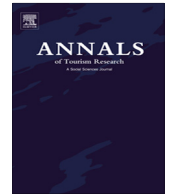




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Service-oriented, sustainable, local food value chain – A case study

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ABSTRACT

Many developing countries depend on tourism as their main engine for economic development, but sustainability is often a concern. In the absence of inter-sectorial linkages between tourism and other industrial sectors, opportunities for trickledown benefits to host communities are stymied. For decades, researchers have been contending with issues related to strengthening agriculture and tourism linkages as a strategy to maximize economic linkages. This service-oriented approach to the local food supply chain is posited as a new model in which agriculture and hotel linkages can be advanced. We collected data about local food hotel supply through interviews with key stakeholders. The findings from our exemplary case study confirm that strengthening inter-sectorial linkages have benefits for stakeholders. This case study suggests that there are opportunities for tourism policies that foster local food linkages with high-end accommodation properties as a strategy to spread the economic spin off from tourism and also to encourage youth involvement in sustainable tourism development.

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Introduction

Tourism is one of the largest service sectors in the world and is seen as an important catalyst for development, especially in developing countries (Roe & Urquhart, 2001) as benefits derived include foreign exchange, tax revenue generation, employment creation and contribution to Gross Domestic Product or GDP (Hummel & van der Duim, 2012; Pratt, 2011). Amidst intense critiques of tourism development approaches, alternative paradigms have emerged in recent years. These embrace sustainable development themes such as equity, local participation, partnership, value chain, poverty reduction, inter-sectorial linkages, empowerment, and private sector participation (Hummel & van der Duim, 2012; Scheyvens, 2007). Whereas there is no shortage of theoretical underpinnings for sustainable tourism development, its realization in practice is sparse. According to Hall and Page (2009), research on poverty reduction – poverty being one of the scourges of tourism-dependent countries – ought to be regarded as the impetus for future discourse in international tourism management.

Greater local sourcing and the use of local agricultural supplies have been identified as a critical best practice for responsible tourism (Pillay & Rogerson, 2013, p. 53). While the importance of strengthening these linkages is generally acknowledged, in practice it is often viewed as almost insurmountable due to a myriad of challenges related to demand, supply, marketing and government policies (Pillay & Rogerson, 2013). Although the pivotal role of the private sector in poverty

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reduction through tourism is generally acknowledged (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012), little attention and few targeted interventions have been made (Hummel & van der Duim, 2012; Meyer, 2009).

Some of the poorest countries in the world possess a wealth of cultural and natural assets that can be judiciously exploited through tourism (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). In particular, there is an opportunity to harness the rarity of local and natural assets to serve the high-end tourist market which currently is more likely to use more imported foods rather than local produce and goods (Rogerson, 2012). Harnessing the benefits from local and natural assets can significantly contribute to poverty reduction through employment generation, particularly of women and youth who are some of the most marginalized people (Bennett, Ashley, Roe, & Britain, 1999). Any efforts to enhance the value chain and inter-sectorial linkages can therefore contribute to poverty reduction (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012).

This research paper presents a component of a multiple case study project in which the new conceptual framework of Thomas-Francois, Von Massow, and Joppe (2016) was applied to investigate the strength of the local food supply chain in the Caribbean. The framework represents a shift from traditional supply-chain management to a service-oriented paradigm (Thomas-Francois et al., 2016). To test and validate this conceptual model, the focus was on three facets of the local food supply chain: value co-creation and co-production, business relationships, and intangible resources. The Caribbean region was selected for this research since it is known as the most dependent tourism region in the world with high economic leakages (Clayton & Karagiannis, 2008; Roe & Urquhart, 2001).

This explanatory case study is based on the theoretical underpinnings of service-dominant (S-D) logic. This framework advances the co-creation of value by customers, emphasizes relationships, and promotes optimal use of intangible resources (Lambert & Garcia-Dastigüe, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Although prevalent in the marketing and service management literature, there has been limited research on its impact on supply chains. Overall, business-to-business service research is underrepresented in the literature (Ostrom et al., 2010) since most of the S-D logic theoretical development has focused on improving business-to-consumer relationships (Lusch & Vargo, 2011). The present exemplary case study of a luxury resort's local food supply chain illustrates its potential, importance, and benefits to sustainable (tourism) development.

A service orientation of local food supply chains can potentially contribute to tackling many of the constraints in agriculture and tourism-backward food linkages that have been identified over the decades by theorists and researchers such as Lundgren (1973), Britton (1982), Belisle (1983), Belisle (1984), Telfer and Wall (1996), (2000), Torres (2003), Torres and Momsen (2004, 2011), Meyer, Ashley, and Poultney (2004), Meyer (2007), Rylance, Spenceley, Mitchell, and Leturque (2009), Lacher and Nepal (2010), Mitchell and Ashley (2010), Rogerson (2011), Pillay and Rogerson (2013), and Rogerson (2014).

Supply chain management and the value chain

Supply chains have existed since the rise of economies (Baltacioglu, Ada, Kaplan, Yurt And, & Cem Kaplan, 2007), but the concept has only fairly recently appeared in the literature. According to Flott (2001), it was the failure of the International Organization for Standardization to ensure that its ISO 9000 standards provided sufficient guidance and tools for organizations (who want to ensure that their products and services consistently meet customer's requirements and that quality is consistently improved) that led to the concept of supply chain and the emphasis on cooperative partnership efforts between buyers and suppliers (with established ground rules and better understanding of suppliers' capacity and buyers' needs).

Supply chain management is a very important aspect in managing organizations. It has been defined as the management of information, processes, goods, and funds from the earliest supplier to the ultimate customer and including disposal of products (Ellram, Tate, & Billington, 2004, p. 17). The Global Supply Chain Forum produced a modified definition which stated that it is the integration of the key business processes from end user through original suppliers of products, services, and information that add value for customers and other stakeholders (Lambert, Cooper, & Pagh, 1998, p. 1). This definition goes beyond others to suggest value creation for customers and benefits to stakeholders, notions usually associated with the value chain concept (Baltacioglu et al., 2007). This evolution in the discussion on supply chains and their management is supported by Lau, Zhao, and Nakandala (2015) and Flott (2001) who emphasize the importance to businesses of moving beyond price (only) and shifting from coercion to collaboration. Rather than viewing products as commodities, the focus should be on true value exchanges; time savings, quality, improved market share, and reliability of suppliers.

Relatively new to the supply chain literature is the concept of sustainable management, i.e., optimizing resources to focus on stewardship in processes throughout the chain (Linton, Klassen, & Jayaraman, 2007). Hence, sustainable supply chains introduce environmental and social issues (Linton et al., 2007), often considered in 21st century business practice as paying respect to the triple bottom line (Elkington, 1998). Sustainable supply chain management is defined as "the management of material and information flows as well as cooperation among companies along the supply chain while taking goals from all three dimensions of sustainable development, i.e. economic, environmental and social, and stakeholder requirements into account" (Seuring, Sarkis, Müller, & Rao, 2008, p. 1545). This heightened focus on sustainability has either a lower cost in the chain or provides positive or neutral value to businesses involved.

Arguably, trust plays a vital role in strengthening the relationships in tourism supply chains. As posited by Nunkoo and Gursoy (2016) and Nunkoo, Ramkissoon, and Gursoy (2012), lack of trust among relating stakeholders in tourism can significantly hinder sustainable development in a destination.

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