



Measuring the sustainability performance of the tourism sector



Simona Franzoni

Department of Economics and Management, Brescia University, Brescia 25122, Italy

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 February 2015

Received in revised form 27 May 2015

Accepted 28 May 2015

Keywords:

Sustainability performance
Social, competitive and economic indicators
Sustainable local community
Sustainable tourist destinations
Sustainable organisations

ABSTRACT

To measure tourism sustainability requires a knowledge of the complexity of tourism systems and the specifics of any given location. However most research, although focusing on social, economic or environmental indicators but have not considered how they integrate and relate to each other. This paper proposes a framework for the identification of variables based on three levels (the community, the tourist destination and the individual organisations) and different dimensions (social, competitive and economic) that are better oriented to the behaviour of key actors and the achievement of stakeholder consensus.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Tourism is a major economic activity with a broadly positive impact on economic growth and employment COM(2010)352. However, the concentration of tourists in a set geographical area may result in the risk of damage and in the irregular consumption of natural resources (Aall, 2011; Buckley & Araujo, 1997; Hall & Lew, 1998; Hiding, 1996; Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Murphy, 1985; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011). It is necessary to move towards a progressive balance that must simultaneously satisfy the needs for economic growth and the consumption of the area's natural resources, for the benefit of quality of life and sustainable development (Cater, 1993; Clarke, 1997; Coccossis & Nijkamp, 1995; Hall & McArthur, 1998; Mc Kercher, 1994; Place, 1995; Richard & Hall, 2000).

Since the end of the 80s, leading scientific literature (Buckley, 2012; Butler, 1999; Hardy, Pearson, & Beeton, 2002; Hunter, 1997; Hunter & Green, 1995; Liu, 2003) has dedicated attention to sustainable tourism research and many national and international institutions have participated in this theme (the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development; the World Tourism Organisation; the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy; the OECD Tourism; etc.).

The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defines the concept of sustainable development and the World Tourism Organisations, 2004, states: "the principles of sustainability refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural development of tourism. To ensure sustainability in the long term you will have to strike a balance between these three dimensions". Finally, according to the European Communication COM(2010)352 (European Union, 2010)

sustainability is a condition for the competitiveness of a destination (Crouch, 2007; Middleton & Hawkins, 1998; Mihalic, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000) that can be defined as "the ability of a destination to create and integrate value-added products that help to maintain the position and market share and/or improve it in the long run" (D'Hartesse, 2000).

It follows that concerns about safeguarding sustainable development means bringing together, in a long term vision, the balance of three dimensions: social, competitive and economic. More specifically:

- social: defined through the assessment of the level of satisfaction, trust and cohesion of the stakeholders. That means: to make optimal use of environmental resources and help to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity; to respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities; to preserve organisational wellbeing and to protect workers from health and safety; etc.
- competitive: referring to maintain a high level of satisfaction of the needs of the tourist, and assuring a meaningful and conscious experience considering the sustainable aspect. According to OECD "tourism competitiveness for a destination is about the ability of the place to optimise its attractiveness for residents and nonresidents, to deliver quality, innovative, and attractive (e.g. providing good value for money) tourism services to consumers and to gain market places, while ensuring that the available resources supporting tourism are used efficiently and in a sustainable way" (OECD, 2013);
- economic: linked the economic benefits to all stakeholders, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities to host communities and the profitability of tourism firms.

Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, organisations involved in the tourist destinations of the local community need to realise

E-mail address: simona.franzoni@unibs.it.

social, competitive and economic goals simultaneously. This requires introducing a system for measuring the sustainability performance, based on the levels of complexity of autonomous organisations and the networks they belong to.

The need to approach and investigate sustainability performance of the tourism sector on many levels and dimensions has become necessary. Most research has focused on the monitoring of social and economic indicators or indicators for sustainable tourism at destination or community levels but without considering their integration and correlation.

In this article, the author suggests a framework allowing attaining a “performance measurement model” of the tourism system in order to support the identification and selection of indicators based on three levels (the community, the tourist destination and the autonomous organisations) and different dimensions (social, competitive and economic) for ensuring and safeguarding sustainable development.

2. The framework

Measuring social, competitive and economic performance is fundamental to motivate the organisations involved (tourism firms, travel agencies, tour operators, local public authorities, tourism cooperatives, cultural associations, etc.) to increase their attention to achieve a common goal: sustainability performance in a local community and its tourist destinations (Bramwell, Henry, Jackson, & Van der Straaten, 1996; Dodds, 2007; Getz & Timur, 2005; Hall, 2007; Hardy & Beeton, 2001; Ryan, 2002; Sheehan, Ritchie, & Hudson, 2007).

The measuring and evaluation of the performance of the tourist destination as a network or “as a group of actors brought together through relationships with specific rules, where the action of each individual influences others, meaning that common objectives must be defined and obtained in a coordinated way” (Laws, 1995) are recent themes. A large part of the literature on networks is focused on the nature and the diffusion of networks (Agranoff, 2003; Kickert & Klijn, 1997; Klijn, Bram, & Edelenbos, 2010; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2004; Provan & Kenis, 2007, 2009) rather than their results (Bardach, 1998; Franzoni, 2013; Isett, Mergel, LeRoux, Mischen, & Rethemeyer, 2011). A significant contribution is provided by an article from Provan and Milward (2001), which argues the need to approach and investigate network performance on many levels.

Provan and Milward concentrate the theme of the evaluation of networks in three analytical dimensions. Firstly, the community (the area which is served by the network), secondly, the network and thirdly, the individual organisations that take part in it. More precisely, in the current article, the three dimensions are represented by: the community (expression in a territorial area where the tourist destinations are identified, according to Dredge, 1999, “the attractiveness of the territory”); the tourist destination (the network of actors involved); the autonomous organisation (hotel, restaurant, transport firm, local public authority, cultural association, etc.).

Therefore, the indicators are represented considering the three levels proposed by Provan and Milward: community, tourist destination and autonomous organisation.

Moreover, in order to measure and evaluate tourism performance, a set of indicators, aggregated into social economic, competitive dimensions, can be formulated, based on a thorough review of the relevant literature (Blackstock, McCrum, Scott, & White, 2006; Bloyer, Gustke, & Leung, 2004; Bossell, 1999; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Kuik & Verbruggen, 1991; Liverman, Hanson, Brown, & Meredith, 1988; Manning, 1999; Marsh, 1993; Miller, 2001; Payne, 1993; Veleva & Ellenbecker, 2001; Vera & Ivars, 2003; White, McCrum, Blackstock, & Scott, 2006) and the several initiatives that provide methodological support for the identification of sustainable development indicators. These include: UNCED, 1992; WTTC, WTO, EC, 1995; UN Department for Economic & Social Affairs Commission on Sustainable

Development, 1996; Global Reporting Initiative, 2002a, 2002b; UNWTO, 2004; OECD, 2013; European Union, 2013).

However, many studies, although focusing on social, economic or environmental indicators at destination or community level, but have not considered how they integrate and relate to each other. The present study fills this gap.

3. The system of indicators for measuring the sustainability performance

The framework proposed is to support the identification and selection of indicators based on three levels (the community, the tourist destination and the autonomous organisations) and different dimensions (social, competitive, economic). The social, economic and competitive indicators obtained from autonomous organisations can effectively contribute to decisions at destination and community levels. Moreover, the social performance is a condition to achieve competitive performance, which, in turn, is a condition to get economic performance in the long term (Table 1).

The number of indicators to measure sustainability performance depends on: the complexity of the three levels and dimensions; the number of critical issues; the interests of the actors involved; the information available to define the indicators.

At this stage, representative and not exhaustive indicators has been formulated below.

3.1. Sustainability performance of local community

The definition of a set of indicators is relevant to the evaluation of the social, competitive and economic performance of a local community. A community needs to measure and evaluate the return on its own investment in tourism: quantity and quality of jobs created, taxes earned; asset value (land and infrastructure prices); benefit from improved infrastructure (roads, water, energy) and social services (health, schools, etc.) that tourism can bring. Sustainable development for community should aim to increase the residents' quality of life by protecting the environment, optimising local economic results and providing high quality experience/service for tourists (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Hall & Lew, 1998; McIntyre, 1993; Stabler, 1997). In this regard, the objectives of sustainability and the important features in this respect lead to singling out the following indicators.

3.1.1. Social indicators of local community

- ✓ Satisfaction level by local residents
- ✓ No. of complaints by local residents
- ✓ % of residents who believe that tourism has helped bring economic development
- ✓ % who are proud of their community and culture
- ✓ % who believe that tourism has helped bring new services or infrastructure
- ✓ No. (%) participating in community traditional crafts, skills, customs
- ✓ % of local community who agree that their local culture, its integrity and authenticity are being retained
- ✓ No. of residents who have left the community in the previous year
- ✓ No. of tourists/no. of residents
- ✓ No. of initiatives aimed at the rediscovery of traditions
- ✓ No. of hotels with rooms accessible to persons with disabilities
- ✓ % of energy consumption from renewable resources
- ✓ energy consumption per capita (in terms of minimum and maximum number of tourists)
- ✓ Water consumption per capita (total volume consumed and litres per tourist per day)
- ✓ level of availability of water (in terms of minimum and maximum number of tourists)

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1013615>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1013615>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)