



Domestic tourism for sustainable development in developing countries

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Abstract

Most scholars portray tourism as a concept foreign to 'natives' and brought about by the adventurous, wondrous, and innocent leisure seeking relatively rich foreigner. This popularised conceptualisation of tourism gives the notion of a 'real' tourist being someone who is foreign to a particular destination. Indeed, this is contrary to post-modern theorisation that conceptualises tourism as an engagement and experience where a person taking a moment to view different scenes out of their ordinary life are also tourists. This post-modern disposition problematizes the conventional WTO definition of a tourist and provides insights on how natives, with their sense of ownership of tourism resources around them can be capitalised on to achieve sustainable tourism development in many Third World destinations. Using content analysis of literature this paper marshals evidence of existence of a knowledge gap and an opportunity for developing countries to mainstream domestic tourism as a panacea for sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Domestic tourism, stakeholders, sustainable tourism development, domestic tourism

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Introduction

In literature tourism is conceptualised as a phenomenon that gives foreigners an opportunity to escape from their mundane everyday life and experience 'native' ways of living (Alneng, 2002, Leiper, 1979). People tour in order to escape from a routine life to enjoy the imagined and unknown world (Yousefi and Marzuki, 2015, Moufakkir et al., 2015). This conceptualisation, presents tourism as an activity which takes place in an environment different from the everyday life of the tourists, thereby reducing domestic tourism to mere travelling without any tourism value (Smith and Eadington, 1992). What makes one a tourist then?

Basically, everyone is a tourist much of the time whether they know about it or not (Urry, 2002, Albrecht, 2011). According to the 'tourist gaze' anyone taking a moment to view different scenes, landscapes and townscapes which are out of the ordinary is a tourist (Urry, 2002, Urry and Larsen, 2011). The tourist gaze, from a postmodern posture, conceptualizes tourism as an engagement and experience rather than a specific form of travel. Experiences such as



ethnic dining and culinary tourism which enables participants to explore what they do not enjoy on a regular basis without leaving their familiar neighbourhood are a case in point (Molz, 2004). This view of tourism embraces the main elements of the traditional definition of tourism with variations in space and time one spends as a tourist. It therefore caters for both international and domestic tourists, whether one engages in overnight stay or a few hour(s) of excursion.

International and domestic views of tourism have one thing in common, they aim to exclude and include certain groups of people mainly on the basis of economic value or contribution of each person (Mazimhaka, 2006, Tang, 2015, Pulido-Fernández et al., 2015). A number of scholars acknowledge and are in agreement over areas in which international and domestic tourism converge and diverge; and how they both help in the development of the tourism industry (see Ali (2015), Holmes et al. (2015) and Johari et al. (2015)). However, when it comes to how to achieve sustainable tourism development, international tourism dominates current research and debate (Mejía and Brandt, 2015).

With regards to international tourism, governments, host organisations, travel promoters and host communities treat tourists as mini gods whose sole objective is to make the hosts better off (Mathieson and Wall, 1982, Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015). Whatever damage they cause, as long as it comes with economic benefits is welcome (Mejía and Brandt, 2015, Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015). On the contrary, domestic tourism is portrayed as a social activity that allows participants to realize their potential (McCabe, 2009). The emphasis at this point is the demand side where the tourist needs and demands are central to tourism development. McCabe and Diekmann (2015), argues that tourism has grown from being a luxury and a preserve for the rich as portrayed in international tourism, to a basic social right that everyone should enjoy. Different countries whether developed or developing have different capacities to satisfy this need. However, going by the views of Albrecht (2011) and Urry and Larsen (2011) of the 'tourist gaze', everyone whether in developed or developing country can be a tourist of some sort and magnitude at some time in their everyday life.

Domestic tourism and modelling sustainable tourism development

The adoption of domestic tourism for sustainable tourism development is lagging behind in developing countries (Rogerson and Lisa, 2005, Scheyvens, 2007). Developing countries are relying heavily on international tourism which is unstable (Sindiga, 1996). If developing countries continue to neglect domestic tourism the sustainability of their tourism industry will remain unstable (Ritchie and Crouch, 1993). Using content analysis of literature, this paper argues for the adoption and mainstreaming of domestic tourism as a model for sustainable tourism development in Third World countries.

Understanding domestic tourism

Domestic tourism is the tourism of residents within the economic territory of the country of reference (Hall and Lew, 2009). The term residents in tourism literature refers to host community (Chirikure et al., 2010, Saarinen, 2010, Yang, 2012); local communities (Karambakuwa et al., 2011, Dadvar-Khani, 2012); rural communities (Eusébio and Carneiro, 2012); hosting communities (Lima and d'Hautesserre, 2011); community (Lepp, 2008); and lastly hosts (Holmes et al., 2010, Korstanje, 2011). In the studies referred to above residents are providers of tourism goods and services at destinations and not consumers unto themselves. This is contrary to what Albrecht (2011), Urry (2002) and Urry and Larsen (2011) highlight when they argue that even these locals have moments to enjoy as tourists within their area whilst living their everyday life and interacting with inbound tourists. Without setting boundaries on distance from the source, this conceptualisation can mean someone participating in an event such as carnival within their community is a tourist and correctly so during the duration of the event (Urry and Larsen, 2011). The danger with such loose



conceptualisation of a tourist is that not only would anybody be a tourist but blurs the real essence of tourism according to the UNWTO (2008).

Becken (2009) also defines domestic tourism as all trips over 40 kilometres outside one's usual environment which can be day trips or overnight trips for any given travel purpose. From this definition, four key tourism aspects emerge. Firstly, the distance, 'trips over 40km' to emphasise the second part, 'outside one's usual environment'. This means anything less than 40km is within one's usual area of residence and there is no tourism taking place. Thirdly is the time one stays at destination which can be 'day trips or overnight' and lastly for 'any travel purpose' which covers the various forms of tourism. However, Becken's view does not give prominence to the economic value of these tourists to the destination in terms of areas they visit, where they stay, where they eat, how much they spend and on what. What exactly do they contribute to the tourism economy of the destination? Rather this definition pays attention to the traveller as the target beneficiary of tourism and this suits very well with McCabe and Diekmann (2015)'s concept of social tourism. If this view were to assume prominence in serious theorisation of tourism then its negative consequences would be the disintegration of the concept of tourism into meaningless and countless dimensions.

Quinn (2010) defines domestic tourism as the travel by residents of a country within the country, which can be same day or overnight within or outside the same state and territory but excluding travelling for work or school. Whilst Quinn's definition removes work and school as non-touristic activities, his view is not much different from Becken (2009). Of what value is this travelling to the economy of the destination? Quinn does not specify what schooling is? This definition excludes educational tourism yet it is one form of tourism which is widely accepted in the tourism industry and research (Quezada, 2004, Ritchie, 2003, Bhuiyan et al., 2010, Gogoi and Balaji, 2015). Another voice, Caletrio (2012) defines domestic tourism simply as tourism within one's country of residents. This is also too general and broad to be of value where specifics are necessary to inform planning and development. However, a conspicuous element in this myriad of divergences in the conceptualisation of domestic tourism is that the phenomenon does not involve foreigners.

Understanding sustainable tourism development

Sustainability is a concept built on three pillars which are environment, economy and social wellbeing (Brundtland, 1987). Rees and Settlements (1989), define sustainable development as positive socioeconomic change that does not undermine the ecological and social systems upon which community and society are dependent. Nasser (2003), summarises sustainable development as development that is economically viable, environmentally sensitive and culturally appropriate. These definitions show that sustainable development aims at maintaining the status quo of what the society needs but raising the standard of living for the same society. Lu and Nepal (2009), alludes to this conceptualisation as a life management approach "which addresses issues of unpredictability of events, uncertainties about the outcome of events and complexities of scale and times".

Reid and Schwab (2006), argue that sustainable development is a holistic concept that seeks to integrate social, economic and cultural policies to ensure high quality growth in the context to which it is applied. Finkbeiner et al. (2010), define sustainable development as a development concept that is capable of covering today's needs for an intact environment, social justice and economic prosperity without limiting the ability of future generations meeting their own needs. The problem with such conceptualisation assumes that present generation knows the needs and aspirations of future generations, which may not be the case. Sustainable development covers various aspects of life including sustainable tourism development (Lu and Nepal, 2009).



Liu (2003), views sustainable tourism development as a development concept that aims at satisfying the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It envisages management of all resources in such a way as to fulfil society's economic, social and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes and biological diversity and life support systems. Sustainable tourism development should therefore emphasise the community need to evolve and strengthen (Pieterse, 2010) thereby satisfying the going concern concept as applicable in destination management (Sheehan et al., 2007). Achieving sustainability is not easy as there are lots of unpredictable forces that lie ahead of any mechanism put in place to ensure sustainable tourism development. Thus the concept of sustainability differs among tourism stakeholders in its definition, interpretation and implementation (Lu and Nepal, 2009). Most destinations in developing countries are finding it difficult to successfully balance the requirements of different generations through the usage of the same tourism resources (Sheehan et al., 2007).

Whilst agreeing that there is urgent need for sustainability, Korstanje and George (2015) questions the will of the stakeholders in working towards sustainability. They attribute this problem to the axiom of the commons where no one is accountable to anyone for their damage to the world. Tourism carbon footprint continues to grow globally negatively affecting the sustainability efforts of the tourism industry (Cadarso et al., 2015). Destinations are trying to achieve sustainable tourism development employing different strategies (Ali and Frew, 2010).

A number of scholars are in agreement on the various strategies in use to achieve sustainable tourism development (see Ali and Frew (2010), Choi and Sirakaya (2006), Korstanje and George (2015), Kwaramba et al. (2012), Matarrita-Cascante et al. (2010), Mihalič (2000), Page (2007) and Swarbrooke (1999). These include; coming up with development indicators, monitoring destination development, eco-labelling, coming up with destination codes of conduct, educating the tourists on the importance of practicing sustainable tourism development, proper planning and development of destinations by destination managers, self-develop environmental practices, certify or award best practice and accreditation schemes, strategy formulation, coming up with developmental models and applying information and communication technologies are at the centre of research and recommendations especially in developed countries.

The application of these various strategies had positive results in some destinations whilst in others they did not achieve much. The variation in results highlights the influence of differences in environment, culture and destination type among other variables. Holistic sustainability is thus impossible and an illusion as outcome of future events is unpredictable and uncontrollable. As such it would be naive for destination managers to rely on any single approach to achieve sustainable tourism development. This review presents that domestic tourism in developing countries is plausible to achieve sustainable tourism development in addition to other strategies in practice.

Domestic tourism and sustainable tourism development

Throughout the world destinations are struggling to achieve sustainability with the rate of attraction deterioration and shift in demand from one destination to another worrisome (Poon, 1993, Sheldon, 2005, Wall and Mathieson, 2006). The adoption and implementation of various techniques and strategies in existence are yielding minimal success in addressing the real issues around sustainable tourism development (Liu, 2003, Ali and Frew, 2010).

Developing countries continue to ignore, neglect and disregard domestic tourism yet developed nations have taken their domestic tourism seriously as a way of attaining sustainable tourism development (Rogerson and Lisa, 2005, Mazimhaka, 2007, Moseley et al., 2007, Arrington, 2010, Chiutsi et al., 2011, Dadvar-Khani, 2012). A number of authors (see, Canavan (2012), Ghimire (2013), Skanavis and Sakellari (2011), Dodo (2015) and



Alammari et al. (2015)) are in agreement on various domestic travelling activities taking place in developing countries which when taken seriously and incorporated into mainstream tourism development plans would help in achieving sustainable tourism development. These include macro and micro domestic, native tourism, small scale tourism, national tourism, localised tourism and ethnic tourism.

Macro and Micro Domestic Tourism

The characterisation of domestic tourism into macro and micro domestic is helping in understanding the different small groups of people who contribute to tourism in a small but cumulatively big way (Canavan, 2012). According to Canavan (2012) micro domestic tourism is “when residents of an area tend to travel short distances of between 15-30 kilometres characterised by landscape variety, infrequency of travel, travel times and expense, and embedded nature of many residents in a local area satisfying the definitions whereby domestic tourism involves travel outside of the normal place of residence to other areas outside one’s usual area of residence”. On the other hand, macro-domestic tourism is travel that covers distances of more than 40 kilometres (Becken, 2009). The key factor is the distance that one travels whether short or long. In so doing domestic tourism becomes a relative phenomenon whose definition, applicability and adoption varies according to situations and users.

On micro and macro domestic tourism, Canavan (2012) studying residents of an island views them as always changing their position in the tourism industry from hosts to tourists and back to hosts. In the process, they are able to take care of the tourism resources within the island as they benefit from them in two-fold. Firstly, bringing tourists and their associated benefits to the island and secondly for themselves to enjoy. By taking care of the island and consuming its tourism resources as tourists, domestic tourists are contributing to sustainable tourism development. On the contrary, in developing countries to date, minimal studies are available on domestic tourism in general and micro/macro domestic tourism in particular (Rogerson and Lisa, 2005).

Classifying and studying practises such as church services, sporting events and music gatherings that attract multitudes of people into macro and micro events can be vital in developing domestic tourism in developing countries. With more research and attention these domestic tourism activities may lead to sustainable tourism development in destinations particularly in developing countries. However, once again care ought to be exercised in defining both macro and micro tourism to avoid occurrence of serious distortion of the concept of tourism.

Native Tourism

Ghimire (2013), conceptualise domestic tourism as native tourism. In developing countries the natives are not very active participants in tourism compared to non-indigenous people who migrated to these countries during colonial era (Hughes, 2010). Hinch (2004), define natives or indigenous people as communities, people and nations that share historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies. In general, these are people who regard themselves as distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. At present, they form non-dominant sectors of society with a determination to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and ethnic identities as the bases of their continued existence as people in line with their cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. Typical examples of indigenous people are the Aborigines of Australia and the Red Indians of North America (Altman and Finlayson, 1993). These are the owners of the tourism resources in their area covering from the natural attractions to man-made attractions and the historical cultural practices that attracts inbound tourists. It is therefore important that such people actively participate in tourism increasing their



appreciation of local resources, hence continue protecting them, in the process contributing towards sustainable tourism development.

Small Scale Tourism

Small scale tourism is that kind of tourism that does not involve massive numbers of people visiting an attraction. Domestic tourists are usually the ones that visit attractions that are not yet mass tourism destinations (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004). They do not worry about the excesses that attract inbound international tourists like five star hotels, airports, quality highways among others and consuming highly standardized tourism products (Munjal et al., 2015, Alammari et al., 2015, Torres, 2002).

In small scale tourism people are able to enjoy their social right (McCabe and Diekmann, 2015) with minimal investment. Thus small scale tourism is able to groom local tourists who appreciate that one does not need to have lots of money to be a tourist, but rather should have the will to travel and have access to the resources that fix the 'tourist gaze' on distinct environmental, social and cultural landscapes (Urry and Larsen, 2011, Torres, 2002). With the role of the local changing from host to tourist and back, appreciation of the value of tourism with minimal investment would attract more people to be more responsible for the tourism in their area, hence helping in attaining sustainable tourism development within destinations.

National Tourism

The UNWTO define national tourism as tourism activities by resident visitors within and outside the country of reference either as part of domestic or outbound tourism trips. In its broader sense tourism are the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (UNWTO). According to Dodo (2015) in African countries most of which are developing, people from different parts of the country often:

“...visit rural homes where the rest of the extended families are based with a view to rekindle relationships and familiarise with their traditional customs. Besides they also join members of their rural communities to commemorate significant traditional rituals and cultural proceedings”.

Just like its broader grouping of visiting friends and relatives, these domestic tourists value to the tourism industry is not known. However, what is critical for sustainable tourism development is the value these people place in these activities that ensures continued existence and relevance of the traditional culture (Dodo, 2015) which becomes part and parcel of the key attractions for both international and domestic tourism within a destination.

Other national activities usually left out on the tourism radar are the annual religious pilgrimages to sacred places for various cultural activities like rain making ceremonies and annual church conferences (VanPool and VanPool, 2015, Mbiti, 2015). These involve large volumes of people to areas they perceive important and hence kept sacred for future generations. Literature points to the 'tourist gaze' during such functions where people take advantage of their particular trip to be tourists (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Their acknowledgement and value creation of places they visit necessitate the need to preserve the environment that generates the 'tourist gaze' hence contributing towards sustainable tourism development in the country of reference.

Localised Tourism

Giampiccoli et al. (2015), are of the view that tourism activities that take place regularly in the local area have the capacity to generate more revenue and sustain tourism development in a



destination than a once off mega event like the FIFA Football World Cup. In localized tourism, the majority of the participants are natives. The nature of the events may not be traditionally touristic in nature like marathons, cycling competitions, motor racing, camel racing, horse racing and golfing (Kurtzman, 2005) but their contribution to the tourism industry is huge. In developing countries such events and others similar are a common phenomenon, however, these are trivialised and completely left out when discussing domestic tourism. Their impact on the need to preserve the culture of having such events and drawing multitudes of local people to participate and spectate goes a long way in efforts to attain sustainable tourism development.

Ethnic tourism

One of the major advantages of domestic tourism is nation building and propagation of peace among citizens of a country (Skanavis and Sakellari, 2011). In ethnic tourism locals visit locals to share their ethnic values (Adams, 1998). Governments use this opportunity to promote peace and market tourism through social marketing (Korstanje, 2015). Social marketing through ethnic tourism empowers communities to take part in tourism activities reducing chances of conflict and dispute with inbound tourists hence assuring tourists of security and liberty whilst at the destination (Korstanje, 2015). Whenever tourists feel safe and secure they visit such destinations and recommend them to their friends and relatives which in turn would visit such destinations contributing towards its sustainability in the long run.

Conclusion

Research on tourism in general and domestic tourism in particular is abundant. Adoption of domestic tourism for sustainable tourism in developing countries has not been explored. This review shows that locals are always participating in domestic tourism. Their participation follows the macro/micro, native, small scale, national, local and ethnic conceptualisation though without their knowledge much of the time. This conceptualisation allows decision makers to reconsider local people's values and contribution both as hosts and tourists in search of sustainable tourism development. Remembering that, the value of domestic tourism rests in the reality of the indigenous people's ways of life and other stakeholders acknowledging the value of such in the preservation of tourism resources. The implication of this concept is for destination developers and managers to give equal respect and investment to both inbound and domestic tourists as the two are critical in achieving sustainable tourism development in developing countries.

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