

Supply Chain View of Tourism: A Special Reference to Education Tourism

Biranchi Prasad Panda, University of Petroleum and Energy Studies, India

ABSTRACT

Tourism being observed as a supply chain, this article describes its practices under a conceptual research framework with a special reference to education tourism. The author projects the education tourism as a continuum where both service supply chains of education and tourism are integrated. The research implication is directed towards the cross-sectoral objectives of communities involving the tourists, students, and destination communities. The original thoughts and value propositions in this research are portrayed as a supply chain framework. Unlike goods supply chain management, the service supply chain of education tourism grows complex due to the coexistence of the overlapping service objectives for education and tourism. Education tourism deals with students and tourists frequently interchanging their roles, leveraging the services of the vendors and outsourced partners. The increasing complexity of education tourism demands smart technology applications to manage it as an integrated total supply chain.

KEYWORDS

Chain, Continuum, Education, Framework, Integration, Service, Supply, Tourism

INTRODUCTION

A traditional supply chain of goods links suppliers through procurement, fulfillment and distribution, until the end-users or customers. A supply chain framework is not easily visible and understood in a domain like education or tourism. McIntosh et al. (1995) approached with a system view to define tourism as the sum of phenomenon and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, service providers, host governments, and host communities in the process of making the tourism products more attractive. This definition includes the potential impacts that tourists may have upon the host community including visitors such as students. The growing degree of intangibility and complexity in the tourism supply chain is attributed by the shared objectives among the interplays and services of multiple industries. Table-1 shows the graphical and descriptive illustration of the traditional supply chain for goods and services in tourism and education industry. The supply chain management framework of education system when viewed in combination with tourism should demonstrate a safe and smooth movements of educational travelers/tourists and their goods/materials in the forward direction (see Table 1, (A)) with money and information flowing reverse or backward as per the plan and schedule. In the traditional supply chain of any business, flow of goods is aligned to the market-pull with some amount of reverse flow. Usually the links of a supply chain framework become active when the host company operates its internal supply chain without substantial outsourcing. Such frameworks connect to their suppliers and customers at both ends viewing all other parties as either internal suppliers or internal customers. With the increasing competitors and needs, organizations started

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Table 1. Traditional supply chain framework for goods and services

	Graphical Framework	Description
(A) Supply Chain for Goods	<pre> graph LR S[Suppliers] <--> P[Procurement] P <--> PR[Processing] PR <--> D[Distribution] D <--> C[Customers] subgraph Feedback C -- "Flow of Information & Money" --> S end </pre>	<p>Raw materials and component parts are procured as per plan from supplier(s), stored, assembled, packed for the fulfillment of order(s) received from customers/ market through the channels of distribution at different locations. Appropriately, the stakeholders use the information and do the payments.</p>
(B) Tourism Supply Chain for Services	<pre> graph LR T1[Tourists
(Individuals/Groups)] <--> TA[Travel Agents/ Tour Operators
...] TA <--> TSP[Transport, Food,
Accommodation
Service Providers] TSP <--> D[Destinations] D <--> T2[Tourists
(Individuals/Groups)] subgraph Feedback T2 -- "Flow of Information & Money" --> T1 end </pre>	<p>Tourists (Individuals/ groups) plan themselves for a new experience along with travel/tour agents to execute the operation or facilitation of accommodation, food, transport and other services from single or multiple providers to reach out to various destinations. Appropriately, the stakeholders use the information and do the payments.</p>
(C) Education Supply Chain	<pre> graph LR Input --> EP[Education Process] EP --> Customers Customers -. "Feedback" .-> Input </pre>	<p>The education supply chain is as simple as the input-process-output model of operations management, which educates the students for graduating to the next higher level by adding suitable knowledge and skill. The value gets added by transforming the students to educated individuals through some knowledge enhancement processes.</p>

focusing on their core competency and outsourced the negotiable activities to third parties. Tourism being a service sector, offers convenient travel, food and accommodation desired by the tourists in a planned and scheduled manner at different destinations. Various categories of tourists originate their tours from various parts of a territory; travel by different modes, with different objectives; avail varied degree of hospitality services; travel to different destinations under different itinerary and tariff (see Table 1, (B)). However, the education supply chain is similar to a simple input-process-output model of operations management that adds suitable knowledge and skill, enabling the students to graduate to next higher level of education (see Table 1, (C)).

The modern dynamic world of business being largely driven by IT, ICT, IoT and web-based technologies, a substantial amount of transactions go crisscross. Thus the evolution of an integrated total supply chain became imperative to functions like advance payment, earning of interest and subsidy, customization of products, cancellation of order and return of damaged, inaccurately delivered or unsatisfactory goods. As the smart technologies like GPS (Global Positioning Service), GPRS (General Packet Radio Service), RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) provide a sustainable direction to the supply chains (Arora and Panda, 2018), the tourism sector need to take advantage

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