

Role of Change Management in Achieving Sustainable Tourism Transformation

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Abstract

Tourism is changing a lot because of things like climate change and people expecting more from their travellers. People who run tourism businesses need to think about the environment sustainability it is no longer consider as something that they can just ignore. Tourism needs to change and become more sustainable. This is not about using new technology it is about changing the way people do things. The people in charge need to make sure that their companies can handle these changes. This paper is about how to make tourism more sustainable, by managing change. Tourism companies need to change. This paper will look at how they can do that. Making specific contributions within these spheres, this paper discusses the drivers of sustainability-oriented change, major issues in implementing change, and the leading roles of leadership, stakeholder involvement, communication, and organizational culture. Based on the use of a conceptual and exploratory approach and review of secondary sources, including academic literature, industry reports, and policy documents, this paper asserts that sustainable tourism transformation can only be achieved if change management principles are systematically embedded into the planning and implementation process. Accordingly, this paper concludes by outlining implications for tourism organizations, policymakers, and destination managers, to effect long-term sustainability, adding structured and inclusive approaches to change management.

Keywords: Change Management, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Transformation, Organizational Change, Sustainability

Introduction

The tourism sector has been a key player in the worldwide economic development processes, creating employment opportunities as well as earning foreign exchange and promoting development in the region. The tourism industry has been one of the fastest growing sectors in the world, providing opportunities for the development of infrastructures as well as cultural exchange between people in the region. Its rapid unsustainable growth has, however, led to a number of drawbacks in the sector from an environmental, cultural disturbance standpoint in the region.

Accordingly, the need for sustainable tourism has come to be recognized and valued at various levels, including among policy makers, researchers, and practitioners. In all these areas, sustainability forms the foundation in ensuring that present needs are met to promote stronger futures. Sustainability in tourism helps to ensure that the international organizations and various governments have measures in place to mitigate the impacts of tourism.

Despite rising awareness, the adoption of sustainable tourism is inconsistent. For a number of tourism organizations, short-term economic objectives are a greater priority compared to long-term sustainability objectives. Opposition to change, lack of management commitment, insufficient resources, lack of adequate skills, and stakeholder integration are a few barriers to sustainability adoption in tourism

A change management strategy may, in various ways, provide a framework to facilitate a shift from the current state to a desired future state. Therefore, in the tourism industry, change management would play an essential role in confronting tourism transformation from a perspective that encompasses human, organizational, and institutional dimensions of sustainability change management.

The following are the objectives that this paper seeks to satisfy in a conceptual and exploratory way in order to evaluate the significance of change management in tourism transformation in a sustainable way:

1. Identifying some of the critical change management drivers that call for a change in a way that could ensure a sustainable tourism transformation.
2. Describing some of the prominent change management hurdles observed in tourism.
3. Identifying some of the ways change management could facilitate a tourism transformation in a sustainable way.

Sustainable Tourism Transformation: Conceptual Background

A sustainable tourism transformation refers to the significant and enduring change in the manner in which tourism is developed, managed, governed, and experienced. This means that sustainability will be core in the manner in which the entire transformation takes place as opposed to the increment of the same in the form of waste reduction and/or the efficiency of energy.

The widely followed pattern of conventional tourism development approaches that stress the growth path and mass consumption of tourist services has now come to be identified as an unsustainable path. The path to the transformation of a sustainable model of tourism development involves redefining the measures of success, giving due considerations to environmental and social concerns alongside economic concerns, and adopting a low-impact and community-based approach to tourism.

There are various factors which have led to a need for the transformation of tourism. These environmental factors, for instance, include issues revolving around sustainability challenges, which threaten the sustainability of the environment, the expansion of the green house effect, pollution, scarcity of water, as well as unsustainably managed natural resources. Social factors also add more force towards sustainability, particularly through community participation. Moreover, tourists themselves also value sustainability, thus favoring sustainable destinations and organization that demonstrate responsible behaviour.

Change Management: An Overview

Change management refer to a process or approach that involves planning, executing, or supporting change on the individual level as well as the organizational level. This involves recognizing that the achievement of change depends on human or organizational behavior, attitudes, or feelings as well as structure or technology.

Generally, change management literature reveals that change follows a process from change awareness creation, vision creation, communication, implementation, to institutionalization phases, while consistently emphasizing change leadership, stakeholder engagement, as well as communication as critical success elements in change management.

For an organization, change management entails minimizing resistance, maximizing readiness, and enhancing potential and structures to accomplish business and/or strategic imperatives. For tourism, overall change management goes beyond individual organizations to tourism destinations and supply chains. It is for these reasons that change management in tourism is more complicated to carry out.

There is evidence across various sectors that change initiatives are failing not due to a lack of appropriate technical solutions but as a result of insufficient attention to human and cultural factors. For an effective sustainability transition in the tourism sector, change management is important for sustainability transitions in tourism.

Drivers of Change towards Sustainable Tourism

There are a variety of factors, closely intertwined, which the tourism industry must face in order to achieve a new path of sustainability. For instance, environmental norms as well as international sustainability agreements have spurred tourism firms as well as destinations towards environmental sustainability. Global agreements on issues concerning climate change, nature conservation, as well as sustainable development, have affected tourism policies.

Extreme weather events, sea levels rise, changes in the ecosystem, among other climatic-related risks, pose a threat to the sustainability of tourism products/sites themselves. For instance, the threats looming over coastal/tropical tourist sites, island tourist sites, nature-based tourist sites/clubs/Safari, among other tourist products/sites make sustainability an imperative for survival rather than a choice!

Technological changes have also played a major role as change drivers. Technologies such as digital technologies can enable the monitoring of sustainability performance. They can provide supply chain transparency and support the communication of sustainability performance with stakeholders. Resource efficiency and tourist management can be boosted by smart tourism technology. Implementing new technology may need organizational change.

Now a days tourist preferences are changing towards the sustainable tourism practices, many travellers now actually want to experiences that are responsible, environmentally friends and respectful to local communities. Tourist starts pay attention to eco-friendly labels, sustainability certificates and responsible tourism brands when choosing where to travel. if business ignore these expectations, they may lose customers.

At the same time, the traditional tourism systems are completely damaged during covid-19 pandemic that create a major global crises, which revealed a need for tourism to be more flexible, adaptable and sustainable. Because of this, the recovery plans now focus more on rebuilding tourism in a sustainable way, offering different types of tourism, and supporting local communities.

Although these market and external pressures strongly encourage change, they do not automatically lead to real transformation. Tourism organizations must use change management to carefully plan and guide sustainability efforts. This helps turn external pressure into practical actions that can last over time.

Role of Change Management in Sustainable Tourism Transformation

Change management helps the tourism organizations to move towards sustainability successfully by making people aware of the changes and preparing them for it. To achieve sustainability,

people should be required to change their way of acting, practices, and thinking. For achieving sustainable tourism transformation, it requires better communication, training, and awareness programs that help people to understand the need for change management and to reduce fear or confusion about the change. Following that, strong leadership also plays an important role in change management practices; according to that, leaders must have the quality of making a clear vision for sustainability and providing resources like money, time, and staff as required, and setting priorities for implementing change. When leaders start to support sustainability, others are more likely to take an interest and follow the change. Without strong leadership, sustainability looks only good on paper but will not last forever.

Another key factor for achieving sustainability in tourism is stakeholder involvement. Tourism not only involves employees and tourists, it includes many groups of people such as communities, employees, businesses, suppliers, and tourists. It is mandatory to involve all these groups of people in decision making process to reduce resistance to change, build trust and to create a sense of ownership towards the change this will increase long-term commitment to sustainability practices.

In addition, organizational culture also matters for sustainability change practices. A culture should always motivate people to learning, innovation, and ethical and environmental responsibility to make sustainable change easier. To make sustainability a part of everyday routine, organizations should undergo some practices like providing training, rewards, feedback, and continuous learning for the employees. At last, change management ensures that sustainability is the integration of rules, policies, and evaluation systems, so it becomes a permanent part of how tourism organizations operate.

Challenges in Managing Change for Sustainable Tourism

Although change management in tourism is of utmost significance, a host of issues makes change management a complicated process. The tourism industry has a highly disintegrated and heterogeneous nature, which makes management a complex issue in tourism sites dominated by small and medium enterprises that lack financial strength and expertise to support sustainability in tourism.

The greatest barrier to change is that of “resistance to change.” Here, various practices for sustainable development are often deemed to be “expensive” and “complex” to execute according to the workforce as well as management. The fear that a rise in workload magnitude would ensue if these practices are executed, coupled with sustainable development being “external” to an organization, is also a key contributing barrier.

Problems associated with policy and governance could also complicate the change management processes. Issues of conflicting regulations and the sustainability of regulations, as well as overlapping institutions, may impede the sustainability processes. The problem is that if government agencies work badly together, tourism organizations might feel confused about which rules and regulations to adhere to. The lack of coordination in the agencies makes it hard for businesses to adopt sustainability. The other problem is the difficulty in measuring. Many sustainable indicators are hard to put into numbers. Sustainability efforts also usually have a long-term effect. As a result of these challenges, tourism organizations need a flexible and complete approach in managing changes. This implies managing changes in a manner that considers the peculiar nature of tourism systems.

Table 1 Role of Change Management in Sustainable Tourism Transformation

Change Management Dimension	Key Focus	Contribution to Sustainable Tourism	Supporting Literature Source
Leadership Commitment	Vision setting, resource allocation	Drives sustainability as a strategic priority rather than a symbolic initiative	Kotter (1996); UNWTO (2018)
Stakeholder Engagement	Community, employees, suppliers, tourists	Enhances legitimacy, reduces resistance, ensures inclusive development	Freeman (1984); Bramwell & Lane (2011)
Communication & Awareness	Training, transparency, information sharing	Builds awareness and readiness for sustainability-oriented change	Hiatt (2006); Burnes (2017)
Organizational Culture	Values, norms, learning orientation	Embeds sustainability into routine practices and decision-making	Schein (2010); Lozano (2015)
Capacity Building	Skills development, knowledge sharing	Improves implementation capability of sustainable practices	UNEP (2019); Weaver (2006)
Institutionalization of Change	Policies, procedures, performance metrics	Ensures long-term sustainability beyond short-term projects	Lewin (1951); UNWTO (2020)

Implications for Tourism Organizations and Policymakers

This discussion says that tourism organizations and the government need to manage sustainability in a planned and organized way, not as a one-time or separate project. First the tourism businesses should focus on making a clear plan to change tourism sustainability practices, explain sustainability goals to the employees of the organization, provide proper training to the staffs, involve partners and communities to the training, at last check the progress regularly to achieve the sustainable tourism practices. To achieve this, there is some tools like leadership, reward systems, and regular feedback that can also help to make change much easier. The governments and destination managers also play an important role in sustainable tourism practices. They should create supportive policies, offer financial help or incentives, provide training programs, and share knowledge and best practices. This can make it easier for tourism businesses to become more sustainable and also there should always be good cooperation between the government, business, and other groups who help everyone to learn and work together more effectively. Finally to accomplish the sustainable tourism practices, some universities and training centers should offer few courses about sustainability and change management for tourism workers, which can also help them to easily prepare employees to adapt and support long-term sustainable tourism.

Conclusion

This paper explains sustainable tourism is not an easy or quick process. It is a long-term transformation process that required a change in people's mindsets, behavior, and organization in their work to achieve the goal. It also explains why change management is important for achieving

sustainable tourism. This analysis emphasizes the importance and need for leadership, stakeholder support, clear communication, and organizational culture to turn the sustainable tourism idea into real actions. Although it also provides useful ideas for research, tourism professionals, and policymakers, it offers theoretical, relevant insights for achieving sustainable tourism practices. It is possible for further researchers to test these ideas in real tourism settings to see how change management practices influence sustainable tourism practices.

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