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Chapter 1:

Introduction

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Sustainable Tourism is a ubiquitous term that has accumulated considerable attention and controversy from researchers, policy makers and practitioners. The concept of sustainable tourism emerged in the late 1980s through the assimilation of the sustainable development and tourism development paradigms in the wake of the seminal Brundtland Report (Welford et al 1999). A growing mainstream awareness of human influences on ecological processes and a realisation that functioning natural systems are needed to support human life contributed to the perceived need for sustainable development. How this awareness and concern should be applied in practice has been a subject of often heated and on-going local, national and global debate. Not surprisingly, the adoption of sustainable development ideology into the field of tourism also stimulated a multitude of conflicting ideas and perspectives (Hunter 2002).

The idea that human activity can impact on the natural systems and subsequently threaten human prosperity, and even survival, has a long scholarly history. For example, Hans Carl von Carlowitz (1713) wrote about sustainable forestry practices in Germany as a means for continuation of the resource and the survival of local communities. Carlowitz was in turn drawing on the principles of silviculture dating from the 16th century (Hasel & Schwartz 2006; Mueller 1992). Modern recognition of a need for sustainable living, though without explicitly using this rhetorical frame of reference, gained prominence in mainstream thinking...
during the 1960s and 1970s. This growing popular awareness was exemplified by publications such as Carson’s (1963) *Silent spring* and Erhlich and Erhlich’s (1968) *The population bomb*, both which became best sellers. The Erhlichs’ book was derivative of arguments made almost two centuries earlier by Malthus (1798) on the limited capacity of society to feed a continually growing population. The Erhlichs and Malthus were writing in historical periods of significance social and political change, and Malthus’ work was groundbreaking for his time. However, *The population bomb* had the advantage of international mass print production, international mass media and a generally higher level of education amongst the wider population, arguably making the Erhlichs’ book more readily accessible. The general rediscovery of a need for sustainable development coincided with social and political pressure to take action, especially in the face of high profile environmental disasters publicised by that same international mass media. Infamous environmental ‘firsts’ of that era included the grounding of the oil tanker *Torrey Canyon* off the UK in 1967, the Three Mile Island partial nuclear meltdown in 1979, and the Union Carbide chemical disaster in Bhopal, India, in 1984.

Institutional recognition of a need for sustainable development manifested in reports such as *The Limit to Growth*, released by the Club of Rome in 1972. This landmark report recognised that natural resources are limited and overexploitation could have very serious consequences for human society (Meadows et al. 1972). In 1983, the United Nations convened the World Commission on Environment and Development to consider the issues associated with long term economic and social development and its relationship with natural resources. A subsequent report set out to define the parameters of sustainable development (Brundtland 1987), fuelling a considerable amount of debate. Subsequent United Nations sponsored conferences on environment and development through the 1990s and 2000s have attempted,
with limited success, to clarify and obtain agreement on how sustainable development translates into policy and practice. The on-going debate about the meaning and application of sustainable development is a product of both ideology and practicality, that is, where the emphasis should be placed with regard to economic, social and environmental imperatives (Hunter 2002).

From sustainable development to sustainable tourism

Based on recognition that tourism was generating significant impacts, the concept of sustainable development sparked the notion of sustainable tourism in the late 1980s even though, notoriously, tourism did not merit a single mention in the seminal Brundtland Report (Hunter 2002; Welford et al. 1999). Sustainable tourism was initially seen as an alternative to dominant ‘mass tourism’. The relationship between these two forms of tourism was conceptualised either as a dichotomy or as opposite ends of a sliding scale (Echtner & Jamal 1997). The assumption underpinning alternative tourism as the flip side of mass tourism was that small numbers of tourists and small-scale development could minimise negative impacts at the local scale (Moscardo et al. 2001; Walpole et al. 2001). This supposition was found to be flawed in that impacts of tourism depend more on the management of development and activities in a given location more than the scale and numbers of tourists (Eagles 2002; Oliveira 2003). Negative impacts associated with alternative tourism include intrusion into the local ‘backstage’, reinforcement of the power of the local elite, dependency on external sources of funding, and the initiation or exacerbation of local rivalries (Weaver & Lawton 2013). Subsequently, conceptualisation of sustainable tourism has moved from the idea of an alternative toward a notion that its precepts are relevant to all tourism, regardless of scale and type (Clarke 1997; Weaver & Lawton 1999). This was made explicit in Weaver’s (2000) identification of ‘sustainable mass tourism’ as a legitimate and feasible development
alternative.

Despite advances in thinking, there is still an apparently wide gap between theory and practice in sustainable tourism. Mass tourism is still a growing phenomenon with international arrivals surpassing 1 billion in 2013, on track with the World Tourism Organisation’s enthusiastic predictions for continued growth to 1.6 billion by 2020. Indeed, almost all of the world’s tourism activity can be described as mass tourism. Furthermore, so-called ‘alternative’ tourism remains dependent on the same transportation systems that support mass tourism (Pearce 1992). This trend is expected to continue with the rise of new markets fed by the wealth and aspirations of the growing middle classes in countries such as China and India.

Given the apparent impasse in terms of sustainable tourism theory and practice, recent scholarly research has tended to focus on ideologically aspirational niche alternative tourism initiatives. This focus does not address the broader issues, vagaries and paradoxes that appear to plague the broader notion of sustainable tourism. Focussing on discrete niche areas of alternative tourism such as volunteer tourism and indigenous tourism perhaps enables targeted communication of relevant concepts. However, the overall body of knowledge becomes increasingly siloed, inconsistent and only marginally relevant in terms of implicated tourists and local communities. As such, there is a need for a new and pragmatic analysis of sustainable tourism as an overarching idea and how this manifests in practice. Our book brings together some of the leading established and emerging scholars in this field to put forward their views on sustainable tourism and its inherent paradoxes with a view to move the debate forward as the 21st century unfolds.
The paradox

Discussions in the sustainable tourism field tend to focus on a specific approach that presents a definitive and often exclusive pathway or resolution - requiring in turn respective abandonment or adoption of particular tourism practices or ways of thinking. Such an approach emphasises an ‘either-or’ proposition based on the idea of incompatible opposites within tourism. The problem with this approach is that alternative forms of tourism, as outlined earlier, often have their own problems that are apparently unresolvable. Focussing exclusively on alternative tourism also ignores the fact that mass tourism has much benefit to offer through economies of scale that foster innovation and fulfil growing consumer demands. This book offers a means of thinking about tourism that is based on the notion of finding common ground as part of a ‘both-and’ approach. This contrasts with the common ‘either-or’ mentality based on identifying ideas and practices as exclusive choices that purport to solve persistent problems within tourism as a sustainable practice. As part of this approach, the book will examine the strongly apparent tensions within alternative tourism as well as the paradox of continuing growth and other mass tourism-related issues. This is a persistent issue in tourism thinking that has been debated with the aim of finding solutions to the destructive aspects of tourism.

This book presents a unique approach to tourism thinking through the application of dialectics as a means for identifying a resolution to the established paradox between mass tourism, growth and sustainability. Resolution-based dialectics is a useful framework as it focusses on resolving apparently opposing viewpoints by recognising they are not mutually exclusive but have common elements that can be synthesised into rational and practical solutions over time. This method of thinking, which may be summarised as seeking ‘complementarity in contradiction’, tries to overcome dualism by understanding how mass
tourism and the various elements of alternative forms of tourism can be synthesised based on their complementarities as a means of achieving the principles of sustainable tourism.

**Structure of this book**

This book includes 18 chapters with contributions in three parts. Part one, *Conceptualising Sustainable Tourism* (Chapters 2-6), sets the scene in relation to the debate surrounding sustainable tourism. It adopts a conceptual and theoretical perspective presenting a range of views regarding the progression of sustainable tourism and its parental concept of sustainable development. Part one highlights the plurality of approaches, perspectives and critiques that result from an apparent gap between theory and the reality of sustainable tourism practice.

Chapter 2 (*Enlightened Mass Tourism as a ‘Third Generation’ aspiration for the 21st Century*) by David Weaver, details the dialectics approach that guides the book. Weaver outlines how the two traditional models of tourism development, mass tourism on the one hand and alternative tourism on the other, both claim authenticity as pathways to and manifestations of sustainability. However, they are both full of ambiguities and thus hinder the theoretical and practical advancement of sustainable tourism development. Weaver argues that only through their amalgamation into a third generation model, ‘enlightened mass tourism’, will destination sustainability and resilience be facilitated.

Christof Pforr, (Chapter 3, *Tourism Public Policy for the Pursuit of Sustainability: Discrepancies between Rhetoric and Reality*), employs a chronological perspective of the conceptual evolution of sustainable development and its devolution into the tourism sphere as a backdrop to highlight the current discrepancies in sustainability rhetoric and reality. Analysing implementation efforts in Australia at a national and subnational level, Pforr
argues that the challenge is to find a more effective mode of governance to better integrate environmental, economic and social development goals. In this context, interaction, engagement and deliberation are seen as complementary policy instruments that can enhance policymaking processes and ensure more sustainable outcomes.

The gap between sustainability rhetoric and reality is not unique to the tourism field. It is a common thread through many disciplines that also struggle to implement the ideals of sustainability. Michael Hughes and Angus Morrison-Saunders (Chapter 4, *Promoting interdisciplinary sustainable tourism*) draw on the field of Environmental Impact Assessment to highlight analogies with sustainable tourism development. They argue that more effective sharing of experiences between disciplines and mutual learning is necessary to move the sustainability agenda forward.

In a similar vein, Sanjay Nepal, Stephanie Verkoeyen and Tom Karrow (Chapter 5, *The end of Sustainable Tourism? Re-orienting the debate*) argue that the sustainable tourism debate has been inwardly focused. As a result, the field has not given enough consideration to issues of economic growth, globalisation, demographic changes, shifting governance arrangements and political regimes that will impact on future tourism demand. The authors argue that rising future demand for finite resources and the dichotomy between environmental protection and economic progress add a further layer to the sustainability debate that also cannot be ignored.

Richard Butler (Chapter 6, *Sustainable tourism – Paradoxes, inconsistencies and a way forward?) concludes part one with his view on the paradoxes and inconsistencies inherent to the sustainability debate and tourism. Butler’s argument puts a spotlight on the extreme difficulties associated with genuine implementation of the sustainable tourism ideal. The
chapter also provides an outlook on the future of the debate on sustainable tourism and a possible roadmap for its implementation.

Part two (*Destination perspectives*, Chapters 7-13) presents a diverse range of views on how destinations address sustainable tourism. For instance, the challenges faced by small island nations and the climate change reality that confronts coastal and winter tourism destinations. In addition, the emergence of ‘last chance’ tourism destinations and how alternative development philosophies might reinforce implementation efforts of sustainable tourism are discussed.

Jack Carlse (Chapter 7, *Island tourism: Systems modelling for sustainability*) opens part two of the book with a focus on small island destinations. He uses a number of case examples to illustrate the challenges of sustainable tourism development in a small island context and the lessons that can be learnt from these. He argues that small island destinations are microcosms of the broader tourism development debate. In particular they can function as models that highlight the necessity for broadening the tourism development focus beyond economics to include environmental and social elements. Adopting a systems model approach can help in understanding the complexities inherent when considering all three sustainability dimensions in the quest for sustainable tourism development.

In Chapter 8 (*Tourist’s perceptions of community based tourism for sustainable tourism in Bali, Indonesia*), Ni Made Ernawati, Ross Dowling and Dale Sanders reflect on the tensions between mass tourism and alternative tourism by exploring attitudes and expectations of different tourist groups participating in community based tourism activities on Bali. They highlight the need to address these differences in community-based tourism planning,
development and marketing in order to bridge the divide between mass and alternative tourism.

Simon Teoh (Chapter 9 *The governmentality approach to sustainable tourism: Bhutan’s tourism governance policy and planning*) presents an interesting ‘high value, low volume’ approach to tourism development in Bhutan. This approach aligns with the country’s Gross National Happiness (GNH) development philosophy based on equal consideration of environmental conservation and preservation, cultural integrity, good governance as well as sustainable and equitable socio-economic development. However, a recent policy shift towards ‘high value, low impact’ as part of the national program titled, ‘Accelerating Bhutan’s Socio-Economic Development’ reveals some tensions in development philosophy. Teoh argues that Bhutan’s ‘governmentality’ approach to sustainable tourism is a paradox that has resulted in unpopular regard for the government’s more recent expansionist tourism policy.

Jackie Dawson, Harvey Lemelin, Emma Stewart and Justin Taillon open Chapter 10 (*Last Chance tourism – a race to be last?*) by drawing attention to the threshold where tourism transitions from sustainable to an unsustainable practice. The authors discuss the concept of ‘last chance tourism’ where tourists are motivated concerns over vanishing tourism attractions and destinations and a wish to experience them before they disappear or change beyond recognition. As the authors of this chapter highlight, this form of tourism is often described as a double-edged sword in the sense that it can both contribute to the further demise of the destination or attraction or it can catalyse its preservation. Thus, the paradox inherent in last chance tourism fits well with the dialectics approach of this volume.
Dirk Reiser and Christof Pforr move on in Chapter 11 (Sustainable tourism development on Niue: A Catch 22?) to discuss another paradox of sustainable tourism development, that of the notion of sustainability in the context of micro island destinations. Micro islands rely heavily on long haul travel for access, a key failing of tourism sustainability noted by Butler in Chapter 6. They also have such a narrow economic and social base that any tourism development might ultimately be set up for failure. Using Niue in the South Pacific as a case example, the authors critically discuss whether tourism can make a contribution to the island state’s sustainable development. Considering Niue’s inherent multiple socio-economic and environmental challenges, Reiser and Pforr argue that future development of tourism on Niue might be at odds with sustainability values and principles.

Lon-Marie Lun, Marianna Elmi and Harald Pechlaner (Chapter 12 An integrated approach to climate change and tourism in an alpine destination: Assessing impacts and strategies in the Vinschgau/Venosta Valley, Italy) bring climate change to the forefront of the sustainable tourism debate. The authors draw on a case example from the European Alps where climate change will necessitate a number of adaptation strategies that may both encourage and inhibit tourism development. The authors discuss possible changes in land use in response to climate change effects along with loss of some tourism experiences and the rise of new experiences that could contribute to sustainability in the region.

Valerie Sheppard, Rachel Dodds and Peter Williams (Chapter 13 Good governance: managing growth and long-term resort destination sustainability and resilience) present the case example of the small Canadian coastal town of Tofino, where an environmentally sensitive location is faced with mounting tourism pressures. In line with the call for complementary policy tools to strengthen governance processes and thus facilitate the
implementation of sustainable tourism development put forward in Chapter 3, the authors describe some of the local policy and planning initiatives to address this tension. The authors also note the limited effect the initiatives have had in Tofino and suggest ways to strengthen the destination’s governance system to achieve a more sustainable future for Tofino’s community.

Part Three of the book (Operators’ Perspective, chapters 14 to 17), presents selected tourism industry perspectives on sustainable tourism. Issues discussed include the Geoparks movement, ecolabel adoption by tourism operators, the contribution of planned events and management of an island tourism operation.

Ross Dowling presents Geotourism as an emerging market (Chapter 14 Geotourism’s contribution to sustainable tourism) that can foster sustainability through geo-conservation, helping to understand geo-heritage and valuing geo-diversity. For example, such initiatives are promoted by the UNESCO Geopark program potentially providing an opportunity for enlightened mass tourism. A number of international case studies are introduced in this chapter to highlight the potential of geotourism to foster conservation and sustainable tourism development.

In Chapter 15 (The Paradox of Adopting Tourism Ecolabels: What is the Problem?) Minjuan Deng-Westphal, Sue Beeton and Alastair Anderson investigate why the tourism industry has been very slow to adopt ecolabelling despite the development and availability of a multitude of ecolabel schemes. The authors apply the diffusion of innovation theory to explain this phenomenon and provide some insights into this obvious paradox.
Judith Mair shifts the focus to the role of planned events in sustainable tourism development (Chapter 16 *The role of events in creating sustainable tourism destinations*). She emphasises the potential of events as a means for encouraging tourism outside peak season, to promote the destination and initiate repeat visitations. However, Mair stresses that planned events can also have negative impacts on a location. Consequently, the development and promotion of events, as is so often the case in the quest for sustainable tourism development, needs to be carefully considered.

Roland Mau and John Tedesco close part three of the book (Chapter 17, *Sustainable tourism - the Rottnest Island experience*) with their detailed discussion of Western Australia’s Rottnest Island. This island is an important and fragile tourist destination with significant natural and cultural values. The authors are managers of the island and outline the challenges inherent in its administration. They emphasise the need for a cautious approach to the triple bottom line. In some instances effective management necessitates the implementation of contradictory strategies that taken together assist in the development of a sustainable tourism destination.

In the concluding chapter of the book (Chapter 18, *Paradox as a pervasive characteristic of sustainable tourism: Challenges, opportunities and trade-offs*), the editors synthesise the main themes emerging from this volume and provide a constructive discussion through a resolution-based dialectical approach. While there may not be a magic bullet to solve the complexity of challenges, the editors argue there is a way forward based on adopting a ‘complimentary in contradiction’ approach to sustainable tourism.
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