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THE ROLE OF RESORT PLANNING IN SUSTAINING TOURIST DESTINATION IMAGE

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Key words: tourism, planning, destination, resort, image.

CONCLUSIONS

The environmental quality is recognized to be an important factor while making decisions upon the destination to visit. The image of the resort will likely to be more realistic but also complex after the tourists' visit. The complex image of the resort, where the tourist has about after visiting it, is crucial for creating loyalty and also word of mouth advertising. Therefore, if the tourists visiting the resort are to complain then the intermediaries will likely to reduce the tourism activities through that resort or the tourism activities will turn into a more hotel facility based activity. Resort planning is a continuous process and defines the systemized and controlled development of the resort. Resort planning can be implemented in an actual resort or a new developing resort. The increasing importance of sustainability in the tourism industry emerged the need for resort planning. It's important to emphasize that planning needs to be upgraded through the environmental and market changes. As it is a continuous process the factors included in must be strict in the short run and flexible in the long run due to the changes. Resorts, generally subject to seasonal tourism activities, should have a positive image through many aspects in order to attract tourists and try to sustain it by the time. Resort planning is essential in order to shape the future and the image of the resort destination. In addition the satisfaction of the tourist will be retained if the tourist believes that they are getting high value from the destination considering their travel expenses. It is the destination image that will determine the future of the destination. Because the resort experience is intangible the competition among the resort destinations is determined by the image of each resort.

ABSTRACT

Destination image is said to be the most important factor in choosing a destination to visit for leisure. As the decision-making process of tourists is highly sensitive, development through sustainability is crucial in creating loyalty for leisure tourists in resort destinations. As it is a dynamic sector and subject to changes very rapidly, the destination image should be sustained throughout some

tourism development policies. Consequently creating a positive destination image is the first attempt and then sustaining it is a very key element of the resort destination. Resort planning here should be the focal point of preserving and/or developing the physical component of destination image. In this paper the importance of resort planning process and its effects on the image of the resort destination will be studied.

INTRODUCTION

The physical component of a destination which includes related attractions, tourism establishments, and the green environment should be planned in a sustainable manner as it affects its image and consequently the future of the destination. Here, in the context of resort planning the land-use planning of the hotels, the timeshares, the second houses, the shopping malls, the roads and the streets are taken into consideration. Because that the resort destination marketers try to create, change or highlight image, it has got to be very closely related to actuality. Therefore neither the intermediaries nor the tourists will be disappointed and dissatisfied according to the quality of the destination itself. It is also thought that the resort destinations with a strong positive image will likely be included in the decision making process of tourists. Hence, it can be said that image is a key element of destination marketers which tourists are very dependent on while choosing a resort to travel. In that sense both destination managers and marketers should take the matter serious and plan the resort in a sustainable basis in the first place where environmental quality is fundamentally important in sustaining the image.

RESORT DESTINATION PLANNING

In theory, future generations are entitled to just compensate for the current actions that lead to a depletion of natural resources. In practice, doing so requires making difficult judgments about the substitutability of natural capital with physical capital. This is a crucial point in the case of tourism, whose activity relies extensively on the transformation of natural capital into accommodation and service facilities. Thus, this industry faces the particularly difficult challenge

to „develop tourism capacity and the quality of its products without adversely affecting the physical and human environment that sustains and nurtures them” (Piga, 2003). If tourism is to reach toward better economic impact, it must be planned as well toward goals of enhanced visitor satisfaction, community integration, and above all, greater resource protection (Gunn – Var, 2002). Here, sustainable development stresses that economic development is dependent upon the continued well-being of the physical and social environment on which it is based (Hall, 2000). Therefore, resort planning through sustainability must be regarded as a critical factor in ensuring the long term sustainable development of the resort destinations. One of the most important challenges arising from the goal of sustainable tourism development is destination planning (Dredge, 1999). Planning is a process must therefore be distinguished from a „plan”, which is „a set of decisions for action in the future” (Hall, 2000). Planning can also be defined as the process of establishing a strategic vision for an area which reflects a community’s goals and aspirations and implementing this through the identification of preferred patterns of land use and appropriate styles of development (Dredge, 1999). Land-use planning, a part of the resort planning, is involved in a number of specialized areas, including transportation planning and housing. Typically, resort area planning and design have been based on one of two concepts. The first produces what can be called the „image-oriented” resort, much like a theme park in its use of images to create ambiance. The second produces what could be termed the „place-oriented” resort in which local character particularly that of the natural environment, is emphasized in planning and design (Pregill – Volk-

man, 1999). A detailed survey of accommodation requirements and tools is, therefore, essential in the initial stage of resort planning as well as in determining design features of individual premises (Baud-Bovy – Lawson, 2002). In many resort areas a high proportion of visitors own second homes, condominium or time-shared properties (Lawson, 2004) as well as many attractions are located within the resort area. Therefore, all development should be thought out ahead of time, and attractions and facilities that are built should be there for some reason. (Mill, 2001). The concept of tourism sustainability points to the need for better spatial, environmental, and economic balance of tourism development, requiring new integrative public-private approaches and policies in the future. When the principle of sustainability is applied to new tourism development, it would mean that coastal hotels would not pollute their beaches with raw sewage, that hillside resorts would not incite soil erosion, and that sites of fragile and rare vegetation or wild life would not be used for tourism except scenery and interpretation (Gunn – Var, 2002). Environmental quality refers to the quality of the natural features of the destination that can be deteriorated by human activities (Mihalic, 1999). Environmental quality is often a key success factor for tourism. At the same time, tourism makes extensive use of natural resources, thereby jeopardizing its long term viability (Piga, 2003).

RESORT PLANNING AND DESTINATION IMAGE

Destination image plays two important roles in behaviour. Some researchers have suggested that it allows an individual to pretaste the venue, thus influencing the decisionmaking process. Others have argued that it can also condition af-

ter-decisionmaking behaviour, consisting of participation (onsite experience), evaluation (satisfaction), and future behavioral intentions (intention to revisit and willingness to recommend) (Lee – Lee – Lee, 2005). As the destination physically a part of the destination experience which tourism is dependent then it is vital to make a resort planning and implement it through in order to gain and sustain a positive resort image on the tourists' minds. It appears that the image of any destination is (1) dynamic because it is subject to change, (2) often relativistic because generally a process of comparison is involved, is (3) multiple in nature, because it involves many different attributes and their evaluation, and consequently (4) generalizations about place do little to help in the promotion of any given resort (Ryan, 2003). Tourists having a weak or even neutral image on their minds will probably not consider the resort destination worth to visit. Faced with a great variety of competing destinations, the tourist must eliminate some options owing to time and money constraints. Among the narrowed set, however, the tourist is likely to choose the destination with the most favorable image (Leisen, 2001). As image is a subjective knowledge, the implications and impact of promoted image can affect tourists through the creation of expectations and the desire for image verification (MacKay – Fesenmaier, 1997). Thus a destination image can be defined as the expression of all knowledge, impressions, prejudices and emotional thoughts an individual or group has of a particular object or place (Baloglu – McCleary, 1999). The image of a destination consists, therefore, of the subjective interpretation of reality made by the tourist (Bigne – Sanchez – Sanchez, 2001). The more positive image of a resort, the greater the likelihood that

resort will attract more travelers than the other competing resorts. The image concept is formed by the consumers' reasoned and emotional interpretation as the consequence of two closely interrelated components: perceptive/cognitive evaluations referring to the individual's own knowledge and beliefs about the object (an evaluation of the perceived attributes of the object), and affective appraisals relating to an individual's feelings towards the object (*Beerli – Martin, 2004*). All factors influencing the image assessments made by individuals are incorporated and classified into nine dimensions which are natural resources, general infrastructure, tourist superstructure, tourist leisure and recreation, culture, history and art, political and economic factors, natural environment, social environment and the atmosphere of the place (*Beerli – Martin, 2004*). Because that image is to influence the decisionmaking of the tourist, it is important to understand what influences image. A destination's attributes can be classified into two major categories. The primary category includes innate characteristics such as climate, ecology, natural resources, cuisine, culture, and historical architecture. The secondary characteristics are built or introduced by the public or private sectors, such as hotels, resorts, catering outlets, transportation, and entertainment (*Kim – Agrusa, 2005*). Since one's own experience, or that of friends, acquaintances or family, is very important in forming an image, all efforts aimed at improving that experience will result in an improved image (*Bigne – Sanchez; Sanchez, 2001*). In addition it may be found that tourists rate an area as being very attractive, but still do not visit it because it is attractive on the basis criteria that are unimportant to them (*Mill,*

2001). One popular typology for understanding travel motivation is the “push and pull” model. The underlying idea of the push and pull model is the decomposition of an individual's choice of a travel destination into two forces. The first force is the push factor that pushes an individual away from home and attempts to develop a general desire to go somewhere else, without specifying where that may be. The second force is the pull factor that pulls an individual toward a destination due to a region specific lure, or perceived attractiveness of a destination (*Lam – Hsu, 2005*). Hence, unless the pull factor is strong due to the unplanned development then the resort destination will certainly lose its appeal to attract potential tourists. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourists are already beginning to avoid destinations with a bad environmental record, and the industry is, of course, faced with enormous economic losses when a major vacation destination declines in popularity (*Huffadine, 1999*). Hence, local resources become a central asset for destinations and tourism suppliers and their sustainability a core function of tourism marketing (*Buhalis, 1999*). Sustainable tourism destination is a complex term that has emerged from the need to develop tourism destinations in a sustainable manner, and therefore the need to recognize the efforts to develop destinations accordingly (*Lee, 2001*). Gradually there is functional shift away from tourism, and the resort may become a slum or else lose its tourism function completely. However, decline may be offset if encounter-measures are adopted, such as the re-orientation of tourism attractions, environmental enhancement, or the repositioning of the destination within an overall market (*Agarwal, 2002*).

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