Chapter 23
Reflexive Tourism Supply Chain Management:
Sustainability in Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific Context

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ABSTRACT

This article is on the practical framework of reflexive tourism supply chain management as it is proposed for enhancing students' understanding of sustainability. The practical framework consists of three phases through a case study examination of a local community. The three phases are (1) including program design in the upstream tourism industry, (2) travel to a local community in the downstream tourism industry, and (3) reflexive learning of understanding of sustainability. The study contributions propose that a practical framework can enhance students' green consciousness with critical thinking, make sustainability learning more interesting for students, and allow students to gain personal understanding from cognition, experience, and reflexive contexts in Asia-Pacific higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism supply chain is defined as supplying products or services from the area of origin to tourist destinations (Page, 2014). Different problems are interconnected between the demand side and the supply side in the tourism industry. In the upstream supply side of the tourism industry, service providers design or offer different products or services for tourist needs. The demand side suggests that tourists play a role in market consumption in the downstream tourism industry. The tourism supply chain links both sides together and then uses them to approach a goal of efficiency and effectiveness.

Zhang, Song, and Huang (2009) proposed that seven key management issues appear in the field of tourism supply chain management: demand management, two-part relationships, supply management, inventory management, product development, tourism supply chain coordination, and information technology. Based on this importance, the supply chain management process adapted sustainability to consider environmental, social, and economic impacts on tourism activities (Font, Tapper, Schwartz, & Kornilaki, 2008)—namely, sustainable tourism. Therefore, sustainable tourism appeals to such investigations as a sustainability audit system for health, safety, and quality within accommodations (Baddeley & Font, 2011); reverse logistics as a sustainable tool in the tourism industry (Škapa, 2014); green hotels (Bohdanowicz, Zientara, & Novotna, 2011); sustainable rural tourism (Lane, 1994); and green music festivals (Mair & Lasing, 2012).

Sustainable tourism supply chain management provides a management approach for sustainable development of the industry. However, different understandings of sustainability exist in the industry, as well as in the education sector (Fisher & McAdams, 2015), that affect the teaching and learning of sustainability. Three following three studies published in the *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* support this point.

The first different understanding is responsibility. Sustainability development for businesses or managers is about responsibility, but responsibility in the higher education context is an abstract concept. According to Lee and Schaltegger (2014), "the roles and responsibilities of business have direct implications for business, society and sustainability" (p. 451).

The second different understanding is reflection. Sherren (2006, p. 410) explains that:

…from survey data it appears that coursework degrees remain more concerned with understanding the environment, rather than human interactions with it … the perception that sciences, methodologies and technologies are the only justifiable core content must be dispelled … humans are novel and complex and their beliefs, motivations, histories, and cultures cannot just be picked up.

This perspective asks which is more important in sustainability in higher education: The environment? Humans? Or both? The industry is not concerned about human interactions for sustainability development but for business benefits. This is the reason the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Paris, France, from November 30 to December 12, 2015.

The third different understanding is capabilities. Gitsham and Clark (2014, pp. 300–301) indicate:

… [a] need for further research into the actual recruitment practices of companies … this study enhances the argument for more research into innovative approaches to developing sustainability-related capabilities. What kinds of approaches are most and least useful, and in what contexts? Further scholarship on teaching and learning … will disseminate the "how" to accompany the "why" provided by studies like this.

This study explains the importance of capabilities on teaching and learning in sustainability education, especially regarding which contexts should explore the how and the why.

In accordance with these studies, this article will explore the how and the why through enhancing students' understanding of sustainability. The study builds a practical framework on reflexive tourism supply chain management, which consists of three phases through a case study examination of a local community: (1) including program design in the upstream tourism industry, (2) travel to a local community in the downstream tourism industry, and (3) reflexive learning of understanding of sustainability.

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