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<Conference Reports>

Report on the B.E.S.T. Education Network Think Tank IV

The annual B.E.S.T. Education Network think tanks bring together educators, researchers, consultants and practitioners from the tourism industry. Sharing their topical knowledge and experience, these are incorporated into the design of various topic curriculum modules on sustainable tourism for use in university curricula worldwide so that future managers will have the skill and knowledge needed to manage tourism in a sustainable manner. This conference report on the fourth B.E.S.T. Education Network Think Tank, entitled Sustainability and Mass

Destinations: Challenges and Possibilities addresses the actualization of sustainable travel and tourism through knowledge creation and dissemination, which also reflect the main missions of the network. The objective to develop curricula content for incorporating sustainability into short teaching modules is outlined. A review of the keynotes, research papers and framing sessions on Facilities Management and Triple Bottom Line reporting are included to illustrate the process and use of the nominal grouping technique.

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Introduction

Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel (B.E.S.T.) has held four think tanks on sustainable tourism since 2000. The primary objective of B.E.S.T. is to develop and disseminate knowledge in the field of sustainable tourism. The actualization of sustainable travel and tourism is possible only if and when managers of tourist destinations and hospitality enterprises both value and know how to implement sustainable development principles and practices. The sustainability of our industry requires future hospitality and tourism managers who understand and value the principles of sustainable development. The B.E.S.T Think Tanks draw together educators, researchers, consultants and practitioners from the tourism industry. Their knowledge and experience are incorporated into the design of various topic curriculum modules on sustainable tourism for use in university curricula worldwide so that future managers will have the skill and knowledge needed to manage tourism in a sustainable manner.

Originally housed within the Conference Board in New York, B.E.S.T. was founded in 2001 through a grant from the Ford Foundation as an incubator for stimulating a variety of activities to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices in the travel and tourism industry. In 2003 B.E.S.T. went through organizational changes and the group overseeing the educational and curriculum tasks became independent and renamed itself the *B.E.S.T. Education Network*. The B.E.S.T. Education Network is chaired by Professor Pauline Sheldon, University of Hawaii, and the executive committee is comprised of professors from undergraduate and graduate tourism departments of universities on three continents.

Previous host destinations were South Africa, Hawaii, Costa Rica, and this year the think tank was held in Denmark at the University of Southern Denmark in Esbjerg. The principal aim of the fourth think tank, entitled *Sustainability and Mass Destinations: Challenges and Possibilities* was to develop curricula content for incorporating sustainability into short teaching modules on Facilities Management and Triple Bottom Line reporting. Teaching modules on planning, marketing and operations developed at previous think tanks using the nominal grouping technique are already published and available for purchase. Modules outlined at this think tank and others on meeting and event management, transportation, and strategic planning can be procured from Dr. Janne J. Liburd. Also the modules will be available soon via the new B.E.S.T. Education Network's web site.

Numerous keynote speakers updated the audience on key developments in mass destinations on sustainable tourism. Participants were also invited to present academic papers. Altogether, twenty one highly informative research papers were presented on the first day of the conference. And an award was presented to the most outstanding paper. Paper themes covered Mass Tourism and Sustainability, Sustainable Financial Management and Accounting (Triple Bottom line), After the Mega Event What Then?, Sustainable Facilities Management, City and Urban Tourism, and Innovative Technologies in Destination Management. The various sections are summarized below.

Keynote addresses

Think Tank IV delegates were welcomed by Dr. Janne Liburd, Chair Think Tank IV; Dr. Flemming Just, Pro-Rector University of Southern Denmark; and Dr. Pauline Sheldon, Chair

B.E.S.T. Education Network Committee. Dr. Fayos-Sola from the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the WTO Themis Foundation first provided the conference with a comprehensive and conceptual presentation on the role of knowledge in destination policy formulation. Dr. Fayos-Sola stressed the need for knowledge creation for a destination to be competitive in today's world. Presenting frameworks for the kind of knowledge that needs to be developed, he underscored the need for quality in tourism education. The *TedQual Certification Program* offered by WTO Themis is a quality assurance program for tourism education and training systems. Dr. Fayos-Sola presented again later in the Think Tank and described the new *WTO TedQual Volunteer program*. The B.E.S.T. Education Network continues the close partnership with the WTO by collaborating on the content of the program entitled *Community Tourism Host*.

Dr. Louis D'Amore, President of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) passionately encouraged the educators in the audience to engage their students in the struggle to achieve peace through tourism. Dr. D'Amore offered substantial examples of social inequities, environmental decline and arms proliferation to further support the exigency of student involvement. He asked the educators to instil in their students an ethos and a philosophy that underpins the role that tourism and hospitality can play in creating a better world. His presentation of the concept of a "Tourism Peace Corps" where students of tourism and hospitality would spend their summers contributing to the welfare of those living in high poverty regions of the world was well received. Dr. D'Amore also described an IIPT student ambassador program where students and a professor from a developed country team-up with students and a professor from undeveloped countries to work on tourism development plans, very much parallel to the volunteer program described by Dr. Fayos-Sola.

Another major keynote address delivered at the end of the Think Tank entitled “Destination Australia: A Research Agenda for a Sustainable Industry” was presented by Professor Leo Jago, Deputy CEO and Director of Research of the *Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre* (STCRC) in Australia. He explained the approach taken in Australia to ensure the quality and relevance of research for sustainable tourism. The research programs of the STCRC focus on the environment, engineering, strategic management, and information technology and gave examples of such projects. Dr. Jago further explained how their research agenda is being steered by industry needs rather than by academia.

Offering a European perspective on quality performance evaluation for tourism destinations that included ways to measure, monitor and benchmark quality, Mr. Ian Slater of the Ramboll Corporation provided another keynote address. The system, called *Qualitest*, was commissioned by the EU to develop and test indicators and promote continuous quality improvement in tourism destinations. A review of similar systems currently in place was first discussed. It was followed by a description of the Qualitest tool.

Mr. Mikal Jensen from the *Blue Flag Campaign* of the Danish Outdoor Council informed the audience on the development of the Blue Flag Campaign, its aims, progress and future plans. Its adoption in Europe and worldwide were traced and the criteria for beaches and marinas to obtain the Blue flag certification were explained. In addition Mr. Jensen described the *Foundation for Environmental Education* (FEE), which is a network of NGO’s currently operating in 36 countries that is focused on sustainable development and environmental education.

CEO of the Danish Tourism Board, Mr. Ulrik Bülow provided insight into trends affecting Denmark's tourism. He discussed the need for tourism destinations and services to respond to consumer demands for socially responsible behaviour and enriching experiences. Mr. Bülow described the Green Key certification program for Danish hotels that requires hotel properties to meet a total of seventy criteria relating to water consumption, cleaning, sorting of waste and energy saving. To date one hundred and twenty Danish hotels have obtained the Green Key certification. Even more popular is the Blue Flag certification for beaches and marinas, as presented by Mr. Jensen. Two hundred ninety-nine Danish beaches and seventy seven marinas have earned the Blue Flag eco-label. The Danish Tourist Board is currently in the process of developing a labelling system to provide tourists with comparable information about attractions and a similar labelling scheme for accessibility. Denmark is the first country to develop a destination eco-label, Destination 21, for tourist destinations. The labelling system was designed based on the 1992 UN Summit on the Environment. To date, no destination has yet qualified for the stringent certification. Other initiatives of the Danish Tourist Board include efforts to reduce printed marketing materials, to educate professionals in tourism and related industries and to inform legislators and the media.

A local case study on Local Agenda 21 from the Wadden Sea island of Fanoe, only a ten minutes ferry ride from the conference venue, demonstrated how the principles of sustainable development were applied to that island. The researchers, Ms. Britt Schak Hansen and Mr. Soren Vinding, discussed the process they used to obtain community input in the definition and future direction for mass tourism in the island of Fanoe. Based on a positive and applied

approach this involved motivating the local citizens, holding seminars, forming working groups and engaging in public debate on the nature of sustainable mass tourism for the island.

In summary, the keynote addresses provided important intellectual and practical framework for understanding how mass tourism destinations can address challenges and potentials of sustainable tourism. In addition, the research papers added to that knowledge base and presented numerous case studies of how destinations are consciously applying the principles of sustainability in daily practice.

Research Papers

Twenty-one paper presentations in five themed areas followed. The first paper session explored issues on mass tourism and sustainability. The presenters discussed a variety of topics including alternatives to the mass-ski model in the Dolomites (Buff & Lucia 2004); the rise and fall of the eco-tax in the Balearic Islands (Cantalops 2004); the dangers of failing to capitalize on the cultural resources of Cyprus (Panayido 2004); a process for involving stakeholders in the sustainable management of Hawaii (Sheldon 2004); and support for sustainable resource use and environmental protection in NGO mission statements (Chen and Holleran 2004)

Presenters who examined mass tourism from the perspective of mega events concluded that the sustainability of the legacy of mega events requires evaluation beyond short-term goals. The need to consider sustainability at the formative, process and outcome stages to achieve lasting benefits was explained (Carlsen 2004). A study of the Sydney Olympics pointed out the lack of

sustainability of the extrinsic infrastructure developments and the failure to take advantage of the opportunity to build human capital through information and knowledge transfer (Reid 2004).

A presentation describing environmental management activities of the Scandic Hotels showcased the significant contributions this hotel chain had made in managing the environmental impact of its operations. By making environmental concern a corporate priority, Scandic's initiatives relative to training, construction and operation materials are successful (Bohdanowicz, Simanic and Martinac 2004). In contrast, environmental initiatives in German hotels were shown to be uncoordinated and disparate (Chen, Legrand, Sloan, & Zhou 2004). A study of Turkish hotels uncovered further evidence of limited environmental initiatives. While 72% of the hotels claimed to use environmentally friendly building materials, 86% of the energy used in these hotels was non-renewable. Only 7% reused treated water and 49% exceeded the average European per person per day water use (Atik 2004).

The lack of successful environmental management programs does not appear to be due to a lack of interest. It was reported that hoteliers in three countries, Sweden, Croatia and Poland, believe that environmental protection is essential for the performance and future development of tourism. They personally feel a concern for the environment and understand the impact hotels have on it. Yet, between 40% and 50% were unable to articulate in-house or corporate environmental management activities (Bohdanowicz, Zanki-Alujevic, & Martinac 2004). A study of tourism activity providers in New Zealand observed similar attitudes toward the environment and limited commitment to environmental programs (Schott, 2004). Ineffective human resource management practices were shown to be a significant deterrent to the

achievement of sustainable tourism due to an absence of long term commitment to employees, poor recruiting tactics, failure to develop staff skills and a general lack of confidence in employees (Presbury 2004). A program designed to improve the education of future managers at the École Hoteliere De Lausanne was described. Its primary objective is to integrate theory and practice by also giving students greater contact with industry executives (Holleran and Chen 2004).

In many mass destinations museums are an important component of the tourism product. Meeting the needs of volunteers in museums is critical to sustaining quality products. The study presented at this conference disclosed that volunteering was a leisure activity that meets personal needs. Sustaining volunteer efforts requires the identification of these needs (Edwards 2004). Another study presented the social costs and benefits of cultural tourism in an Australian Aboriginal community. The speaker emphasized the need to manage tourist/host relationship in order to achieve sustainable tourism (Szynklarz 2004).

Technological advances have the potential to reduce the impacts of tourism in mass tourism destinations. Innovatively using mobile digital tourism services in Danish city and nature walks, tourists who have generated individual online profiles are presented with sustainable products and services. Preliminary research results suggest that the device may ultimately help add to the quality of life in mass tourism destinations (Liburd 2004). The Centre for Hospitality and Tourism Research outlined a plan for developing social and socio-economic indicators for tourism communities. The presentation identified key social impacts along with a framework for

consultation with communities (Jago & Fredline 2004). Visitor and non-visitor research was urged to attain information useful sustainable tourism policy decisions (Sterry & Leighton 2004).

Conference slides and 'live' web cast of the paper presentations are available online from <http://web.sdu.dk/ulla/bestthinktankiv/>.

The *outstanding paper award* was presented to Ms. Paulina Bohdanowicz, Mr. Branko Simani and Dr. Ivo Martinac from the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden, for their paper entitled "Environmental Training and Measures at Scandic Hotels, Sweden". The paper explained the processes, procedures and activities Scandic had successfully implemented to achieve low levels of environmental impact in their hotel operations. The model described in the paper contributes significantly to the literature on sustainable tourism by demonstrating the viability of implementing broad-based environmental management in the hotel sector.

Throughout the rest of the conference there were a number of informative plenary presentations and poster sessions. Associate Professor Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt questioned whether branding can help control the associations that tourists make with a destination and asked whether we can tell tourists which associations to make or whether we should understand the associations that tourists make and hold. Mr. Ole Rud Nielsen presented a study on cultural contrasts and 'reterritorialization' of the modern nuclear family sail boating in the Finnish Archipelago Sea, pointing to the symbiosis of the sailors with the local year-around-inhabitants.

Curriculum Module Development

Day two, three and four of the conference, were devoted to developing sustainable tourism curricula in the areas of Facilities Management and Triple Bottom Line Reporting. As with previous think tanks, framing papers provided background information and stimulated the audience's thinking in preparation for sessions to identify the key learning objectives for each.

The framing paper for the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) was presented by Dr. Larry Dwyer. He explained that TBL is an accounting system that provides information required for achievement of sustainability. The framing paper was supplemented by a research paper by Dr. Jeffery Faux. The audience learned from these two presentations that TBL accounting methodology explicitly considers an organization's environmental and social performance along with its economic performance. Financial outcomes, environmental quality and social equity indicators evaluate company performance, thereby providing information for decision making related to sustainable management. TBL reviews performance from the management, user and social assurance perspectives.

The second framing paper on sustainable facilities management was presented by Ms. Paulina Bohdanowicz. She laid out the parameters of resource consumption related to the tourism and hospitality industries, and gave a summary of the average usage levels of electricity and water, and the average levels of waste generated by hotels in different parts of the world. Methods of mitigating the various impacts at the planning (siting, design, facility operation and transportation), construction (land excavation and grading, demolition of previous structures, vehicle traffic and heavy equipment operation, construction and finishing and furnishing), and

operational (energy and electricity usage, water use, utilization of consumptive products, operation of mechanical systems and human activities) stages were discussed. The topics of eco-purchasing and corporate initiatives to encourage eco-friendly practices were also covered.

A third teaching module - Community Tourism – was based on previous work done in collaboration between World Tourism Organization and BEST. The outline of a curriculum module to train community tourism hosts had been developed the previous year and formed the equivalent of a framing paper for this session, and a framework for the break-out sessions.

The development of the teaching modules took place in three break-out sessions. For each curriculum, attendees began by identifying what students should be able to do after a 6-8 hour lesson. Consensus on the objectives was reached by applying the nominal group technique (NGT). The technique is particularly useful for achieving equal participation and creative thought. Readers are referred to Jurowski and Liburd (2001) for a detailed discussion of how the nominal group technique is used in the think tank sessions. The end product of the NGT process was a list of objectives on which to base the content. The content of each module was developed through group discussion. One or more participants in each process volunteered to write the lecture notes, prepare a power point presentation and develop a list of resources related to the curriculum.

Sustainable Facilities Management Module

The module content emphasizes the identification of stakeholders and team members in the planning and design process as well as knowledge of resources. The importance of understanding

and responding to local natural and cultural environments as well as local labour issues are important components. The development of concepts such as bioclimatic design, environmental impact statements, and eco-certification programs were incorporated in the content.

Some of the learning objectives for the Sustainable Facilities Management module were identified as follows:

1. Identify the difference between sustainable buildings and non sustainable buildings.
2. Identify and involve the stakeholders and necessary actors in the eco-planning process
3. Analyze the current local conditions in terms of resources
4. Analyze the current local conditions in terms of the natural environment
5. Describe the rules of thumb of eco-design
6. Analyze the current local conditions in terms of labour issues
7. Analyze the current local conditions in terms of the local culture
8. Explain the value of process monitoring and environmental auditing

Triple Bottom Line Module

This module introduces tourism students to the relatively new concept of triple bottom line accounting that incorporates environmental and socio-cultural accounting in addition to financial accounting practices.

Some of the learning objectives for the Triple Bottom Line module were identified as follows:

1. Understand the nature of the TBL approach and its key components
2. Identify the potential benefits of the TBL approach to tourism organizations
3. Identify the conditions necessary for integrating TBL into organization activities
4. Understand the challenges to tourism organizations in establishing TBL
5. Understand the challenges to tourism organizations in establishing TBL.

Community Tourism Modules

The outcome of the Community Tourism module development sessions was two-fold. First, the group discussed, analyzed and gave significant input to the previous work that had been done on the community tourism host curriculum. This input is being consolidated to create a 120 hour *WTO General Tourism Aptitude Test (GTAT)* course. In addition the group created a new module on *Community Tourism Leadership*. This module seeks to develop a community tourism leader with the capacity to be an energizing and motivating force to facilitate the development of a community tourism vision and the means to realize that vision. This was developed using the same nominal grouping technique as other modules and will be produced as a B.E.S.T. Education Network module.

Some of the learning objectives of this latter module were identified as follows (each had multiple sub-objectives also):

1. Demonstrate the ability to communicate appropriately with stakeholders
2. Understand the role of the community leader
3. Manage a sustainable community tourism program

4. Demonstrate knowledge of tourism

Case studies were recommended for each module and proposed student activities were also suggested.

Visioning Session

The think tank ended with a visioning session to set goals and direction for the next two year's activities for the B.E.S.T. Education Network. It was decided that knowledge creation and dissemination in sustainable tourism were still the main missions of the network. While the module development remained a critically important way for the network to disseminate knowledge, it was suggested that future think tanks might include a Critical Issues Think Tank to address cutting edge research issues in sustainable tourism. The addition of a virtual think tank to the new website was also discussed. The need to identify funding and grant opportunities to support the growth of the network was named as a key activity for the future along with developing further alliances and partnerships with organizations of similar missions.

Social activities

During the think tank delegates were allowed 'time out' to experience the local area. Delegates had the choice of one of two excursions: a visit to Ribe Denmark's oldest town and home to 'Ribe Viking Centre' or a tour of the Wadden Sea island of Fanoe. The Ribe Viking Centre reconstructs and animates the way of life which was the foundation of the Viking era as authentically as possible. The buildings in the village, the clothes worn by staff (including their shoes), were recreated authentically as possible and made from traditional materials by

traditional methods. In the village we saw blacksmiths, Icelandic ponies, sheep and geese, a falconer show, and traditional crafts such as silver smithing, glass beading, and bow and arrow making. The delegates who went to Fanoe enjoyed a long stroll around the island and learnt about its history as an agricultural, fishing and hunting area, how it was home to Denmark's second biggest merchant marine fleet, and its new role as a mass tourist destination attracting 1.2 million bed nights a year. Both tours were entertaining and assisted delegates in gaining a greater appreciation and understanding of Denmark's history, tourism product, and its contemporary way of life.

It must be noted here that a key success factor of the B.E.S.T. Education Network Think Tanks is their ability to provide excellent opportunities for people to network and to get to know each other and workshops that enable both academics and practitioners to interact in a stimulating and thought-provoking environment. More information about the work of this organization and the 2006 Think Tank V in Jamaica June 16-20, 2005 can be found on its current web site:

http://www.sustainabletravel.org/programs_edu.htm.

To immediately procure one or more of the published teaching modules in CD format, contact Dr. Janne J. Liburd, University of Southern Denmark, Email: liburd@sitkom.sdu.dk. Conference proceedings are also available in CD format through Dr. Liburd.

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