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Editorial

Tourism continues to grow at a phenomenal rate showing a parallel growth of booming tourist statistics worldwide. New technology, awareness, a fast burgeoning middle class population with substantial disposable income, and innovations on part of the suppliers, are all reasons for the excellent performance of the tourism and hospitality industry. Though no doubt this industry has a promising future, it is not free from the unresolved long plaguing concerns and new challenges that keep emerging from time to time and require prompt handling by policy makers, practitioners and all related stakeholders. The current issues relate to development, sustainability, climate change, terrorism, niche tourism, tourism and hospitality education, human resource development, among others. While the industry players address these issues, as and when faced with, an ongoing contribution to identify, highlight and suggest strategies for solution of the same are being continuously researched by tourism and hospitality researchers.

The present volume of the Tourism Development Journal comprehensively addresses a wide variety of issues pertinent to contemporary tourism and hospitality industry. At the outset, Walter and Michelle Jamieson present a discourse on tourism planning. They provide an in-depth discussion on issues that concern urban destination level tactical tourism planning in developing economies, particularly with respect to Asia. The discussion highlights the gap between the development of tourism master plans and the actual implementation of strategies and plans for responsible tourism within an urban destination. From the angle of hospitality, touching upon the food sector, Zainol and Zagana have explored factors related to food service, that are critical to satisfaction of international students in food outlets of Universiti Utara Malaysia. Acknowledging the increasing importance of the fast popularizing cruise tourism business, as a major employment provider for tourism and hospitality students, Ping, Xu and Khan have investigated the factors that determine the intention of tourism and hospitality undergraduates to opt for a career in the cruise industry in Hong Kong. On similar lines Razak, Sharif and Zainol, have attempted to identify, from the practitioners perspective, the core competences desired from tourism and hospitality graduates, in Malaysian tourism industry, so that institutions providing hospitality management courses can re-align their programmes according to the industry's requirements. Mohinder Chand and Vikram address the issue of sustainability with relation to the exhibition industry in India, concluding that sustainable practices effect organizational performance. Identifying what local communities feel about tourism development Gurung, Rahimi and Ekiz have discussed support for tourism development at a place based upon the residents' perceptions of place image, attachment and social exchange theory. In view of the increasing popularity of Malaysian as a green tourism destination, Adawiyah, Azam, Rashid and Zainol explore the revisit intentions of tourists to 'green resorts', indicating the importance of the concept of perceived value. Finally, looking at performance of tourism services from the perspective of employees, Kasa and Hassan, have taken up the issue of importance of 'flow' experience for hotel employees suggesting that organizations should create an environment that fosters 'flow' that employees can give their best to work. Hence, the diverse studies carried out in different sectors of the industry in different countries provide an interesting reading.

It is hoped that the present issue of TDJ would be of interest to practitioners, academicians and policy makers in tourism and hospitality industry, as well for stimulating research interest of young researchers and students.

Dr. Sonia Khan
Chief Editor, TDJ

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Urban Destination Level Tactical Tourism Planning in Developing Economies

Walter Jamieson, Michelle Jamieson

Abstract

Too often policy strategies and directions developed in tourism master plans are not fully implemented due to the lack of financial, human and governance capacity of many Asian tourism destinations. Given this reality, master planning needs to be supplemented by additional tourism planning approaches that introduce short- to medium-term strategic initiatives which allow for rapid implementation. Within the concept of tourism tactical planning short-term initiatives may become long-term solutions replacing detailed research and long-lead time planning. Tactical tourism planning including change management and communication strategies, governance capacities, human resource considerations are explored.

Keywords: Tourism Master Planning, Implementation, Change Management, Tactical Planning, Responsible Tourism

Introduction

This article examines the development of planning documents to guide the development of tourism destinations. In order to provide a focus for this article and to consider an important area of tourism development, this article focuses on the planning of urban tourism destinations within developing environments with a specific understanding of the Asian context. The author and his colleagues have been responsible for the development of a number of tourism plans and policies throughout the Asian region. These initiatives range from master plans for destinations to regional plans (ASEAN) to more recently the Myanmar Tourism Master Plan, which are explored throughout this article. The analysis and directions identified in this article are based on these exercises, some of which have been highly successful from an implementation perspective, while others that the authors have been involved in or have assessed have not been successful from the perspective of the implementation policies and plans developed within the master plans.

Destinations in developing economies are generally characterized by rapid growth in both population and the level of development of tourism, as well as a general lack of professional and transparent governance, bureaucracies with poorly developed planning and development skills, a general lack of funds to carry out large-scale

changes, a lack of stakeholder agreement and at times non-existent regulatory structures. The overall Asian challenges can be seen in Figure 1, adapted from a previous iteration of the authors (Horayangkura et al., 2012).

Figure 1 Asian Metropolitan Challenges



Source: Authors

It is important to note that many tourism models and approaches have been developed for advanced economies with well-developed regulatory frameworks, trained bureaucracies, etc. Clearly the approaches taken to developing planning instruments in less developed economies need to adapt to the realities of the social, cultural, economic and political environment.

Some of the ideas developed in this article were initially conceived when one of the authors participated in an Asian Development Bank (ADB) endeavor looking at the overall development situation in Myanmar. From a number of different sectoral points of view, a diagnostic study was carried out to determine development directions and policies. The author, working with a colleague, developed the section on tourism and looked at a number of short term policy recommendations (ADB, 2014).

Responsible Tourism

Throughout the article, the concept of responsible tourism is utilized. Responsible

tourism is defined as in Cape Town in 2002 alongside the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This definition, the Cape Town Declaration, is now widely accepted and has been adopted by the World Travel Market in 2007 for World Responsible Tourism Day. Responsible tourism is about “making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit.” Responsible tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility, and action, to make tourism more sustainable.

The Cape Town Declaration recognizes that responsible tourism takes a variety of forms. It is characterized by travel and tourism which:

- minimizes negative economic, environmental and social impacts
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues
- provides access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged
- is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

Many destinations continue to invest in the development of a tourism master plan and in the case of developing economies largely funded by development agencies. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines a master plan's objective as to:

“formulate a long-term development framework for tourism (10-20 years) with emphasis on policy and strategy, planning, institutional strengthening, legislation and regulation, product development and diversification, marketing and promotion, tourism infrastructure and superstructure, economic impact of tourism and tourism investment, human resource development, and socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism. It includes a short term (three-year) action plan for priority actions to be undertaken to kick-start sustainable tourism development, and preparation of several demonstration projects for pilot areas” (UNWTO, n.d.).

The UNWTO identifies a number of basic characteristics of a master plan including the duration of the plan's preparation for up to 12 months, an indicative budget of a minimum of USD 220K, and a development process covering three phases: the preparation of a detailed terms of reference for the formulation of the tourism development master plan, the formulation of the tourism development master plan which focuses on a number of sectors, and the implementation of the master plan itself. The UNWTO maintains a registry of national tourism and marketing plans. A review of the plans indicates a similarity among them (WTO, 2015).

Many tourism master plans appear to have been written from the same template and actually contain many of the same political, social, capacity, environmental and economic dimensions - which is not surprising, given the notion of a prototypical master plan put forward by the tourism planning community. Master plans are typically large-scale documents containing hundreds of pages often mandated by the funding agencies or simply driven by what other master plans have done in other situations. In examining many plans one has to question whether there was any true understanding of the challenges being faced by a destination and the capacity of the various stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the master plan.

An encouraging change in the formula driven master plan was the development of the Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2013), which was less than 100 pages and was very action oriented. This was possible due to the direction provided by the master planning team and the client - the Asian Development Bank - who were ready to put forward a different type of planning instrument to guide development in a quickly changing economic and social environment. This remains the exception rather than the rule.

In some cases, master plans are written in such way that they appear to ignore geography, land-use realities, spatial distributions of various phenomena, etc. This can be seen as a result of the reality that very often urban master plans or tourism policy plans and tourism master plans are written in isolation and are rarely integrated.

Given the wide range of factors that are considered, and what a master plan must contain, many plans are complex and, despite their length and breadth, often lack a realistic implementation structures and processes that would allow developing stakeholders to use a plan to move forward in guiding and encouraging responsible tourism development. Inskeep, 25 years ago, commented that:

“... it has been recognized that preparation of plans does not automatically guarantee that the recommendations will or can feasibly

be implemented and now much more focus is being placed on realistic and imaginative means to achieve implementation.” (Inskeep, 1991, p. 27).

Of more fundamental concern from the authors’ perspective is the ability of planners and destinations to develop policies and strategic directions that allow any level of reliability in predicting and formulating future structures and plans. This has been discussed by some tourism planners, in particular Inskeep, “Previously, there was much emphasis placed on preparation of the end state ‘master plan,’ which was assumed to be sufficient for guiding and controlling future development patterns” (Inskeep, 1991 p. 26).

In a time of significant change and increasing complexity within the global environment there needs to be caution exercised about planners’ ability to anticipate/forecast the future, let alone look at a future of the destination with any notion of specificity and confidence. The notion that a document or development and planning instrument can anticipate the future and lock-in development directions especially at any level of specificity has to be questioned in light of the nature of the rapidly changing business environments that we see throughout the world.

It is not the objective of this article to question the development of master plans but rather to argue that the gap between master plans or other policy documents and the actual implementation process needs to be bridged. Planning is essential in ensuring responsible tourism development, given the encouragement, “it is widely acknowledged that planning is crucial to successful tourism development and management; and planning has been a widely adopted principle in tourism development at both regional and national levels” (Inskeep, 1991; World Tourism Organization [hereafter WTO], 1994).

Arguably, the merits of planning can only be realized given that a plan can be implemented in the first place. As such, experts suggest implementation be considered in the planning process; and a plan be practically made for this purpose (Lai, Li, & Feng, 2006, p. 1171). Ideally, a plan should be implemented as planned. In practice, however, planners are frequently challenged by the fact that their choices “are nuanced and have to balance idealism [what ought to happen by and for society] with pragmatism [what can happen with private sector investment]” (as quoted in Lai, Li, & Feng, 2006, p. 1171). This situation creates a gap between planning and implementation and has led to the failure of tourism plans (Lai, Li, & Feng, 2006, p.1171).

Discussion

Towards a Tactical Tourism Planning Approach

As noted, destinations in Asia are growing very quickly, both in terms of their population and their tourist numbers. In some instances, destinations are experiencing damaging growth and negative impacts while waiting for high-level policies to be developed, regulatory structures to be designed and financing to be identified and obtained. The time delays are exacerbated by bureaucratic structures and levels of expertise very often ill-suited to taking proactive action to ensure that responsible tourism is achieved. The question therefore must be what could supplement tourism master plans or policy documents. The proposal explored in this article is to adopt the notion of tactical tourism planning that could be included in the overall tourism process and that would be more likely to lead to successful implementation.

With the growing interest in tactical urbanism and planning with urban planning, the authors argue that tourism planning could take into account tactical initiatives that should be considered as necessary approaches that can be complemented by larger scale and longer-term policy documents that could be seen as master plans. For the purposes of this article, the definition being used for tactical urbanism is, “an approach to neighborhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost, and scalable intervention and policies. Tactical Urbanism is used by a range of actors, including government, business and nonprofits, citizen groups, and individuals” (Lydon & Garcia, 2015, p. 2).

The impacts of waiting for master plans to be completed and implementation to take place has spurred the interest in tactical urbanism. Jaime Lerner, architect, urbanist, former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil in the following quotation expresses the urgency and need for a tactical approach:

“The lack of resources is no longer an excuse not to act. The idea that action should only be taken after all the answers and the resources have been found is a sure recipe for paralysis. The planning of a city is a process that allows for corrections; it is supremely arrogant to believe that planning can be done only after every possible variable has been controlled” (The Street Plans Collaborative et al., 2012).

The term “tactical urbanism” came into common use in 2010-2011 when a group of young urbanists created the publication *Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action, Long-term Change* (The Street Plans Collaborative et al., 2012). The authors define tactical urbanism as “small-scale, short-term interventions meant to inspire

define tactical urbanism as “small-scale, short-term interventions meant to inspire long-term change”, adding that tactical urbanism as a city-building approach features five characteristics:

- A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change;
- An offering of local ideas for local planning challenges;
- Short-term commitment and realistic expectations;
- Low-risks, with possibly a high reward;
- Develops social capital between citizens.

Given the quickly changing nature of tourism development, especially in Asian cities, adopting a tactical urban approach to tourism projects appears to be justified. Using the principles of tactical urbanism would be very much in keeping with the concept of responsible tourism. The entire notion behind tactical urbanism would allow tourism planners and others to put into place strategies and projects that can be easily implemented and most importantly observed and evaluated. Using smaller scale projects would allow for innovation and prototyping, which are very much required given quickly changing visitor requirements and the competitive tourism environment. It would also allow for incremental growth based on the ongoing assessment and refinement of various strategies and approaches. The intentions behind a tactical tourism planning approach could vary from ensuring the participation of disadvantaged sectors of the population, to developing the capacity of front-line workers in the hospitality industry, preserving the sense of place of a neighborhood, dealing with traffic issues around tourism attractions, or developing visitor management plans for historical and cultural sites.

Tactical tourism planning can be defined based on the principles of tactical urbanism put forward in *Tactical Urbanism and The Planner's Guide to Tactical Urbanism*, which was prepared as part of a larger supervised research project at the McGill School of Urban Planning (Pfeifer, 2013). Tactical tourism planning could have the following characteristics:

- A phased approach to bringing about change and making things happen;
- Realistic and short-term strategies and projects;
- Low risk and high gain approaches;
- Widespread stakeholder involvement;
- Building the capacity of stakeholders;
- Understanding and responding to destination needs;
- No one-size-fits-all approach.

From a tourism planning perspective there are a wide range of factors that can be included in any tactical tourism planning approach. For purposes of illustration, the authors have identified four areas, which could be seen as essential dimensions of a

Figure 2. Essential Dimensions of a Tactical Tourism Planning Approach



Source: Authors

The objective of these tactical considerations is to ensure that tourism development does not overwhelm the capacity of a destination to absorb change, and to lessen the impact on essential social, cultural and environmental systems. However, it must be recognized that many of these tactical initiatives would also have medium-term implications. A constant challenge facing any destination is to have enough time and expertise to lay the basic foundations for successful and responsible tourism development while accommodating growing visitor numbers and continually changing environments.

Managing Change

An intrinsic dimension of any planning process is to introduce change in a number of manifestations in order to improve conditions and to achieve overall results. In most master planning processes, rarely is the readiness and ability of various stakeholders assessed in order to ensure that plans and policies can be successfully implemented. An essential part of any tactical process should be to develop strategies and approaches that enable change to occur. For the purposes of this article stakeholders are illustrated by Figure 3, which clearly illustrates the number of different interest groups that must be engaged in the overall implementation of plans and policies.

Figure 3. Tourism Stakeholders



Source: Authors

Creating a strategy, especially one that is dynamic and innovative, cannot be properly implemented without addressing overall organizational structures and stakeholder behaviours and systems. The implementation of a new strategy/plan/policy is in essence the introduction of new ideas into current systems. The process of change must become much more ingrained in the daily functions of an organization or group of stakeholders given the nature of the global environment and the quickly changing forces and trends within the tourism industry.

In the past, tourism planning has often not focused on how change would occur. Responsible tourism planning must reach out to those working in change management and communications to ensure that dynamic implementation has been considered. This requires developing an understanding and application of change management and the integration of communication strategy concepts and processes that work in parallel. Additionally, “communication can be used to reduce resistance, minimize uncertainty, and gain involvement and commitment as the change progresses which may, in turn, improve morale and retention rates” (Goodman & Truss, 2004).

A communications strategy may have a series of objectives depending on the organization and its structure, however, the underlying object is to communicate important information driving the change – new ideas and strategies, the evolving goals of the leadership, market challenges, new forms of innovation, changes in the world economy, new processes brought about by technological change, new challenges in talent management and so forth. Any organizational change and communications strategy must be designed to engage the essential members of the organization in order to build an understanding of the receptivity of various stakeholders to change, how to prevent misunderstanding and to lower the differences that may exist between groups and individuals. For the purposes of this article, it is assumed that the leaders of any organization have carefully considered the purpose/rationale of the change in the organizational structure before beginning a process of consultation and discussion.

Creating a communication strategy allows an organization responsible for tourism planning to focus and develop consistency in its development and diffusion of the messages about the change. In tourism, even though the process may be initiated and guided by the public sector, clearly each group of key stakeholders will require different messaging in order to ensure a coherent form of tourism development. This is particularly acute within the public sector with a wide range of government departments and agencies that must work together to produce responsible tourism development. One of the important lessons learned from other change situations is that inconsistent messaging can actually work against a communications strategy.

This is not to say that the messaging is the same for every stakeholder but rather that all stakeholders can see the rationale and consistency of the reasons for the organizational change.

Any change process combined with a communication strategy will need to be implemented within a structured and well understood series of steps that consider various dimensions of the overall challenge of ensuring success. As stated in Elving (2005), “...the change effort is dependent of the ability of the organisation to change the individual behavior of individual employees. If organisational change is about how to change the individual tasks of individual employees, communication about the change, and information to these employees is vital” (p. 130).

As with many other areas of organizational behaviour and management, the sustainability of the change needs to be introduced into the discussion. For the purposes of this discussion, sustainability refers to the short and long term success of the integration of the change into the organization’s culture and future operations (it is recognized that this is a narrow view of the more comprehensive understanding of economic, cultural, social and political sustainability).

In order to obtain engagement from stakeholders, requires more than just sharing what is happening during a change initiative or while implementing a new plan/structure, but also listening to what the stakeholders are saying. If an organization wants to tell their story, then they need to find a way that resonates with the various stakeholders and “gives them an opportunity to participate in a conversation, not just treat them as receptacles for [the] corporate pitch” (Girvetz, 2013). Some opportunities that assist in developing the tactical approach to the overall implementation of a master plan are identifying the appropriate channels for communication with the various stakeholder groups such as through word of mouth, collateral posters, brochures, fliers, meetings, presentations, special events, newsletters, intranets, email, music, videos, infographics, and others.

Many organizations already have established channels for communication. These channels, even though effective for day-to-day communication, may not allow for the same effectiveness during a change initiative. Depending on the group of stakeholders, an effective channel that allows for two-way communication is social media, which is also consistent with how communication is happening currently in the world (Girvetz, 2013).

It must be remembered that in addition to these more formal means of communication organizations have informal communication channels and organizational structures. It is crucial to understand the role that these informal

networks have and how they can be harnessed to achieve success or their influence dealt with in a careful and sustainable way in order to ensure that the communication strategy has every opportunity for success. Too often, these informal networks can be destructive especially if particular stakeholders do not support the organizational change being suggested.

Developing Governance Capacities

While it is fairly straight forward for consultants and planning groups to provide a series of policy directions and recommendations, very often the body responsible for implementation will not have the personnel with the necessary skill set, resources and mindset to actually implement what is being discussed. Quite clearly, the suggested tactics must be in keeping with the capacity of the implementing agency.

Very often master plans are based on the establishment of a set of coordinated activities between government organizations and departments and other public and nongovernmental sector stakeholders. While this is difficult to do within more established economies, it presents a real challenge in developing economies. Very often, there is little capacity within a public sector government department or organization to effectively manage the implementation process and the reality is that the objective of achieving coordinated action will take some time to put into place.

Even in developed economies “the solo effect” is still very much the order of the day and it is very difficult for various ministries and government agencies to accept the rationale and advantage of working effectively together on tourism development. OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2012 argues that in order to deal with various challenges, “there is a need to strengthen institutional governance mechanisms, so that more effective tourism related policies can be developed, and to make changes in the organization of government institutions to maintain competitive advantage” (OECD, 2012, p. 14). The same report argues that there is a need to adopt a “whole government” approach not only to tourism, but the entire governmental system.

Plans often call for skilled and experienced practitioners to be hired but often this presents a challenge that is difficult to realize. A tactical approach would be to seek assistance from donor nations as well as NGOs and second their staff or request that they provide funds to hire foreign experts to help in the process of implementation. The object would not be to permanently embed foreign experts within governmental structures but that with the limited time frames people with experience in tourism development could immediately begin to advise a government, while at the same time measures would be in place to build capacity within the governmental sector.

In many instances, it is important to recruit people with strong technical skills in human resource development, marketing, data gathering, analysis and interpretation, project management, etc. For example, this challenge is recognized in the McKinsey Global Institute Report Myanmar's Moment: Unique Opportunities, Major Challenges. The report recommends that the Myanmar government demonstrates that it is capable of managing change and identifies the need to develop a cadre of skilled and talented officials who can guide a path through the challenges ahead. Chhor et al. 2013

Master plans frequently call for sophisticated human resource needs assessments and delivery structures. Destinations do not have the luxury of funding and implementing these types of initiatives. Rather tactical on-the-job training and capacity building must be instituted immediately to enable existing staff to carry on their ongoing tasks while at the same time increasing their administrative and managerial capacities.

Institute Critical Capacity Building Activities in Key HRD Development Areas

While there clearly can be no argument against having stakeholders involved in capacity building exercises within formal educational and institutional settings, there is often a need for immediate increases in the quality of those responsible for the development and delivery of capacity building initiatives utilizing a range of techniques.

Immediate areas of human resource development that should be considered include: data gathering and analysis capacity and destination management knowledge. It is difficult to generalize, but in many situations, data gathering and analytic capacities are limited and need to be developed in a time effective way in order to allow a destination to make effective decisions based on sound data. As suggested specialists could be contracted to take the responsibility for reviewing the current methods used to calculate overall tourism earnings, assess alternative options and methods to more accurately calculate overall tourism earnings, make recommendations for additional or alternative procedures, methodologies and systems that should be put in place to prepare a more policy oriented database and make recommendations to set in place a tourism accounting working group to assume responsibility for generating economic data and formulating related policy recommendations. With improved data the public and private sector can take advantage of major developments in data visualization that help ensure that all stakeholders have access to and understand the crucial dimensions of the tourism situation.

Increasingly important and recognized is the need to ensure that as the planning and development process occurs, destinations are able to immediately respond to challenges and pressures, especially in the Asian context of rapidly growing tourism numbers, as discussed in this article. This calls for strengthening the destination management expertise of a destination. The quality of destinations and their management is a major concern and one that if not dealt with in a timely fashion will have immediate and potentially long-lasting impacts not only on social, environmental and cultural systems, but also on the very sustainability of tourism in those destinations. One could argue that there is no time to wait for formal structures to be put into place but that immediate action must be taken in order to ensure the continued sustainability of a destination. This is clearly an important tactical dimension.

Development partners and experts can be invited to assist in destination management strengthening. Developing and implementing destination plans and strategies can be time-consuming and developing interim destination management can guide development until more formal structures, policies, regulations and plans are put into place. These could be seen as stopgap measures until more formal and wide-ranging destination management strategies are instituted.

While it is understood that assessing environmental impacts is usually not the responsibility or the area of expertise of a tourism ministry or agency, these bodies must make every effort possible to ensure that the staff of relevant ministries are well versed in assessing environmental impacts and developing appropriate policies and procedures. Basic environmental impact techniques must be introduced to relevant staff in a user-friendly way, possibly utilizing the expertise of academics in surrounding countries that would be prepared to contribute their expertise.

Short-term tactical initiatives should include inviting experts from educational institutions, especially train-the-trainer initiatives and putting together packages of materials as well as the necessary instructional equipment that can be used in various parts of a destination. This must be in a wide range of areas related to design, service delivery, management of transportation systems, etc.

At the heart of many plans is the need to ensure that SMEs have an opportunity to effectively participate in the development process. A tourism ministry organization working with the relevant government entities must deliver immediate small and medium business training, but more importantly provide technical assistance and small business loans in order to allow residents to increase their ability to respond to the quickly growing tourism economy.

In most urban destinations there is an urgent need to match the pace of tourism development with the carrying capacities of the population, communities, levels of education of key players as well as the ability of the natural and cultural heritage to withstand rapidly growing tourism numbers. Without these carrying capacity figures and policies it is impossible for policymakers to determine desired levels of visitation to a destination and most importantly to specific natural and cultural sites.

For example, The Travel and Tourism High-Level Meeting Report of the World Economic Forum (June 2013) states that “the rapid speed at which Myanmar plans to grow tourism raises questions about the sustainability of its overall investments, both environmentally and from the perspective of human capital.” It goes on to say that “the challenge for Myanmar’s government will be to manage the flow of tourists, and ensure structures are in place to modulate and limit growth, where appropriate.”

What is important in these statements is the notion of modulating and limiting growth. Much of the discussion within governments, the private sector and the media is often on the need to increase international visitor arrivals without a great deal of attention being paid to ensuring that the necessary infrastructure, development and operating rules and regulations are in place. While there are assurances by public officials of the need for responsible tourism, there is often very little indication of how responsible tourism policies and practices can be instituted at the same rate that the level of tourism activity and investment is occurring. It takes strong leadership to be able to establish a balance between tourism growth and the enhancement of a destination’s capacity to absorb growth.

Immediate steps should be taken to establish carrying capacities. The people best able to do this, at least in the short-term, are the stakeholders with some guidance from tourism experts. Quite clearly more sophisticated methods will have to be eventually instituted but at least in the short-term there must be recognition that without significant improvements in soft and hard infrastructure and enforcement it will be difficult to provide quality visitor experiences and at the same time secure the cultural and environmental heritage.

It is reasonable to expect that within a responsible tourism context the discussion around tourism growth should move from the use of visitor arrivals as a way of measuring progress and success to a finer grained discussion of what kind of tourism activity is most appropriate to regions of a destination and very importantly where it should occur.

Assuming that this change in message can be established, there is a need for a sophisticated, rapid planning and consultation process that allows experts to establish

levels of activity that positively contribute to the overall conditions of a destination. In that discussion there must be a recognition that if development exceeds the absorptive capacity of a destination, there would be serious consequences. Unless there is a willingness and commitment to limit growth until the necessary soft and hard infrasteasonable targets in place.

Defining Meaningful Metrics for Assessing Impacts

Most international and national tourism organizations employ international arrivals to gauge success. Nevertheless, as noted, there continue to be serious questions about the use of this metric to gauge the success of responsible tourism development.

One of the challenges facing the tourism industry at many levels is the lack of appropriate and internationally accepted metrics that allow stakeholders to gauge and assess the levels of progress and success beyond just the number of people crossing its borders. While some stakeholders may celebrate an increase in international arrivals, others may question whether these international arrivals are reducing poverty or increasing the quality of life in developing economies.

Governments working with stakeholders and international experts, should begin immediately to identify metrics that will allow a destination as well as supporters to determine who benefits and who suffers from tourism growth. In concert, these stakeholders must define metrics that allow for an understanding of the role of tourism in providing benefits and the costs of increased visitation. This could be accomplished by involving world experts working with local stakeholders. There are many examples of such metrics including whether tourism is being directed to areas of greatest economic need, average revenue per tourist, tourism receipts per capita, receipts per job, CO₂ emissions per unit of tourism receipts, etc. It is understood that developing these metrics is politically and technically difficult to achieve but it must be remembered that well-developed metrics are especially important when dealing with aid agencies to convince them that tourism is a useful tool in meeting a range of social, economic, cultural and environmental goals.

Such metrics would allow for a more sensitive measure of return on investment (ROI) for the private sector and perhaps return on assets (ROA) for the public sector, and greatly assist in improving flexibility in responding to both opportunity and threats to the sector.

The OECD Tourism Trends and Policy 2012 publication identifies key categories, which may be relevant to all members and stakeholders:

- Economic (employment, business charts, GDP)

- Social (skills, local community development linkages)
- Physical (facilities, infrastructure, environmental)
- Profile and perceptions (identity, image and branding)
- Capacity building (human resources, local capabilities) (OECD, 2012, p. 75).

Conclusion

Tourism development in Asian cities is growing at a significant rate not experienced in many parts of the world straining environmental, political, economic and social systems. Tourism development is occurring within an urban planning and development context, which at best in most instances, is poorly structured and regulated. When this institutional and industry framework is combined with a lack of hard and soft capacity the need for developing planning approaches that allow destinations to develop responsibly within existing realities is urgent. In this article the authors have attempted to demonstrate that for many destinations the adoption of short-term and effective strategies and tactics is essential both to help manage growth and to achieve effective and longer-term positive impacts.

The tactical tourism planning considerations presented above are designed as actions and strategies that can be immediately implemented while the larger structural and strategic dimensions of a tourism master or policy plan are put into place. While four specific tactics are discussed in the article there are quite clearly others that could be considered such as visitor management, the development of innovative experiences, creating responsible marketing strategies, the development of tourism experiences that benefit local people, capacity issues, etc. Many of the considerations depend heavily on enlisting the support of various partners whether they are national or foreign NGOs, aid groups or university and research groups.

Most destinations do not have the luxury of waiting for large-scale investments or initiatives to occur. In many parts of the world, social enterprises, community led initiatives and small donor led or supported initiatives are making a difference. Adopting tactical tourism planning approaches requires a change in mindset for many who are of the opinion that only after a master plan is put into place can destinations be managed and planned for. The success of tactical urbanism within cities should be seen as good evidence that such approaches work and must be considered within tourism.

The adoption of tactical tourism planning approaches is directed at ensuring that irreparable damage is not done to a destination's valuable resources in the quest to meet artificially created targets for growth.

This article is clearly exploratory in nature and is designed to begin a debate

within tourism planning circles about various planning approaches to achieving responsible tourism.

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