

Hospitality Industry around the Globe

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Abstract: *Sustainable tourism requires educators, tourism practitioners and industry representatives to adopt the principles of sustainability into their daily practice and managerial vision. A plethora of scholars have spent decades discussing the socio-economic issues of tourism and related managerial implications. However, there is little evidence that the integral aspect of sustainability, particularly socio-cultural sustainability, has been systematically addressed, particularly in areas of material and non-material well being, equitable relationships between host communities and tourists and quality of life. Drawing on multi-sited anthropological research, the article examines the dynamics of tourism, society and culture and reports on learning, equity, collaboration and mutual respect in the context of the inns and hotels in Denmark. Examining cultural practice in the context of sustainable tourism using a case study serves to shed some empirical light on its relevance and utility. The paper concludes that cultural practice is not only a useful mechanism for successful competence development but a legitimate and integral part of sustainable tourism.*

Keywords: Challenges, Year, Restaurant, Hospitality

I. INTRODUCTION

Many tourism destinations and operations around the world have adopted the laudable principles of sustainable tourism in their daily practice and managerial vision (Dwyer and Sheldon 2005). This has been supported by an international body of research and scholarship, especially in the areas of environmental and socio-economic sustainability. Still, mass tourism destination management organizations remain reluctant to adopt the principles of sustainable tourism in spite of the apparent growth of interand intra-generational inequity and erosion of cultural practices. Among varying reasons often an ageing infrastructure and renovation expenses are cited as the main inhibitors to sustainable development of tourism (Sheldon et al. 2005). Moreover, cultures worthy of preservation are treated as a mere tourism asset by people in developing countries (Meethan 2001). As correctly observed by Burns (2005), the issues of cultural sustainability in tourism regrettably appear to hinge in a simplistic dichotomy of patronizing elitism concerned with negative impacts upon ossified local cultures and a simplistic ‘market rule’ perspective. Teasing out the meanings of inter- and intergenerational equity, collaboration and feelings of belonging in the context of Danish inns and hotels, this article argues that cultural practice is an integral and dynamic part of sustainable tourism. Denmark is a conventional mass tourism destination characterized, among other things, by a well-developed infrastructure, a wide range of attractions and accommodation facilities. Whereas mass tourism represents a number of challenges and opportunities to sustainable

tourism in general, this paper addresses the much neglected aspect of social and cultural sustainability in the context of historical inns and hotels. It is widely accepted that the tourism and hospitality sectors are dominated by small, family owner-operated businesses (Getz et al. 2004), which calls for a comprehensive understanding of their role in sustainable tourism. The article proposes to analyse how the culture of Danish historical inns is about lived experiences and dynamic processes in which tourism and hospitality is an integral aspect of life and ongoing meaning production. Culture is constantly appropriated as a resource, which is used to generate economic opportunities in tourism and simultaneously reinforce a positive feeling of belonging, identity, professional pride, collaboration and mutual respect. The latter is of particular relevance to the following discussion since tourism is also well known for producing inequitable encounters between visiting tourists, local residents and hosts (Smith 1977, 1989). Whereas economic differences are small in Denmark, even in the 21st century ‘experience economy’ (Pine and Gilmore 1998) there appears to be little status and incentive in being creative and working hard to provide for others. In due course, it will be argued that inter-generational collaboration and democratic equity are critical to sustainable tourism in practice, in accordance with the managerial philosophy, principals (principles) and definitions of sustainable development (World Commission of the Environment and Development 1987). Bearing in mind that practices towards sustainable tourism do not denote a sustainable tourism industry per se, the sector-specific application in the following analysis will not consider the wider ramifications of sustainable development, but rather the specific aspects of social and cultural sustainability in tourism and hospitality.[1]



The article draws on the anthropological method of participant observation, the author's involvement with a competence development project for inns and hotels in Denmark and previous research experience with sustainable tourism development (www.besteducationnetwork.org). First a conceptual background to the meaning of sustainable tourism is introduced, after which an outline of the methodology is provided. The article then examines the dynamics of tourism and culture and reports on learning, equitable collaboration and mutual respect in the context of the inns and hotels in Denmark. Applying the meaning of cultural practice in sustainable tourism to a single case study serves to shed some empirical light on its relevance and utility. The article concludes that cultural practice is not only a useful mechanism for successful competence development but allows for an enhanced view of culture as a dynamic and integral part of sustainable tourism.[1]

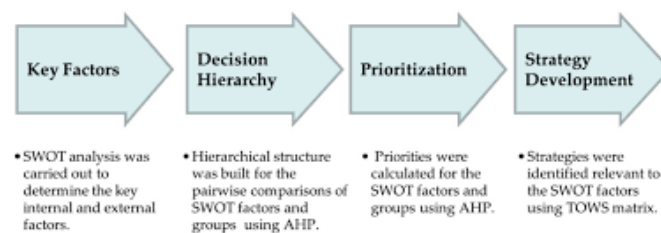
Over the past decade, the extensive literature on sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism development and the ongoing debate over theoretical definitions and practical concerns have

received considerable academic attention and analysis (Bramwell et al. 1996; Butler 1998; Hall 1998; Sharpley 2000; Cohen 2002; Miller and Twinning-Ward 2005; Dwyer and Sheldon 2005). While the meanings of culture and cultural practice in sustainable tourism have received little attention, most scholars agree that the laudable principles should be adopted into the managerial vision of the travel and tourism industry. This is summarized by the United Nation World Tourism Organization (2004): Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Committed to furthering the development and dissemination of knowledge on the principles and practice of sustainable tourism the Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel Education Network (BEST EN) argues that the travel and tourism industry must adopt business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders today while protecting, sustaining, and enhancing human and natural resources (BEST EN 2006). BEST EN acknowledges that a sustainable tourism business has interdependent economic, environmental, social and cultural objectives, and understands that long-term viability depends on integrating all four objectives in decision-making. Rather than regarding socio-cultural and environmental objectives as operating costs, a sustainable tourism enterprise seeks opportunities for profit in achieving these goals to the benefit of the environment, communities and stakeholders through inter-generational collaboration and democratic equity. [1] Nevertheless, involving countless individual businesses of varying size, the fragmentation of tourism enterprises makes it difficult to argue for sustainable and equitable collaboration in a highly competitive environment let alone to speak of tourism as a single industry. Still, the travel and tourism industry shares basic business characteristics as they are predominantly driven by the search for profit, employment of people, management in the operational areas of marketing, personnel, finance, and in many cases, the search for a good lifestyle (Getz et al. 2004). This article will further probe the argument and apply it empirically to the Danish Inns and Hotels as they reflect this industry fragmentation while simultaneously representing a way to overcome it by sustaining cultural practice in everyday business operations. Further elaborated below, the inns and hotels in Denmark are predominantly family-owned and operated and characterized by a high level of interpersonal trust, norms of reciprocity and social responsibility. The underlying motivations of family businesses imply that the inter-generational equity and socio-cultural well-being of the family are put ahead of purely profit- and growth oriented interests (Getz et al. 2004:190).[2] This form of business motivation is clearly subjective and subject to circumstantial change over time. Accordingly, it would be erroneous to conclude that sustainable tourism is a static target, or a balance, to be achieved but must be seen as processes of transformation where acceptable levels of change to the home and working lives of those family businesses involved in hospitality and tourism are of key importance. Moving beyond the principles of sustainable tourism and also recognizing the burdens and everyday responsibilities at the inns and hotels, personal identification

and a place of belonging attribute substantial meaning to the dynamics of culture in sustainable tourism.[2]

II. SUMMARY

One of the best ways to be a responsible tourist in Denmark is to visit with an open mind, ready to explore and perhaps learn something new. Some see the country in just two dimensions – Copenhagen, and the rest – but this does provincial Denmark a huge injustice. It's a subtle, complex nation where you can spend time in cities with landmark architecture or villages with cobbled streets, choosing to relax beside a sparkling harbour or kick up the sand on a wide, wonderful beach.



Denmark is immensely proud of its green credentials – and rightly so. Copenhagen is on track to become the world’s first carbon-neutral capital by 2025 and Denmark aims to be independent from fossil fuel by 2050. This is a nation of bikes and electric buses, surrounded by clean waters. Its cities are dotted with ground-breaking sustainable architecture, gleaming with solar panels and green roofs. High taxation on petrol-fuelled vehicles makes people think twice before buying and using cars. Aarhus is arguably the global hub of the wind energy market. The Danes have even halted the march of the plastic carrier bag, with the lowest use in Europe – just three bags per person per year.[3]

So, is Denmark the perfect example of a forward-thinking, environmentally aware nation? Well, of course, there’s no such thing as perfect. Denmark’s well on the way to achieving something remarkable, but there have been challenges along the way.

Like getting to grips with waste, for example. Denmark used to have a bad record for generating rubbish and, in particular, chucking out food. According to Stop Wasting Food (Stop Spild af Mad) Danish consumers used to throw away around a quarter of the food they bought. In 2008, Stop Wasting Food launched a public awareness campaign. They also persuaded supermarkets to sell more products by weight rather than pre-packaged and to discount out-of-date items instead of binning them. In a particularly nice touch, they set about breaking down the stigma associated with asking for a doggy bag in restaurants, since Denmark’s professional kitchens waste about 140,000 tons of food per year. A Gallup poll has revealed that half of Denmark’s population have now actively reduced how much food they discard.[3]

The Danes have also taken a while to work out the best ways to deal with rubbish and recycling. One policy that works and has stuck is the system of deposits on bottles and cans. Automatic receptacles at supermarkets offer cash for recyclable waste, and modern-day Wombles scrape

together some pocket money by gathering empties from alfresco drinkers who can't be bothered to claim the deposit themselves.

Recycling other materials and reducing general waste has proved more troublesome. Municipality-owned incinerators reduced the amount of rubbish going to landfill to a minimum and have the bonus effect of generating low-cost power and heat for communities, and waste reduction is also now being encouraged.

Danes are generally happy with the principle of incinerators being sited within urban areas, believing them to be cleanly and efficiently run. Operators court further approval by making sure their plants offer additional benefits. Some incinerators double as recycling and education centres and Copenhagen's massive, cutting-edge, low-pollution Amager Bakker plant, due for completion in 2017, will be topped by artificial ski slopes and hiking trails – a boon for this mountain-starved nation.[3]

However, there's a growing realization that relying on incineration at the expense of recycling doesn't make sense in the long term. A government plan released in late 2013 set out new priorities, including increased use of garden and food waste to produce biogas and compost.

III. CONCLUSION

Aiming to contribute to the knowledge base on culture and sustainable tourism, the article reported on culture as a dynamic resource subjected to preservation efforts and identification of new business opportunities by traditional inns and hotels in Denmark. A testimony to the latter, the voluntary association of Danish Inns and Hotels in January 2005 displayed an overall increase in revenues by 8 per cent. According to board members of the association, registered complaints had decreased by 20 per cent for the same period (personal correspondence), and by mid June 2006, the association proudly presented a 29 per cent increase in occupancy rates over the first five months (Politiken 2006). Sustaining cultures in shifting economic realities in tourism and hospitality enterprises are arguably more complex than indicated in the present analysis. Still, preservation of inn culture served as the primary motivation for the National Agency for Enterprise and Construction to support the competence development project. Eminently illustrated by the traditional inns and hotels, culture is practised across time and place. Here, the interconnectedness in research methodology and understanding of culture accentuated how the context and study are not confined by place but created and shaped by actors who are engaged in 'multi-sited spaces' (Marcus 1999). Thus rejecting the notion of homogeneous cultures, whether in mature or emerging tourism destinations, it was argued that cultural uniformity is a reflection of interrelatedness rather than unity (Hannerz 1990). The cultural interrelatedness of the Danish inns and hotels was reflected in notions of identity, equitable collaboration, feelings of belonging and quality of life. It exists between people who, over time and in different contexts, allow for the Danish inn culture to be mediated and generate economic opportunities through everyday encounters between hosts and guests. One of the lessons learned from the competence development project for Danish Inns and Hotels is that processes of collaboration between association members, who are colleagues as well as competitors can be facilitated through meaningful participation and solidarity. Accordingly,

sustainability is about processes of transformation that are acceptable to those in which tourism and hospitality are integral aspects of life and ongoing meaning production. Cognizant of the global trends on individualization, fragmentation and search for identity as well as unique experiences in the 21st century, the principal cultural virtues of stability, trust, empathy and place of belonging are precisely what the Danish Inns and Hotels can provide to service personnel and guests in a global market place. Mindful of the possible gap between the search for authenticity but not necessarily reality, whether this recognition will have a positive impact on retention, just as it is already visible on the financial bottom line of the hotels and inns in Denmark, remains to be seen.[3]

Sustainable tourism is about refocusing and re-adapting. A balance must be found between limits and usage so that continuous changing, monitoring and planning ensure that tourism can be managed. This requires thinking long-term (10, 20+ years) and realising that change is often cumulative, gradual and irreversible. Economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development must include the interests of all stakeholders including indigenous people, local communities, visitors, industry and government.



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