Preserving natural asset values while also promoting tourism potential – an exploration of issues in New Zealand and China

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Thanks

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  - Prof Deqiang Wang, DVC of Yunnan University of Nationalities.
A brief introduction

• 21st century ‘discussion’ of economic and social development (including of course cultural and ethnic needs) must be underpinned by understanding environmental constraints – this is the triple bottom line.

• In NZ we now talk about the quadruple bottom line with social now = social and cultural, perhaps a thought for this conference?

• My talk is mostly about the environment because to have sustainable growth, we must sustain our natural capital.

• I illustrate some of the issues and possibilities by comparing and contrasting tourism in New Zealand and in Shangri-la.
A framework for thinking about sustainable tourism development

• I now present an ‘organising framework’ for you to think about, in the context of tourism and sustainable livelihoods;

• This framework has been proposed and tested by my colleague Dr Fujun Shen, in rural China;

• I believe it has potential for further application here, although today I concentrate mainly on those aspects associated with Natural and Attraction capitals.
A Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for Tourism (Source: Shen et al. 2008)

Hexagon key:
H = Human Capital
S = Social Capital
N = Natural Capital
E = Economic Capital
I = Institutional Capital
A = Attraction Capital

Tourism context
• Macro: tourism policies, possibility of developing tourism
• Micro: tourism market, development process, TALC stage

Institutional arrangements
Vertical
• National governments
• Regional governments
• Local governments
• Policies

Horizontal
• Governments
• Tourism companies
• Local community
• (I)NGOs
• Tourism agencies
• Tourists
• Informal and formal rules

Tourism-related activities
Livelihood outcomes
• Sustainable economic development
• Sustainable social development
• Sustainable environmental development
• Sustainable institutional development

Non-tourism-related activities

Vulnerability context
• Trends
• Shocks
• Seasonality
• Institutions
• Hyper-dependence on tourism
• Destination tourism management
• Individual capability

To influence

To mediate via planning portfolio:
• Planning
• Policy-making
• Legislation
• Financial support
Definitions: The Attraction capitals

Cultural –
  • different nationalities and their cultures, religious, historical and archaeological features, festivals, etc

Social –
  • the people generally, and their ability to attract – events, entertainment, friendly reputations

Natural –
  • (i) the natural resource assets (e.g., lakes, glaciers, landforms, forests, animal life) which *attract* the tourists, and
  • (ii) the natural resource assets which *sustain* the tourists (e.g., clean and fresh water, clean and fresh air).

Both of these forms need to be managed carefully and sustainability if an area is to maintain its attraction capital.
Some comparative context, and a question (note – China no satellite accounts)

### New Zealand:
- External tourists: 2.5m p.a.
- International = 2.5m
- Income from external tourism = 30b RMB
- Attractions: 100% PURE

### Shangri-la:
- External tourists: c.1m p.a.
- International = c.100,000
- Income from tourism = <<6b RMB
- Attractions: Natural; Cultural

Based on the above how can areas like Shangri-la:
- increase tourism income (i.e., the economic bottom line), while concurrently
- meeting societal obligations (i.e., the social and/or cultural bottom line) while also
- protecting its natural capital (i.e., the environmental bottom line)?

I now discuss some of the issues faced in addressing this question from (mainly) the environmental perspective.
Environment and tourism issues

• Global concern about climate change & carbon footprint of tourism: can we ‘offset’ tourism impacts? Growing issue for NZ and for long distance international tourism

• Sustainability generally – NZ markets its ‘Clean and Green’ image successfully; has its own credible sustainable tourism certification scheme, i.e., Responsible Tourism Qualmark: [http://www.responsibletourism.co.nz/](http://www.responsibletourism.co.nz/)

• What do places like Shangri-la tell the world about its assets, how it develops and manages them and why high spending tourists should visit?
Some more comparative context

New Zealand:
- Type of tourist – mainly FIT from Europe, NA, Australia (camper vans, rental cars); group travel from Asia
- Access to natural assets – free and open access; rents for commercial operations

Shangri-la
- Type of tourist – mainly group travel, mass tourism (mostly planes and buses)
- Access to natural assets – totally ‘provider’ controlled and fully commercial

Implications: In theory much easier to deliver many aspects of sustainability in Shangri-la than in New Zealand:

Why is this the case?
New Zealand’s tourism is built largely on its natural attractions - anybody can visit this lake and 99% of national parks and reserves – its ‘free’
In New Zealand, caves are very popular tourist attractions – they are also important for their natural and palaeontology features but these are difficult to protect.
And getting close to nature is also what tourists like to do in NZ, but how do we manage tourism so the birds don’t suffer, and the attractions remain?

These are really difficult challenges when the access is essentially free to all, in many circumstances.
So, for NZ the answer is complex!

- **Macro national and regional levels:**
  - Increase proportion of ‘high spend’ tourists and get them to stay longer = possible, with good marketing and reputation
  - Manage internal travel more sustainably, i.e., increase public transport, regionalise visits = difficult - high proportion of FITs
  - Offset carbon emissions = possible, if govt supports it!

- **Micro level:**
  - Identify key *natural attraction assets* and manage so as to protect while still attracting tourists = generally achieving this as most iconic assets are on government land and Department of Conservation manages carefully and strategically
  - Safeguard the *sustaining natural assets*, e.g., water, air = possible but challenging in face of other development pressure, i.e., intensive agriculture
For areas like Shangri-la, and admittedly based on:
- 1.5 days of observation and
- brief interviews with 3 business leaders and government officials ...
Shangri-la: obvious sustainability advantages around the *natural attraction assets*

Everyone pays and is controlled from the front gate – Pu Dacuo NP

Mass transit moves people in managed ways – minimising carbon and other footprints

And, at the end of the day:
- impacts on the underlying natural attraction capital are minimised;
- thus leaving other parts of parks for the conservation of biodiversity, etc.
But, major challenges around the sustaining natural assets

- International tourists, esp from Europe, NA and Australasia, like: reliable and efficient transport systems, free flowing streams, good air quality, safe food, and a litter free environment
  - Can the infrastructure and management to deliver on these needs be provided?
  - Can the carbon footprint be minimised?
  - Can a tourism development plan that links with other priorities, e.g., transport, be constructed in an integrated way?
Shangri-la: other opportunities/needs

- Initial interviews suggest – ‘get the infrastructure right first’
- Then market in a bold and integrated way looking to build more resilience into the industry = increase proportion/diversity of international tourists: reputation is vital
- But market the right things – interviews suggest the distinctive cultures, but my observation suggests also the natural attractions. Combine the two in innovative ways!
- Try and grow international market, esp. around shoulder seasons (why did we see so few tourists on Friday?)
- Develop new opportunities = master plans great start but for the macro level–operationalise within context of sustainable livelihoods ..., and complement other initiatives
So, what should the tourism goals be in 21st century?

• Do we want, in a broad economic sense, to:
  – Grow tourism sustainably and maintain pristine/very diverse attraction (natural, cultural and social) capitals?
    • Appeals most to a diverse high end, high spend, market
    • Requires significant tourism infrastructure development
  – Grow tourism while allowing natural capital to decline but enhancing cultural and social capital?
    • This option might build a narrower low-medium spend tourism market: mainly domestic and south Asia

My assumption is we will pursue the first of these goals ...
How to maintain natural capital assets in the face of tourism growth

• Inventorise, map and prioritise the assets for development (and others for environmental protection)
  – Who? combination of tourism developers, govt, community interests, scientists

• Empower local communities to manage assets, e.g. in NZ many of our largest tourism companies owned/operated by Maori, e.g., ‘Whale Watch’ in Kaikoura, a multi million dollar industry

• And then more specifically in terms of sustainability:
  – Identify indicators of change to assets linked to tourism use
    • Who? scientists, policy makers
  – Measure these indicators to manage the resource
    • Who? scientists, industry, community
  – Manage the results within the context of approaches such as the Pressure – State – Response model (see Hughey et al. 2004)
    • Who? Government, industry, community, scientists
Conclusions and implications

• Sustainable tourism development and maintaining attraction capitals should be ‘natural’ partners.
• In places with multiple nationalities, culture is a logical partner to nature – look for complementary development.
• Collaboration between local communities, tourism developers, government (and researchers) is needed for sustainable tourism development.
• Such cooperation helps protect the environment and helps ensure economic and social development, including of course for ethnic minorities, the key conference theme.
• Finally, integrate and use a combination of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for Tourism and the Quadruple Bottom Line to both plan for and implement development, and to measure performance.
Key references:

