

PETER BJÖRK

# Sustainable Tourism Development, Fact or Fiction in Small Tourism Companies?

## ABSTRACT

*Sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism development and sustainable principles are, within the framework of a sustainable development, the main concepts both tourism researchers and practitioners are trying to understand, develop, integrate and apply. Tourism planning processes have been analyzed, sustainable strategies identified and optimal goals defined. The theoretical discussion has progressed considerably. The problem is that the theoretical discussion seems to be too far ahead and too abstract in comparison to the development found on an operational level, leaving the practitioners empty handed.*

*Sustainable tourism development was studied from two perspectives in this research project. Small tourism companies were surveyed to determine how far their sustainable tourism development efforts have progressed. Tourism project leaders were interviewed about the interest in sustainability issues they meet when consulting small tourism companies. The results from these two studies show, on the one hand, that there was a positive attitude towards sustainability issues in small tourism companies in Finland, but, on the other hand, the results did also show that most tourism companies have not yet engaged actively in sustainable tourism development processes – a reality also acknowledged by the project leaders. Small tourism companies want and need external support, but the whole sustainable tourism development process seems to be in jeopardy because the project leaders have no environmental management training.*

**Keywords:** *Sustainable tourism development, sustainable tourism, sustainable principles, small tourism companies*

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of including an environmental dimension in strategic management processes has grown during the last decade, leaving no industry unaffected. Concepts such as sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism development and sustainable principles have been discussed, and a review of the existing tourism literature clearly indicates two separate discussion paths. On the one hand, we have researchers who have focused on defining and comparing different concepts related to sustainability and who have developed guidelines for a sustainable tourism (e.g. Clarke, 1997; Ding & Pigram, 1995; Hughes, 1995). On the other hand, there are articles based on case-studies describing more or less successful sustainable tourism development projects (e.g. Brown & Essex, 1997; Davis, 1999; Page & Thorn, 1997; Schlüter, 1999; Tooke, 1997). The amount of research reports, articles and books focusing on tourism and sustainability shows, without a doubt, that the tourism industry has responded (or at least tried to respond) to the global sustainable development directive set out by the UN Commission on the Environment and Development in the report called *Our Common Future* (Diamantis, 1999).

The importance of defining central concepts, such as, for example, sustainable tourism and ecotourism in a strict way cannot be neglected, but the theories also have to be useful (Peter & Olson, 1983). The keen interest in finding ultimate definitions of the different concepts has been questioned. Garrod and Fyall (1998, p. 200), for example, claim that "there are so many varieties of the definition of sustainable tourism that any further proliferation seems to serve no useful purpose". The complexity of the tourism industry is well known and Mill (1990) uses a four-dimensional framework to describe tourism. Although the dimensions are the same all over the world, their content varies from one place to another (Hunter, 1997). Pearce (1994, p. 15), who discussed alternative tourism, is therefore of the opinion that to pursue an all-embracing single definition of alternative tourism "will be elusive and ultimately fruitless". Too much focus on conceptual issues, leaving the adaptation of the developed theories (to reality) to the category "further studies", can cause problems for the entire sustainable tourism development process. Scholars and practitioners do not talk the same "language" and the essential communication is minimal (Page & Thorn, 1997). The conceptual development seems to be too far ahead of the development found on an operational level and there are big problems in translating the concepts to use in practical situations (Ding & Pigram, 1995; Knowles et al., 1999; Schlüter, 1999). From another point of view, the view of tourism management, companies cannot embrace the guidelines presented (Garrod & Fyall, 1998) – especially not if they are developed on a more abstract level.

Sustainable tourism development is a difficult area towards which many tourism managers have a prudent attitude due to them having no training in this subject. Marketing, financ-

ing and accounting are well known areas, but knowledge on environmental issues is not at the same high level. The importance of external support in environmental issues cannot therefore be stressed enough. Tourism, which is a network industry ordered in a hierarchical way can, at least, be discussed on the following four levels: international, national, regional, and local. Strategies on a national level constitute the framework that planning on a lower level should follow. An interactive communication and support network should be established. Tourism companies, operating at the lowest level, should, for example, be able to ask for help from different organizations and authorities, but above all, from the project leaders, who work in close contact with the companies.

The aim of this article is to examine sustainable tourism development in small Finnish tourism companies and to analyze the role project leaders play in the development process. These aims will be pursued by answering the following questions:

- What is the general attitude towards sustainable tourism development in tourism companies,
- What have tourism companies done to support sustainable tourism development,
- What kind of support have tourism companies received in sustainability issues, and
- What do they think of the future and the importance of sustainable development.

The project leaders were asked the following:

- What they think of sustainable tourism development in Ostrobothnia (Finland),
- What they themselves know about the principles of sustainable tourism development, and
- What they think of the future and the importance of sustainable development.

Sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism development, and sustainable principles are the three main interrelated concepts the framework which is presented in the next part of this article is build on. The importance of training project leaders for STD in small tourism companies is stressed by Jithendran and Baum (2000). This dimension is also highlighted in the second part of this article. Sustainable tourism development is studied from two perspectives in this research project, using both a quantitative and a qualitative research approach. The methodological issues are discussed in the third part. The results are presented in the fourth part, where the question "sustainable tourism development in small tourism companies, fact or fiction?" is also answered. This article concludes with a suggestion on how to continue sustainable tourism development in Finland.

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT, AND SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES

Sustainable tourism (ST) is a result of sustainable tourism development (STD), a development phase, and a process. ST is not in itself a unique form of tourism as is for example adventure tourism, but a philosophy and a set of guidelines (principles) which can be used as a framework when developing all types of tourism, independent of scale and type, towards sustainability (Butler, 1993). Curtin and Busby (1999, p. 137) conclude that

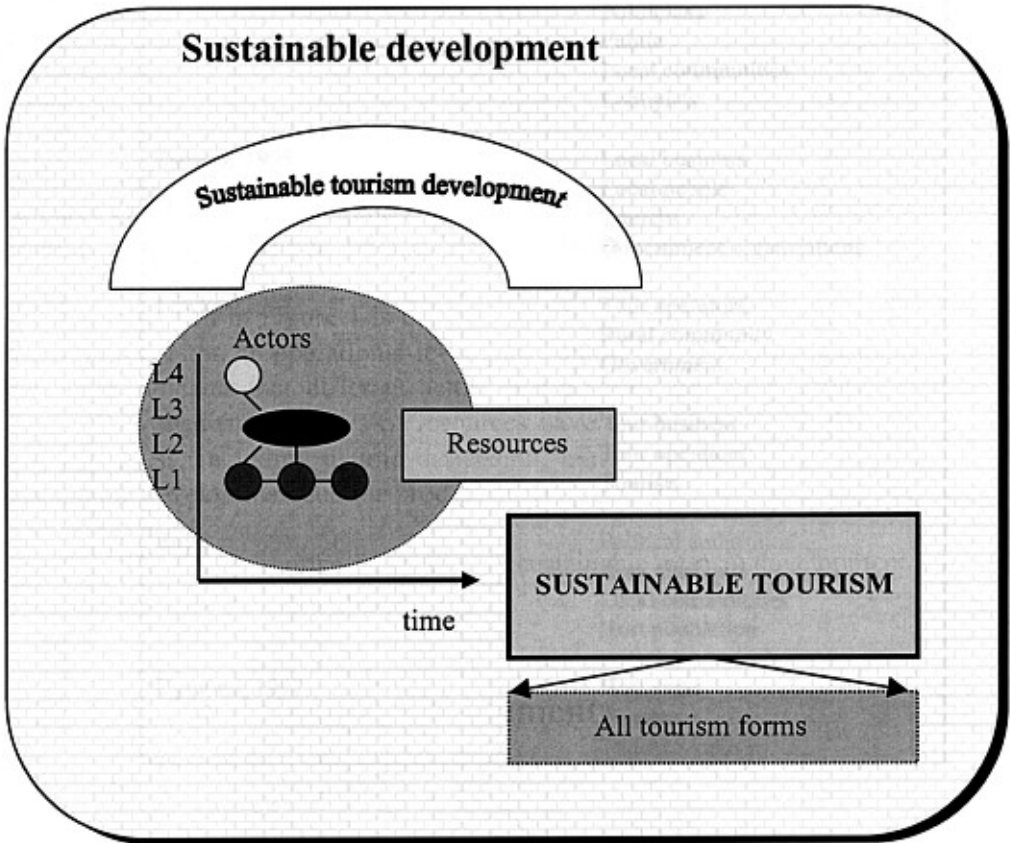
“the term sustainable tourism has come to represent and encompass a set of principles, policy prescriptions, and management methods which chart a path for tourism development so that a destination area’s environmental resource base is protected for further development”.

The history of ST can be traced back to the report entitled *Our Common Future*, published by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, in which sustainable development was defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. With this definition as a basis, the 1990s has been the decade of ST, which on a philosophical level implies to “maximise the benefits from tourism whilst the disbenefits or costs should be minimised” (Bramwell et al., 1996, p. 35). This means that all resources (environmental, cultural, economic, social and political) should be considered in a tourism assessment process and that the interests of all actors should be taken into account on an operational level.

In addition, it is important to recognize that STD must be a part of a more embracing sustainable development (Hunter, 1995a), i.e. a development which has a focus on long-term economic and ecological sustainability, and an equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of development (Woodley, 1993).

The philosophy of sustainable development sets the framework for STD, which in turn is the means to ST – tourism defined by the FNNPE working group as “all forms of tourism development, management and activity, which maintain the environmental, social and economic integrity and well-being of natural, built and cultural resources in perpetuity” (Heukemes, 1993, p. 5). ST is not alternative tourism, interpreted as an alternative to mass tourism (Hunter, 1995b; Pearce, 1994), but tourism managed “in such a way that all tourism activity – which in some way focuses on a heritage resource (be it natural or cultural) – can continue indefinitely” (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996, p. 20; see also Butler, 1993, p. 29)

What can be seen in Figure 1 is that ST, which on a philosophical level seems to be quite simple, is on an operational level very complex. The two-dimensional structure presented



**FIGURE 1.** Sustainable tourism in relation to sustainable tourism development and sustainable development.

indicates that different actors (representing different levels, L1 to L4 in Figure 1) with different types of resources have to be engaged in the process. The whole process, including a time dimension, must be directed by the principles of sustainable development and the process of STD.

Four main groups of actors can be identified as central in a partnership model pursuing ST. Different researchers have stressed somewhat different actors, but as can be seen in Table 1, the view of actors who should cooperate and be involved in a STD process is quite homogeneous.

Tourism companies (tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, etc.), host society and tourists are actors found on a micro-level, i.e. at the first level (L1) in Figure 1. Project leaders and local tourism organizations, which are responsible for the development of a larger tourism

**TABLE 1. Actors in a partnership model**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Actors involved</b>
<b>Giannecchini, 1993</b>	<b>Travel industry Tourists Conservation Community</b>
<b>Dall'Aglio, Zangaria, Pierré, Gasperoni &amp; Malagoli, 1994</b>	<b>Tour operators Local government Local population</b>
<b>Boers &amp; Bosch, 1994</b>	<b>Local providers The authorities Tour operators Tourist organizations Tourists</b>
<b>Hvenegaard, 1994</b>	<b>Tour operators Tourists Developers Government/organizations Universities Landowners Politicians Public Local communities Lobbyists</b>
<b>Darrow, 1995</b>	<b>Local business Local people Tourists Government/organizations</b>
<b>Fowkes, 1995</b>	<b>Tour operators Rural community Government</b>
<b>Higgins, 1996</b>	<b>Tour business Tour operators Tourists</b>
<b>Boyd &amp; Butler, 1996</b>	<b>Political authorities Area managers Local communities Host population</b>
<b>Dymond, 1997</b>	<b>Host areas Tourists Tourism industry</b>

area, operate on a more abstract level (level two) (L2). Most countries have on a national level an organization that is responsible for nationwide planning and marketing (incl. government) (L3). In Finland, for example, the organization responsible for developing nationwide tourism

strategies is the Finnish Tourist Board. International tourism organizations are found on the fourth level (L4). Directorate General (D.G.) XXIII Tourism Unit is responsible for tourism planning within the European Union, and if we look at specific sectors, we can, for example, mention CHRIE (The Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Educator), which has a mission to foster the international advancement of teaching, training, learning, research and practice in the field of hospitality and tourism management (Upchurch, 1998). The presented structures which embrace tourism companies operating on the first level supported by actors on higher levels indicate that there is a vertical integration of actors of importance in addition to the horizontal one (Borg, 1998; Poon, 1994).

The different actors involved in tourism command different kinds of resources. Some resources are constructed by the actors themselves while other resources are of a more natural character (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998). Most of these resources are found or generated within a specified tourist area, but there are also situations when resources are borrowed from the surrounding environment and used in tourism products, or the tourists are moved from the well-planned tourist area to more unplanned, fragile areas (Ayala, 1996). Independent of how the tourism product is constructed, STD must be managed from a holistic perspective in order for it to be successful (Woodley, 1993), i.e. a tourist spot must always be considered as a part of a larger area. The complexity of actors, activities and resources involved in STD is obvious, but only briefly touched on in this article. A more multidimensional structure is laid out by Dall'Aglio et al. (1994) and discussed by Green (1995). The two-dimensional framework presented in Figure 1 is by its content dynamic and hierarchical. This means that sustainable development is the platform on which STD and ST are built and from which the guidelines for sustainable tourism management derived.

The horizontal axis in Figure 1 shows that the actors involved in STD may change in a time perspective and that ST is a result of a development process: a process which, dependent on what kind of tourism is developed, can take various time spans to become complete, and in certain development phases have a "skewed distribution of priorities" (Hunter, 1997, p. 859). In this development process it is not hard to identify key facilitating dimensions such as knowledge, attitude, and involvement of the different actors involved in STD. It is of ultimate importance from a development perspective that the guidelines for STD are well known among all the actors, independent of the level they are operating on. If this is not the case, it may be solved by actors on a higher level informing actors on a lower level on how to proceed. The whole STD process may thereby be jeopardized if this for some reason is not the case.

Guidelines for STD have been presented by many researchers, and the ten dimensions listed in Table 2 are only a summary of the ones found in tourism literature (see for example

**TABLE 2. Guidelines supporting sustainable tourism development**

- 1) **Actors involved in tourism should have an ethical responsibility to avoid the misuse of the resources the tourism industry depends on and clear sustainable aims must be set.**
- 2) **The growth of tourism must be controlled.**
- 3) **The tourism planning perspective must be long-term.**
- 4) **All resources – environmental, economic, social, cultural and political – must be considered in a tourism development process and the carrying capacity must be assessed.**
- 5) **Special attention should be paid to the essential needs of the poor.**
- 6) **Tourism development must be locally anchored and all the actors involved consulted, and cooperation must be stressed.**
- 7) **The diversity of the different tourism resorts must be recognized and the principles of sustainable tourism development must be applied to the unique character of an area.**
- 8) **The interests, reasons and goals of the different actors for supporting a sustainable tourism development must be understood.**
- 9) **A trade-off approach to a balanced approach between different resources must sometimes be accepted on an operational level.**
- 10) **An assessment of the negative and positive impact on the different actors must be carried out.**

Boers & Bosch, 1994; Borg, 1998; Bramwell et al., 1996; D'Amore, 1992; Diamantis, 1999; Heukemes, 1993; Manning & Dougherty, 1995; Mowforth & Munt, 1998).

The listed guidelines, which are on a general level, can be critically examined from different perspectives. What do these guidelines imply, if we look at them, for example, from a tourism company perspective (first level (L1) in Figure 1)? A run-through of the guidelines shows that a tourism company should have a business mission (Doyle, 1998) which includes a sustainable dimension (Chrisnall, 1995) and a business culture colored by ethical considerations (Malloy & Fennell, 1998a; 1998b). The current operation and all expansion plans must be balanced. Economical aspects and ecological dimensions must be integrated and the planning perspective must be long. But this is not enough. An environmental impact assessment should be carried out (Manning & Dougherty, 1995; Ding & Pigram, 1995) and (if possible) an Environmental Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) implemented. Support for the relevance of the listed guidelines for a STD can be found in two praxis oriented reports presented by the Finnish Tourist Board (Suomi ympäristöä ..., 1995; Majoitus- ja ..., 1997).

Small tourism companies can have problems to comply with the principles listed in Table 2 out of many reasons (Butler, 1999). The tourism companies may have a) a lack of knowledge on how to change course and become more sustainable, b) economic restrictions, and/or c) no interest in sustainability issues. Cooperation is one dimension stressed within the framework of STD and if there is not sufficient knowledge in-house on how to become more sustainable, support should be received from authorities and tourist organizations involved (Boers & Bosch, 1994; Karjalainen, 1998). In cases where there are project leaders working in



close contact with the tourism companies, they should be of immediate support (Jithendran & Baum, 2000).

## RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research approach is suitable when the purpose of a study is to explore a phenomenon, the studied area is complex, and detailed descriptions are of interest (Connell & Lowe, 1997; Maxwell, 1996). A telephone interview method was used to collect data from the 13 project leaders involved in tourism development in the district of Ostrobothnia in Finland<sup>1</sup>. Sustainable tourism is a complex area and can be discussed on different levels. An open-ended interview guide was therefore used. Colwell (1990) stresses the importance of creating a friendly and relaxed interview situation, of thinking analytically during the interview phase, and of being a good listener. All project leaders were willing to participate after having been informed of essential parts of our research project. Before the interviews began, it was explained to the project leaders that the interviews would take about 45 minutes to complete. No definition of STD was given in advance to the respondents. They chose to focus on the environmental dimension in this interview. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis (Ericsson & Simon, 1984).

Within the framework of a quantitative research approach a questionnaire was sent to 60 small tourism companies (companies with less than 30 employees) located in the district of Ostrobothnia in Finland. There are two reasons why a questionnaire was used to collect data from the tourism companies. Firstly, the sustainable tourism principles on a company level can be concretized and structured questions can be asked. Secondly, it was of interest to use a research approach that would facilitate a generalization of the results. A definition of ST was not presented to the respondents, but their individual frame of reference was accepted. Out of the many dimensions STD embrace, environmental matters were put in focus. A sample of 60 was thought to be enough in this exploratory study on the assumption that the response rate would be at least 50 percent. This response level was not reached, but a response level of 46 percent can be accepted considering the fact that no follow-up letter was sent out due to budget limitations. The many different types of companies that answered the questionnaire and the large geographical distribution of the tourism companies in Ostrobothnia offer a good basis for analysis<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Depth in data was prioritized for breadth in this study. All research resources were put on Ostrobothnia as a tourism area in this study. All Swedish speaking project leaders operating within this area were interviewed and 28 randomly selected tourism companies were analyzed.

<sup>2</sup> The sample of tourism companies consisted of 6 camping areas, 2 transportation companies, 1 travel agency, 2 bed and breakfast companies, 4 hotels, 7 restaurants, 3 museums, and 3 companies offering cultural activities.

## RESULTS

The results from the two studies carried out will be presented separately before sustainable tourism development on a local level is discussed. We reflect on the question, "Sustainable tourism development, fact or fiction in small tourism companies?" thereafter.

### **Sustainable tourism in small tourism companies**

Sustainable tourism planning in tourism companies must be based on a positive attitude towards sustainable development. The tourism companies were asked two questions related to their attitudes towards ST. The first question was a general one (How important do you think it is that tourism companies in Finland focus on sustainable development?), and a ten-point scale (where 1 indicates not at all important and 10 very important) was used. This question was raised to obtain a view of the general opinion among small tourism companies about the importance of focusing on environmental efforts. As can be seen in Figure 2, most companies find sustainable development important. Twelve companies (42%) think that it is very important that tourism companies in Finland focus on environmental issues. However, the results also indicate that there are companies representing a view that STD is not important. Six companies (21.4%) have a grade of seven or less (Figure 2).

What people value and what they do does not always correlate, which in this context means that their general view of how important sustainable development in tourism companies is and their own environmental efforts are not necessarily in line. The next question the tourism companies had to answer was therefore whether they have consciously invested in STD in their own companies. A majority (70%) of the companies stated that they have done something in favour of the environment. The companies were asked what they have done and the most common answer was that they have a working waste disposal program. The use of environmentally friendly detergents and refill shower creme pumps also seems to be a popular tactical action that has been undertaken. The results obtained show that there were only three (10%) companies which had offered their employees environmental training, two (7%) companies (hotels) which had appointed a person responsible for environmental issues and also had written an environmental handbook. These results indicate that some actions in favour of the environment have been taken in tourism companies. However, most actions mentioned are on a tactical level, leaving strategic issues untouched (Moutinho, 2000).

With regard to external support in environmental issues, six companies stated that they had received some, but a majority (15 companies) said that they have got no help (7 companies did not answer this question). It is interesting to notice that of those companies which have received no help, 11 wanted external support to carry out a STD process.

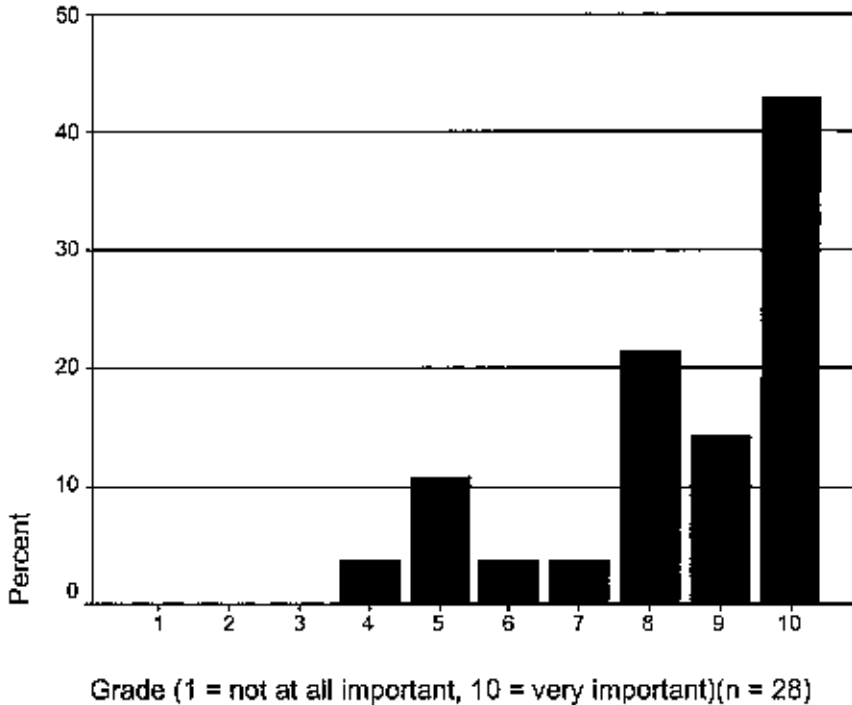


FIGURE 2. How important are environmental issues in Finnish tourism companies.

The companies were finally asked about their future environmental efforts. Six companies said that they will do nothing in favour of STD, but 12 companies stated that they will speed up their STD processes (10 companies did not answer this question).

### Sustainable tourism from the perspective of tourism project leaders

The telephone interviews began by asking the project leaders about their view of STD processes in small tourism companies in Ostrobothnia. They were all of the same opinion: the owners (managers) of tourism companies are aware of the importance of focusing on environmental aspects, but have not done much in favour of STD in their daily work. The project leaders themselves have a positive attitude towards environmental efforts in tourism companies. 50 percent of the project leaders think that environmental aspects constitute a central competition dimension already today, and the rest believe it will be a factor in the near future.

It is of utmost importance that the project leaders who work in close contact with the tourism companies as supervisors possess environmental knowledge and a deep understanding of the STD processes.

The basic knowledge in environmental issues is not at a high level among project leaders. None of the project leaders had any advanced training in STD, which means that they are not prepared to give consultation in environmental matters – a problem identified already in mid-1990s (Karjalainen, 1998). On the other hand they claim that they have some knowledge of where to get the right expertise when necessary. The question is do the tourism companies have the resources to look around for relevant information from different organizations and institutes? The low level of environmental knowledge may be one reason why the project leaders have not received any, or very few, questions from the tourism companies about how to initiate and proceed with the STD processes. Three out of thirteen (23%) project leaders have been asked for advice in environmental matters and in all cases they have had to direct the tourism companies to other actors (organizations) for further information.

### **Sustainable tourism development in small tourism companies, fact or fiction?**

The theoretical discussion of STD has progressed enormously during the last ten years, concepts have been defined, principles listed and best practices presented. There is no doubt that STD is essential and all tourism forms should be sustainable (Krippendorff, 1992). The theoretical ideal is indisputable. The question which has urged us to undertake this research project is, what is actually happening on an operational level as concerns STD? The theoretical frameworks and principles have to be adjusted to the empirical field. But how do we interpret the fact that only two tourism companies have appointed a person responsible for the environmental issues and also developed an environmental guide, and only three companies have offered their employees environmental training? In defence, one can say that the dimensions mentioned are more relevant to larger companies. Notwithstanding, the results show that small tourism companies in Ostrobothnia (Finland) do very little to support STD. Some initial guidelines have been followed, such as for example the introduction of waste disposal programs and use of environmentally friendly detergents.

The tourism companies are aware of the importance of focusing on environmental aspects, a result supported by the interviewed project leaders. Stabler and Goodal (1997) studied environmental awareness, action and performance in the Guernsey hospitality sector, and the similarity between their results and the results presented in this study are striking on one dimension. Very little is done on an operational level to support STD. The situation seems somewhat more promising in Finland, where the tourism companies at least recognize the importance of environmental efforts, whilst the hospitality sector in Guernsey shows such a "lack of awareness of environmental issues and initiatives, if widespread in the hospitality sector, [that it] paints a depressing picture of securing a proactive management response at the level

of the individual business" (Stabler & Goodal, 1997, p. 27). The level of environmental awareness among European tour operators was studied by Budeanu (1999), and even her conclusions are in line with the results presented in this article: the tourism companies show a high level of environmental awareness although environmental practice is kept to a minimum. The incongruence between value and behaviour is prevalent and it seems to be a major management leap between short term tactics and long term strategies.

Small tourism companies have seldom time or money to invest in STD process, except for minor cost-reducing tactics, such as for example signs in hotel bathrooms saying

"Dear Guest: If You imagine the tons of towels which are unnecessarily washed each day in all hotels worldwide, You can picture the enormous quantities of washing powder that are polluting our waters. Please make your decision: Towels in the bath-tub or shower stands for: 'Please change!'. Towels hung up back again stands for: 'I will use them again'". (Hotel Excelsior, Gothenburg)

But all environmental efforts do not need large investments if only there is someone who can guide. Changes in purchase routines (Höyer, 2000), water and energy consumption patterns (Ympäristöystävällistä hotelli- ja ravintolatoimintaa, 1991), and knowledge on how to inform visiting guests how to behave are just some examples that can significantly reduce environmental stress. The situation is not easily remedied if support from the project leaders, the actors working closest to the tourism companies, is minimal at the moment.

Answering the question whether sustainable tourism development in small tourism companies is fact or fiction does not seem to cause any problem today. The answer is fiction, if we define fiction as a (large) gap between theory and practice. The tourism companies analyzed are aware of the importance of focusing on environmental aspects, but very little is done. The closest development partners, the project leaders, are not in a position to support the tourism companies in sustainable development matters due to lack of knowledge on environmental management.

Both groups, the tourism companies and the project leaders, believe that the sustainability dimension will become increasingly important in the future due to the greening of markets and more restrictive environmental laws. An interest in following the development path is recognized among the tourism companies. This positive attitude means at least that the starting point for more intense sustainable development in Ostrobothnia, Finland, is correct. It is now important that all actors engaged in tourism on all levels embrace the principles of STD, start to cooperate, share knowledge and support each other in order to reach a final state where all tourism is sustainable.

## SUMMARY AND A SUGGESTION

The idea that all tourism should be sustainable is nothing new. The theoretical discussion has during the 1990s been intensive, and practitioners have continuously received new extended guidelines to follow. Concepts have been defined, frameworks presented and principles listed. Case studies from all over the world have been presented. Some of these case studies are examples of success stories (Brown & Essex, 1997), whilst others show a discrepancy between an ideal, theoretical situation and reality (Augustyn, 1998; Alipour, 1996; Page & Thorn, 1997). Independent of what kind of cases are described (success or failure) one central dimension is always discussed – cooperation. It seems to be of utmost importance that the involved actors have a positive attitude towards sustainable development, strategies on different levels are integrated, and the tourism companies get support when their own knowledge and resources are limited (Hall, 1998; Karjalainen, 1998; Klemm, 1992; Koscak, 1998; Owen et al., 1993)

Sustainable tourism development in small tourism companies in Ostrobothnia in Finland was studied from two perspectives in this research project. Questionnaires were sent to tourism companies and telephone interviews were used to collect data from tourism project leaders. The presented results give us an initial indication of where small tourism companies in Finland stand in STD process and how STD in Finland has progressed in comparison to other countries. To be remembered is that results based on a snapshot view must always be considered with some caution.

The presented results indicate positive development potentials if we look at the development in Finland as an isolated phenomenon. The positive aspect is that the basic attitude is right. Tourism companies as well as tourism project leaders believe that the environmental aspects will be even more important in tourism management processes in the future. The first halting steps have been taken by some tourism companies, but there is a long way to go. The situation in Ostrobothnia, Finland, resembles the one Berry and Ladkin (1997, p. 439) studied. They conclude, after studying small tourism companies in East Sussex in the UK, by saying, "local businesses are receptive to new ideas and are willing to try to make a positive contribution. The greatest stumbling block to a positive response is perceived as extra costs, and the lack of faith in the governing bodies".

A comparison of the STD in Finland to the development found in other countries provide us with a somewhat more depressing picture. Tourism in Finland is based on the same basic resources as the tourism of our keenest competitors, Canada, Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia and Estonia (Kauppi, 1996), and it seems that these countries are working very hard on STD (Berry & Ladkin, 1997; Bramwell, 1990; D'Amore, 1992; Titterington & Lennon, 1996). The risk is that STD in Finland is too slow, which means environmental degradation

and loss of the competitive resources Finnish tourism is dependent on.

STD must be carried out within the framework of a more general sustainable development. This means that the heterogeneity of the tourism industry must be managed, partnership models created and common sustainability goals set up, although the industry consists of actors from different industries, actors of different types, and the planning is on different levels (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998). Although the actors in our study found the environmental aspects important, it was not enough to compel the STD process forward. The environmental legislation of today is not too demanding from a company perspective and tourists do not seem to put much pressure on companies either. What can then facilitate (or guide) the development? The results presented in this article give us one solution. It seems obvious that the project leaders, who work in daily contact with the tourism companies can influence and support the companies in their development processes. What is now needed is a training session directed at the project leaders. The basic principles of STD should be well known among the project leaders who should get further support from other actors involved in tourism, or actors who find an interest in a blooming tourism industry.

Widespread and comprehensive changes in society and companies require that all central building blocks are in order. The suggestion presented must therefore be interpreted in a broader context. Active project leaders is only one building block in a success formula. Brown and Essex (1997) demonstrate in their paper that the success of sustainable tourism strategies is dependent on political support, appropriate organizational structures, and adequate funding. Especially the last building block seems to be a critical one when STD in Finland is studied. Small tourism companies have limited capital assets, which inevitably means that the pace at which STD is carried out is longer, or in the worst case not at all initiated. Limited funding is nothing unique to Finland, but is a fact in most Nordic countries (Nyberg, 1995; Wanhill, 1997). It is therefore not surprising that tourism companies are especially interested in environmental practice which will produce immediate benefits (Stabler & Goodal, 1997). Tactical operations which can help tourism companies to survive are therefore of course important, but the long-term planning and strategic issues must not be forgotten. ■

## REFERENCES

- ALIPOUR, H.** (1996): Tourism development within planning paradigms: the case of Turkey. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 17, No. 5, pp. 367–377.
- AUGUSTYN, M.** (1998): National Strategies for Rural Tourism Development and Sustainability: The Polish Experience. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 191–209.
- AYALA, H.** (1996): Resort Ecotourism: A Master Plan for Experience Management. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*. Vol. 37, No. 5, pp. 54–61.

- BERRY, S. & LADKIN, A.** (1997): Sustainable tourism: a regional perspective. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 18, No. 7, pp. 433–440.
- BOERS, H. & BOSCH, M.** (1994): The earth as a holiday resort. An introduction to tourism and the environment. SME/Institute for Environmental Communication and Netherlands Institute of Tourism and Transport Studies. Utrecht.
- BORG, P.** (1998): Kestävyyden kriteerit matkailuelinkeinon palveluksessa. In: Saarinen, J. & Järviluoma, J. (eds): Kestävyys luonnon virkistys- ja matkailukäytössä. Metsäntutkimuslaitos. Vantaa, pp. 5–14.
- BOYD, S. & BUTLER, R.** (1996): Managing ecotourism: an opportunity spectrum approach. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 17, No. 8, pp. 557–566.
- BRAMWELL, B.** (1990): Green tourism in the countryside. *Tourism Management*. Vol. No. , pp. 358–360.
- BRAMWELL, B., HENRY, I., JACKSON, G. & van der STRAATEN, J.** (1996): A framework for understanding sustainable tourism management. In: Bramwell, B., Henry, I., Jackson, G., Prat, A., Richards, G. & van der Straaten, J (eds.). Sustainable Tourism Management: Principles and Practice. Tilburg University Press. Tilburg, pp. 23–71.
- BROWN, G. & ESSEX, S.** (1997): Sustainable Tourism Management: Lessons from The Edge of Australia. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 294–306.
- BUDEANU, A.** (1999): A tour to sustainability. Internationella Miljöinstitutet. International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics (IIIEE). Lund University. Sweden.
- BUTLER, R.** (1993): Tourism – An Evolutionary Perspective. In: Nelson, J. & Butler, R. & Wall, G. (eds.). Tourism and Sustainable Development: Monitoring, Planning, Managing. Heritage Resource Centre, University of Waterloo, pp. 27–44.
- BUTLER, R.** (1999): Problems and Issues of Integrating Tourism Development. In: Pearce, D. & Butler, R. (eds). Contemporary Issues in Tourism Development. Routledge. London, pp. 65–80.
- CEBALLOS-LASCURÁIN, H.** (1996): Tourism, ecotourism, and protected areas. IUCN, Gland Switzerland.
- CHRISNALL, P.** (1995): Strategic business marketing. Prentice Hall. New York.
- CLARKE, J.** (1997): A Framework of Approaches to Sustainable Tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 224–233.
- COLWELL, J.** (1990): Qualitative market research: A conceptual analysis and review of practitioner criteria. *Journal of the Market Research Society*. Vol. 32, No. 1, pp 13–36.
- CONNELL, J. & LOWE, A.** (1997): Generating Grounded Theory from Qualitative Data: The Application of Inductive Methods in Tourism and Hospitality management Research. *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research*. Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 165–173.
- CURTIN, S. & BUSBY, G.** (1999): Sustainable Destination Development: The Tour Operator Perspective. *International Journal of Tourism Research*. Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 135–147.
- DALL'AGLIO, S., ZANGARIA, G., PIERRÉ, G., GASPERONI, G. & MALAGOLI, I.** (1994): Taking Account of Environment in Tourism Development. Commission of the European Communities D.G. XXIII Tourism Unit. Brussels. Luxembourg.
- D'AMORE, L.** (1992): Promoting sustainable tourism – the Canadian approach. *Tourism Management*. Sept., pp. 258–262
- DARROW, K.** (1995): A Partnership Model for Nature Tourism in the Eastern Caribbean Islands. *Journal of Travel Research*. Winter, pp. 48–51.
- DAVIS, P.** (1999): Beyond Guidelines, a Model for Antarctic Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 516–533.
- DIAMANTIS, D.** (1999): Green Strategies for Tourism Worldwide. *Travel & Tourism Analysis*, No. 4, pp. 89–112.
- DING, P. & PIGRAM, J.** (1995): Environmental Audits: An emerging concept in sustainable tourism development. *The Journal of Tourism Studies*. Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 2–10.
- DOYLE, P.** (1998): Marketing management and strategy. Prentice Hall. London.
- DYMOND, S.** (1997): Indicators of Sustainable Tourism in New Zealand: A Local Government Perspective. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 279–293.
- ERICSSON, A. & SIMON, H.** (1984): Protocol Analysis. Verbal Reports as Data. The MIT Press Cambridge, Mass.



- FOWKES, J.** (1995): Building Partnership. Establishing links between Government conservation agencies, private tour operators and rural communities in ecotourism. Research paper prepared for the World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism. October.
- GARROD, B. & FYALL, A.** (1998): Beyond the rhetoric of sustainable tourism? *Tourism Management*. Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 199–212.
- GIANNECCHINI, J.** (1993): Ecotourism: New Partners, New Relationships. *Conservation Biology*. Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 429–432.
- GREEN, H.** (1995): Planning for sustainable tourism development. In: Hunter, C. & Green, H. (eds.). *Tourism and the Environment. A sustainable relationship?* Routledge. London, pp. 93–121.
- HALL, D.** (1998): Tourism development and sustainability issues in Central and South-eastern Europe. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 19, No. 5, pp. 423–431.
- HEUKEMES, N.** (1993): Loving them to death? Sustainable tourism in Europe's Nature and National Parks. Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe (FNNPE). Grafenau. Germany.
- HIGGINS, B.** (1996): The Global Structure of the Nature Tourism Industry: Ecotourism, Tour Operators, and Local Businesses. *Journal of Travel Research*. Fall, pp. 11–18.
- HUGHES, G.** (1995): The cultural construction of sustainable tourism. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 49–59.
- HUNTER, C.** (1995a): On the Need to Re-Conceptualise Sustainable Tourism Development. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 155–165.
- HUNTER, C.** (1995b): Key concepts for tourism and the environment. In: Hunter, C. & Green, H. (eds.). *Tourism and the Environment. A sustainable relationship?* Routledge. London, pp. 52–92.
- HUNTER, C.** (1997): Sustainable Tourism as an Adaptive Paradigm. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 850–867.
- HVENEGAARD, G.** (1994): Ecotourism: A status report and conceptual framework. *The Journal of Tourism Studies*. Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 24–35.
- HÖYER, K.** (2000): Sustainable Tourism or Sustainable Mobility? The Norwegian case. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 147–160.
- JITHENDRAN, K. & BAUM, T.** (2000): Human Resources Development and Sustainability – The case of Indian Tourism. *International Journal of Tourism Research*. Vol. 2, No 6, pp. 403–421.
- KARJALAINEN, E.** (1998): Luontoyrittämisen kehittämismahdollisuudet Suomessa. In: Saarinen, J. & Jarviluoma, J. (eds): *Kestävyys luonnon virkistys- ja matkailukäytössä*. Metsäntutkimuslaitos. Vantaa, p. 139–150.
- KAUPPI, L.** (1996): Suomen luonto kansainvälisenä matkailutuotteena. Finnish Nature as an International Tourism Product. Travel Development Center. Helsinki. Finland.
- KLEMM, M.** (1992): Sustainable tourism development. Languedoc-Roussillon thirty years on. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 169–180.
- KNOWLES, T, MACMILLAN, S., PALMER, J., GRABOWSKI, P. & HASHIMOTO, A.** (1999): The Development of Environmental Initiatives in Tourism: Responses from the London Hotel Sector. *International Journal of Tourism Research*. Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 255–265.
- KOSCAK, M.** (1998): Integral development of rural areas and village renovation, Trebnje, Slovenia. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 81–86.
- KRIPPENDORF, J.** (1992): *The Holiday Makers. Understanding the impact of leisure and travel*. Butterworth-Heinemann, Ltd. Oxford.
- Majoitus- ja ravitsemisalan ympäristöjärjestelmä, YSMEK 2, Matkailun edistämiskeskus, MEK E:36, 1997.**
- MALLOY, D. & FENNELL, D.** (1998a): Ecotourism and Ethics: Moral Development and Organizational Cultures. *Journal of Travel Research*. Spring, pp. 47–56.
- MALLOY, D. & FENNELL, D.** (1998b): Codes of ethics and tourism: An exploratory content analysis. *Tourism management*. Vol. 19, No. 5, pp. 453–461.
- MANNING, E. & DOUGHERTY, D.** (1995): Sustainable tourism: Preserving the golden goose. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*. Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 29–42.
- MAXWELL, J.** (1996): *Qualitative Research Design, An Interactive Approach*. SAGE Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, California.
- MIDDLETON, V. & HAWKINS, R.** (1998): *Sustainable Tourism. A Marketing Perspective*. Butterworth-Heinemann. Oxford.

- MILL, C.** (1990): *Tourism: The International Business*. Prentice-Hall International, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.
- MOWFORTH, M. & MUNT, I.** (1998): *Tourism and Sustainability. New tourism in the Third World*. Routledge. London.
- MOUTINHO, L.** (2000): Strategic Planning. In: Moutinho, L.(ed): *Strategic Management in Tourism*. CAB Publishing. Wallingford, pp. 259–281.
- NYBERG, L.** (1995): Scandinavia: Tourism in Europe's Northern Periphery. In: Montanari, A. & Williams, A. (eds.). *European Tourism. Regions, Spaces and Restructuring*. John Wiley & Sons. Chichester, pp. 87–107.
- OWEN, E., WITT, S. & GAMMON, S.** (1993): Sustainable tourism development in Wales. From theory to practice. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 13, No. 2. pp. 463–474.
- PAGE, S. & THORN, K.** (1997): Towards Sustainable Tourism Planning in New Zealand: Public Sector Planning Responses. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 59–77.
- PEARCE, D.** (1994): Alternative Tourism: Concepts, Classifications, and Questions. In: Smith, V. & Eadington, W. (eds.). *Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism*. John Wiley & Sons. Chichester, pp. 15–30.
- PETER, P. & OLSON, J.** (1983): Is Science Marketing? *Journal of Marketing*. Vol. 47, Fall, pp. 111–125.
- POON, A.** (1994): *Tourism, Technology and Competitive Strategies*. CAB International, Wallingford.
- SCHLÜTER, R.** (1999): Sustainable Tourism Development in South America. In: Pearce, D. & Butler, R. (eds). *Contemporary Issues in Tourism Development*. Routledge. London, pp. 176–191.
- STABLER, M. & GOODAL, B.** (1997): Environmental awareness, action and performance in the Guernsey hospitality sector. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 19–33.
- Suomi ympäristöä säästäväksi matkailumaaksi.** Ympäristökatselmuskokeilun tulokset kymmenessä matkailuyrityksessä ja ehdotukset jatkotoimiksi. Matkailun edistämiskeskus, MEK E:30, 1995.
- TITTERINGTON, A. & LENNON, R.** (1996): The Potential for the Development in Northern Ireland – the Challenges Facing the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research*. Vol. 2. pp. 119–134.
- TOOKEY, D.** (1997): Sustainable Development in Laos: Prospects for a Green Future. *Journal of Environment & Development*. Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 170–179.
- UPCHURCH, R.** (1998): A Conceptual Foundation for Ethical Decision Making: A Stakeholder Perspective in the Lodging Industry (U.S.A.). *Journal of Business Ethics*. Vol. 17, pp. 1349–1361.
- WANHILL, S.** (1997): Peripheral Area Tourism: A European Perspective. *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research*. Vol. 3, pp. 47–70.
- WOODLEY, A.** (1993): Tourism and Sustainable Development: The Community Perspective. In: Nelson, J., Butler, R. & Wall, G. (eds.). *Tourism and Sustainable Development: Monitoring, Planning, Managing*. Heritage Resources Centre, University of Waterloo, pp. 135–147.
- Ympäristöystävällistä hotelli- ja ravintolatoimintaa** (1991). Hotelli- ja ravintolaneuvosto r.y.