
Introduction: Ecology, society and harmony in tourism service

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Due to its negative effects on the environment and society, the rapid development of the tourism industry has become a significant challenge to building a harmonious society and realising sustainable development. Accordingly, academia has brought forward the concept of sustainable tourism and defined it as tourism that is ecologically benign, economically feasible and socially acceptable, and is thus contingent on environmental protection and reconciling tourism activities with local socio-economic values (Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Buckley, 1994; Cater, 1995; Ceballos, 1987; Sharpley, 2000).

Tourism service involves several activities and services related to the tourism/travel experience: activities that happen from tourists' arrival through their departure. Though various tourism services have been studied and attempts at suitable regulations and technologies have been developed, significant advances in the effort to interconnect tourism service and sustainable development have not been adequately achieved.

This special issue's strategies are to encourage offerings from various disciplines; to serve as a forum through which these offerings/disciplines may interact; and thus to expand the frontiers of knowledge in and contribute to the literature on tourism service science and sustainable development. Consequently, all papers in this special issue of the *International Journal of Services Technology and Management (IJSTM)* take into account the environment and social and human aspects of service and sustainable tourism, and attempt to answer how tourism service might relate to the sustainable development of novel approaches for improving our experience of work and community life.

The first paper, 'Grasslands as a sustainable tourism resource in Germany: environmental knowledge effects on resource conservation preferences' by Barkmann and Zschiegner, reports on two choice experiments that assessed economic preferences in the form of willingness-to-pay (WTP) for grassland conservation with cattle and sheep. The research was conducted at two locations in Germany in order to estimate local preferences for the sustainable development of this tourism resource, and to test how environmental knowledge affects grassland conservation preferences. This paper revealed that residents with higher scores on an index of grassland knowledge preferred higher numbers of sheep and cattle for grassland conservation.

The second paper, 'Effects of population migration on rural tourism' by Cai, Liu and Huang, applies a conceptual derivative of the gravity model to examine the relationship between the population changes due to migration at tourist origins and the percent changes of tourist arrivals from these origins to a rural destination. The findings highlight the importance for rural communities to understand population migration at source

markets, and provide a scientific tool to predict migration-induced tourist demand at rural destinations.

The third paper, 'The resolution of conflict between ecotourism and community interests in China: basis of the Pigovian tax design' by Cheng, takes ecotourism development in China as an example, and aims at the problem of information asymmetry in application of Pigovian taxes in China. The paper examines the design of Pigovian taxes to balance ecotourism development and community welfare, as well as the feasible ways and restriction conditions, and then gives an economics explanation for the resultant institutional arrangement of ecotourism design.

The tourism industry is the largest and most rapidly growing industry in India, employing over 15 million people, accounting for 8.5% of the total workforce, and generating over 4% of GNP. The fourth paper, 'Measuring the service quality of Indian tourism destinations: an application of the SERVQUAL model' by Chand, applies the SERVQUAL measurement instrument to evaluate tourism services at ten Indian tourist destinations visited by foreign tourists and provides evidence of where specific service improvements are needed to enhance the competitiveness of the destinations.

The fifth paper, 'Cognitive image change and loyalty in destination branding' by Huang, Cai and Ismail, examines visitors' cognitive image change and its relationship to their loyalty to a well-established destination brand. This paper aims to reveal which image change affects visitors' loyalty by focusing on the construct of image change.

The sixth paper, 'Developing integrated e-tourism services for cultural destinations' by Paskaleva and Azorin, presents findings based on theoretical analysis and three case study examples from Europe. The paper discusses how cultural tourism destinations can develop intelligent systems that can improve access and use of local heritage by using integrated e-services. The authors argue that, if new e-services can convey diverse, distributed and multi-media information on cultural destinations and sites, then they can contribute to cities' long-term competitiveness and sustainability.

With the rapid development of the Chinese economy, especially with regard to the enforcement of the strategy of developing the Western Region, conflict over exploitation and protection of natural resources in heritage sites and national parks has become a key point of contention between developers and the public. The seventh paper, 'Public participation effects on resource exploitation in heritage sites and national parks: case study of Western China' by Cheng, analyses three important cases of the influence of public participation on resource exploitation at heritage sites and national parks in China, discusses an ideal framework of sustainable use of resources in heritage sites and national parks according to the public and examines the difference between that ideal and reality. The paper examines the present situation and practice of resource exploitation at heritage sites and national parks in China under the watchful eye of the public.

The eighth paper is 'The Dao of the sceptic and the spiritual: attitudinal and cultural influences on preferences for sustainable tourism services in the domestic Chinese tourism market' by Barkmann, Yan, Zschiegner, and Marggraf. The study uses the choice experiment method to assess Chinese tourists' preferences for destination attributes, including the availability of sustainable tourism services, and also estimates the influences of attitudinal and/or cultural values on destination attribute preferences and destination choice.

In order to analyse tourists' multi-phase recreation experience of railway tourism in Taiwan, the ninth paper, 'Visitors' involvement, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioural intention on tourist express trains in Taiwan' by Ho et al., discusses the

customers' involvement, perceived value, satisfaction and purchase behaviour. In addition, multiple-group SEM analysis was used to analyse the different types of operations between the various tourism agencies.

References

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