groups.
32. Issue of competition vs cooperation (sharing information).

Knowledge creation and diffusion

33. What is innovation and how is it implemented?
34. Identify effective uses for technology that can assist firms to innovate and act sustainably.
35. Identify mechanisms for aggregation and sharing of sustainable innovations and best practices across sectors and geographical regions.
36. Identify methods that can facilitate the successful distribution of ideas/knowledge/innovation to enterprises.
37. Identify the differing types of support systems, that is, training, resourcing, sharing that are required to assist SMEs to innovate.
38. Understanding of broad-based sustainability.
39. What knowledge does the private sector need to stimulate their interest in improving the Triple Bottom Line.
40. Examine how a transfer of knowledge or practices from firms operating in origin markets can be facilitated to firms operating in destinations.
41. What innovations in tourism education and training are required to advance tourism sustainability.
42. Understand the types of support that is required for SMEs to be innovative.

Socio-cultural

43. Understand differing cultural understandings and viewpoints of sustainability and innovation.
44. Examine the impact of demographic changes on firms.



45. Examine the problems of balancing the needs of different stakeholders — employees, government, suppliers, etc.
46. Identify the role of destination communities in SME sustainable innovations.
47. Examine the role of ethics and corporate governance (moral issues) that impact on innovation for tourism sustainability.
48. How do tourism managers view issues of sustainability?
49. Social marketing to influence social trends.
59. Identify policy and legislation at all levels of government that facilitate or hinder innovation.
60. Identify the political processes required to promote sustainable innovation.
61. Develop tools to assist SMEs in the monitoring and regulation of the implementation of sustainable practices.
62. Incentives or perceived value of sustainable innovative practices in developing and emerging destinations.

Consumer

50. What is the willingness to pay for sustainable practices by the consumer?
51. Understand the role of consumer pressure to encourage innovations in sustainable practices (how strong is the pressure).
52. Consumer needs vs wants — managing perceptions toward greater sustainable tourism practices.
53. Examine equity issues around sustainability and innovation.
54. What is the role of customers' views of sustainability in influencing innovation in the private sector?
55. Identify how to actively involve customers in the innovative process.

Government

56. Examine regional (cross boundary) issues or laws that affect private sector success.
57. Identify the role of government in facilitating, supporting or hindering sustainable innovations in the private sector.
58. Identify the role of government in accessing and supporting innovation and sustainability in SMEs.

TOP 14 ISSUES

- Identify the role of government in facilitating, supporting or hindering sustainable innovations in the private sector.
- Identify the policy and legislation at all levels of government that facilitate or hinder innovation.
- The role of free market dynamics vs state intervention in developing sustainable tourism.
- Examine the ability of firms to define/ articulate — vision, mission, goals and objectives in embracing the principles of TBL reporting (profit vs wider set of criteria).
- What are the most important issues of sustainability that drive the private sector to innovate?
- Understand the motives of SME owners and how this creates barriers to innovation.
- Identify methods that can facilitate the successful distribution of ideas/knowledge/ innovation to enterprises.
- Issue of competition vs cooperation (sharing information).
- Identify the external and internal factors that challenge, impede, encourage and influence the take up of innovations by enterprises.



- Identify the political processes that are required to promote sustainable tourism.
- Identify the differing types of support systems, that is, training, resourcing, sharing that are required to assist SMEs to innovate.
- Identify mechanisms for the aggregation and sharing of sustainable innovations and best practices across sectors and geographical regions.
- Examine the role of ethics and corporate governance (moral issues) that impact on innovation for tourism sustainability.
- Identify how to actively involve customers in the innovative process.

INNOVATION IN SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Within this group the challenge was to compile a research agenda for social sustainability. The breadth of this task was acknowledged, as was the inherent bias of those in the room towards certain aspects of the topic. Hence, this research agenda does not claim to be definitive, but is simply a description of the interests of those present and the innovative issues they identified as being the most important to encourage social sustainability in tourism. Despite the large number of topics that could potentially be included within this research agenda, there was a surprising amount of consensus within the group. It was the intention of the facilitator to use the nominal group technique to produce a final research agenda, but while the technique was employed to generate ideas and then identify commonalities, the outbreak of agreement meant there was no need to vote on suggestions in order to produce the research agenda. This agenda for innovative issues in social sustainability is presented below.

Well-being

Enhance well-being and quality of life of the individual and community through innovative research

1. In the work/life balance equation

2. In the value of creating a mutually beneficial host/guest relationship
3. Resident experiences of different forms of tourism (especially between sustainable tourism and mass tourism)
4. Enriching the tourist experience (eg how to increase value transference from indigenous cultures).

Methodology

Exploring innovative methodologies that can help us better understand social sustainability

5. New ontological and epistemological understandings of research
6. The creation and adoption of research methods (eg co-researching with research subjects)
7. To predict the levels of 'success' or 'failure' by developing appropriate social indicators
8. Ethical issues faced by researchers studying social sustainability
9. The development of a framework for compatibility of the values of the tourists and community
10. To gain a deeper/truer understanding of visitors (eg under-researched groups such as children).

Culture and values

To understand the value systems that drive tourism stakeholders and their interaction

11. Maintaining the integrity of local cultural values
12. The ethics of influencing value systems towards social sustainability
13. Perceptions of authenticity
14. Allow community resistance to change to inform the research agenda



15. Decision-making processes in different cultural contexts
16. The intercultural connections between communities, places and tourists.

Communication and knowledge transfer

Facilitating stakeholders' understanding of socially sustainable tourism

17. Transferring knowledge of sustainable lifestyles from tourism to home communities
18. Educating research funding sponsors about the importance of sustainability research
19. Transferring knowledge to tourists from emerging markets
20. Communities' understanding of their role in tourism
21. Knowledge transfer to government and industry
22. Understanding informal, social and virtual networking relationships.

Definitional

23. Is there such a thing as socially sustainable tourism
24. Can sustainability in the biological sense be applied to social sustainability?
25. What is the local level?
26. What are the social issues that affect social innovation?

Political power relationships

Understanding formal and informal shifting power relations for social sustainability

27. Examining transparency in public–private interrelationships?
28. Understanding the social political economy (eg destination image; heritage)
29. Ignored and/or excluded populations (eg age, ethnicity)
30. How do we deal with dislocation issues of tourism
31. Issues of empowerment (eg the subordination of host community leisure needs to tourist leisure needs)
32. Can social sustainability be legislated for?
33. Innovation in community leadership in sustainable tourism.

Planning and management

How can we plan and manage socially sustainable destination change in an era of globalisation?

34. Understanding the trade-offs between the present and the future
35. Moving from vision to implementation without losing intention
36. Ways to maintain community engagement with tourism
37. Entrepreneurship in developing countries (eg Micro financing)
38. Issues surrounding labour (eg mobility, training)
39. Understanding tourist mobility and new technology for impact management
40. Public participation in different contexts.