

Tourism, ecotourism and sport tourism: the framework for certification

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to develop a framework for identifying the need for ecotourism certification within ecotourism and sport tourism (EST) by discussing the overlapping characteristics on the dimensions of EST.

Design/methodology/approach – Qualitatively, the Social Exchange Theory was used to discover segments of tourists based on the two dimensions: EST.

Findings – The findings discovered four strategic segments (namely; vacation, green, action oriented and active tourists), their related activities, and the level of need for eco certification.

Practical implications – EST activities offer a unique opportunity for tourism managers to positively influence conservation in and around communities, protected areas and sport events. Applying and implementing a global eco certification is paramount to attract tourists and enhance credibility of sport tourism.

Originality/value – Identification of the four tourists segments and their relative need for certification is the novelty of the study. The labels of the identified tourist segments are: vacation tourist (low on ecotourism and low on sport tourism); green tourist (high on ecotourism and low on sport tourism); action-oriented tourist (high on ecotourism and high on sport tourism); and active tourist (low on ecotourism and high on sport tourism). The certification needs for green and action-oriented tourists are HIGH, for active tourist is MEDIUM, and for vacation tourist is LOW.

Keywords Tourism, Ecotourism, Sport tourism

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Tourism is a multi-trillion dollar industry and a dominant force in the lives of millions of people globally (Kurtzman, 2005, p. 47), accounting for over 230 million jobs and over 10 percent of the gross domestic product worldwide (IES, 2014). Tourism has grown 7 percent per year since 1990, and the number of tourists who traveled abroad grew by 6 percent. In 2020, the international tourism market is forecast to reach about 1.6 billion international arrivals (UNWTO, 2014). Sports tourism also offers a significant potential for revenue generation on a global scale (Klayman, 2012). As a result, tourism has also become a major economic force for several developing and developed countries alike, and has drawn attention of both scholars and managers.

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Previous studies relating to tourism concentrated on individual traits (Fennell, 1999), consumer behavior (Khan, 2003; Ryan *et al.*, 2000), demographics and ecotourism products (Wearing and Neil, 1999), and ecotourists' quality expectations (Khan, 2003), among others; however, recently, scholars have paid attention to the sustainability of tourism – ecotourism – defined as responsible travel that conserves the natural environment and improves the well-being of local people (Ghosh *et al.*, 2003), and have suggested that governments should regulate the ecotourism industry. Regulating tourism through certification schemes is a strategy for few countries for encouraging the sustainable production of goods and services (Medina, 2005). The certifications are particularly important because some opportunistic tourism operators capitalize on ecotourism's appeal to promote eco or sport activities with little or no true attention to environmental and social responsibility (Boo, 1990; Wight, 1994). Ratten and Babiak (2010) have gone extra mile to define the role of social responsibility, philanthropy and entrepreneurship in the context of sports industry. Corporate social responsibility is integral in the global business environment but it has only recently been discussed in the context of sports tourism (Walters and Chadwick, 2009).

Sports tourism – one of the largest and fastest-growing segments of travel and tourism industry – defined as all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated casually or in an organized way for non-commercial or business/commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home and work locality (Standevan and Deknop, 1999, p. 12) is found to contribute significantly to the economic development and tourist traffic in a city or region (Turco *et al.*, 2003). But it has also been criticized for the lack of standardized method of determining residents' perception of the benefits of sport tourism events (Gibson, 1998). Madichie (2009) also questions the wisdom of the UAE investments in professional or elite sports and its sustainability. Attractiveness of ecotourism and sport tourism (EST) rests in its potential for providing economic benefits to local communities while maintaining ecological integrity through low impact, non-consumptive use of local resources. Currently, there is no consensus as to what constitutes EST and how they should be regulated and certified globally; however, some countries such as Australia, Costa Rica and Sweden have their own certification schemes and standards. Nonetheless, research is needed to develop a managerially relevant conceptual framework exploring the need for certification in both ecotourism and sports tourism in a global context. Our study attempts to do this.

The purpose of the paper is to develop a typology combining sports and ecotourism that illustrates breadth and scope of the segments in relation to the certification. As such, Gammon and Robinson (2003) encourage to branch out the discipline in whatever areas it deemed appropriate – however vague the linkages, creating a new foci of interest – and resist polarizing as two subject areas. Much has been written separately about the precise nature of sports and tourism, but there seems to be little work that integrates the certification aspect of the tourism. Keeping this in mind and responding to the call for future research (Tsiotsou and Ratten, 2010), we fill the gap in literature by using the psychological and sociological perspectives of the Social Exchange Theory (SET) that postulates that people engage in interaction or reciprocate with other people because they expect to receive benefits or incentives from the other party (Ap, 1992).

Few studies have focussed on ecotourism (Honey, 1999), sport tourism (Hudson, 1995), urban areas (Lawton, 2005), rural setting (Vogt and Jun, 2004), economic impact (Kurtzman, 2005), and destination of sports or professional tourism (Williams, 2006; Madichie, 2009), among others; however, a little is paid to combine the two industries and develop an integrated framework that assesses the need for getting ecotourism or

sports tourism certified in order to protect environment (as a sport destination) and local communities, and ensure that local communities indeed economically benefit. The certification assists tourists in making decisions. It appears that our study is the first of its kind that contributes to literature by combining ecotourism and sports tourism and by developing a typology which has direct implications for managers in understanding which tourist segment has a need for certification priorities. Development of such typology should also be useful for sports entrepreneurs – people or organizations involved in sports that apply innovation to solve business issues (Ratten, 2011a). We further contribute by identifying the four strategic tourists segments based on ecotourism and sports tourism: vacation, green, action oriented and active tourists.

In the following sections, we explain the relationship between tourism, ecotourism and sports tourism, give a background in the political, economic, social and environmental context, discuss existing certification schemes, discuss the SET, explain methodology, and develop a framework for the identification of the tourist segments and their levels of needs for the certification, followed by a discussion, contribution and future direction of the study and implications for marketing managers.

Relationship between tourism, ecotourism and sport tourism

Tourism relates to a temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places they normally live and work and the type of activities they engage in during the stay at these destinations (Bennet, 2000). Because of the movement of people from place to place, its marketing differs in at least three ways: first, tourism is primarily a service industry where services are intangible, and quality control and evaluation of experiences are more difficult to envision; second, the customer must travel to the destinations for the products or services instead of moving the product to the customer; and, finally, people usually participate several activities and visit many places when traveling (Honey, 1998).

Ecotourism is defined as a responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. Thus, ecotourism destinations follow the principles to: minimize impact; build environmental and cultural awareness and respect; provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts; provide direct financial benefits for conservation; provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people; and, raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental and social climate (IES, 2014). Based on the principles, taking a tour through the Amazon rainforest is not an example of ecotourism unless the tour in some way benefits the environment and the people who live there. Similarly, a rafting trip would be considered ecotourism if it raised awareness and generated funds to protect the watershed (SAA, 2014). Ecotourism is one aspect of nature-based tourism, which includes many other types of tourism and outdoor recreation such as sport tourism.

Sport tourism relates to specific travel for either passive or active involvement in sports where the sport is the prime motivational reason for travel (World Tourism Organization (WTO), 2010). Tourists are likely to choose eco-friendly sport activities due to the concerns about protecting environment. It is not surprising that cities, regions and even countries are increasingly reliant on visiting golfers, mountain bikers and skiers. In some countries (e.g. UK), sports can account for up to 20 percent of all tourism income (Klaus and Maklan, 2011). Although sport is an integral part of all culture and may be viewed as a separate activity, it is often linked to tourism.

Sport tourism is of two kinds: hard and soft (Gammon and Robinson, 2003). Hard sport tourism relates to active sport tourism that is designed to attract a large number of visitors to a particular place to witness an event in a group setting such as Olympic Games,

Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup and F1, among others. Soft sport tourism refers to tourists traveling to participate in a recreational setting or signing up for leisure activities such as hiking, skiing, rafting, etc. A significant activity of soft sport tourism relates to ecotourism. Our premise for this study is that EST can co-exist and thus can be integrated for the purpose of segmenting tourists.

Political environment and EST

Currently, no global eco certification scheme relating to EST obligates countries to comply with its guidelines. At the International Year of Ecotourism Conference, a large number of government certification schemes was presented but appeared to be poorly conceived as they were intrusive into natural areas and thus generated inequitable outcomes for local communities (Carter, 2007). As such, these schemes are voluntarily in nature and focus more on accommodation and facilities such as energy- and water-saving techniques rather than engaging in EST activities. Further, government schemes relating to nature reserves and national parks often lead to land being forcibly taken from the local people and countless indigenous peoples being displaced. Although these conservation sites can bring additional EST, they may not contribute to improving quality of life of displaced people. Also excessively active involvement in sports, if not monitored or regulated, can be detrimental to eco-friendly environment.

Scholars have also questioned EST's contribution to local development, asserting that little or no ecotourism revenue reaches local people (McLaren, 1998; Healy, 1994; Jacobson and Robles, 1992). Bookbinder *et al.* (1998) find that only 6 percent of surveyed households earned income directly or indirectly from EST relating to Nepal's Royal Chitwan Park. Even those who profit financially from tourism find it to be an unstable source of income which is subject to seasonal fluxes, economic and political events (Epler Wood, 1998).

A balance needs to be struck between the need to protect environment and the desire to generate EST-based revenues through certifications. Fennell (2008) suggests a list of what governments should do to support ecotourism: ensure a sound macro-economic environment; guarantee law and order, and just settlement of disputes; ensure the provision of appropriate infrastructure; ensure the development of human resources; and, acknowledge the role of small business entrepreneurs and facilitate their activities. It is particularly important for developing countries seeking to balance the environmental and economic growth objectives. The challenges faced by environmental policymakers are great, because government funds are typically in short supply and enforcement of environmental regulations is almost non-existent (Chase *et al.*, 1998).

We argue a possible alternative which encourages nations and natural destination owners to get eco-certified over a period of time. This alternative gives the ecological destination owners the time they need to improve their ecological practices in their own areas to comply with the certification. True, if joining a certification scheme is voluntary, many ecotourism-based businesses may not choose to join a certification scheme; they will prefer profit to environment or the economic situation of the local people. Thus a global political solution is needed for the certification.

Economic value of EST

The economic impact of EST includes the generation of profit, provision of economic opportunities and benefits to local people. The arrival of tourists serves as a spin-off for other businesses (e.g. the transportation industry, the food industry and the hotel industry) and generates revenues and benefits for the local people. Because EST brings tourists closer to local people, markets and activities, it can be an important low-cost

mechanism for local businesses and artisans to market and sell their goods (Healy, 1994). As the industry grows, more people find employment opportunities and sources of revenues. Thus, EST contributes substantially to the local economy especially when local residents are involved in its management and operations (Wunder, 2000; Lindberg *et al.*, 1996).

Weaver (2008) found that in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in Australia, travelers spent 40 percent on hotels, food and beverage, 19 percent on trade and 15 percent on transportation. Ceballos-Lascurain (1996) cites a study estimating Amboseli National Park's financial value (attributable mostly to tourism) at US\$40/ha as compared to less than \$0.80/ha when used for agriculture. In another study by Munn (1994) found that each free-flying macaw in Peru generated between US\$750 and US\$4700 annually in tourism revenues. Unlike many sustainable harvesting initiatives, EST consistently provides an impressive financial return per hectare use of land.

However, not every EST is likely to be successful. Some fail due to the ineffective or insufficient marketing, particularly in the emerging markets such as Latin America, Asia and Africa where the lack of the knowledge and resources to protect the sustainability of the ecotourism and sport destinations contribute to demise of EST businesses (Honey, 2008). In 1987, Costa Rican Giovanni Bello was famous for its 1,500 adult golden toads in the Forest Reserve, and it attracted a significant number of travelers to visit the rare wild animals. By 1989, no golden toads were found in the forest. Scientists concluded that the golden toads had become extinct, perhaps due to excessive sport-related activities or environmental related issues.

EST strives to empower and benefit local community, but it might bring unintended harm to the local community, wild animals and nature through excessive sport activities. Also the lack of support from the government does not develop EST markets evenly. Even host cities have been unable to justify the expenditure required to host the games purely on the basis of the spectacle of a few weeks of sporting competition (Weed, 2008). A government regulation and certification may ensure creation of an environment that is economically viable and sustainable throughout the year. In fact, with the increase in sports tourism, governments have begun investing in sports with the expectation that business will benefit (Hoye *et al.*, 2006)

Social impact of EST

Tourism impacts people and social activities and thus can disintegrate local communities' social and cultural structures (Boo, 1990). When tourists visit the remote and scenic natural areas or engage in sport activities, it may be an exciting experience for tourists, but the local communities and culture may be at the risk of being diluted. Brandon (1996) maintains that tourism' most serious impact may be the commodification of culture, where people and their culture become marketable commodities. Further, tourists' beliefs, values and behavior influence the host residents, eroding community cohesion, social relationships and culture practices (McLaren, 2003). Therefore, the factors influencing the social impact of EST such as the changes in value systems, traditional lifestyle, family relationship and individual behavior or community structure should be preserved (Diamantis, 2004).

To address the social impact, Fennell (2008) suggests implementing the following Pro-Poor Policies which could be a part of a certification scheme: first, increase the amount of the industry's wage and the ability of local people to take up employment at all levels of the reserve; second, stimulate a variety of small enterprises capable of taking up contracts inside the reserve and its lodges; and, finally, foster the conditions for local

residents to develop their own lodges in the reserve in partnership with professional operators and lodge developers from the private sectors. These policies and certifications may ensure that local people do not leave their lands and that they will have an income from the use of their lands for ecotourism or sports tourism purposes.

Environment and EST

Tourists like to have a memorable experience in the natural environment. The development of an EST is based on environment and relies on the natural resources; however, EST can have negative environmental impacts. Overcapacity might cause burden on the environment (Reid, 2003), particularly in a wildlife area where EST might break animals' normal lives and create harassment (Diamantis, 2004). In some countries, illegal logging, ranching, mining and human settlement have already destroyed the tropical forests (Honey, 2008). On the other hand, Costa Rica has devoted 30 percent of its land to national parks and reserves, one of the highest in the world. For example, Monteverde, a prime market for EST is in between two reserves – Monteverde and Santa Elena – in the Costa Rican highlands. It is well developed with hotels, restaurants, shops and art galleries (Todras-Whitehill, 2009). Thus, sports tourism can take an active role in promoting the conservation aspect of ecotourism. Table I illustrates dimensions of EST.

Currently, EST industry tends to use ECO logo to attract tourists, though it is still at infant stage. If the industry is promoted carefully with a planned strategy to preserve environment and promote sport activities, EST can be segmented, and for each segment, a need for certification can be determined. We elaborate the segments and certifications after comparing the existing certification schemes in the following section.

The certification schemes – the comparison

An eco-certificate is considered to be a mark of high product quality and an indication of environmentally, economically and socially sound products (Haaland and Aas, 2010). Certification also refers to a procedure of auditing and giving assurance that a facility, a product, service or management system meets specific standards (Honey and Stewart,

Minimal	Extreme Ecotourist
<i>1. Level of commitment to being environmentally responsible</i>	
Low level ←————→	High level
Shallow green	Deep green
E.g., minimize negative environmental impacts	Enhance environment and habitats of species
<i>2. Level of sport activities in the environment</i>	
Low level ←————→	High level
Shallow green	Deep green
Passive observer/listener involvement	Active and intense
<i>3. Level of physical difficulty or challenge in sport activities</i>	
Low level ←————→	High level
Shallow green	Deep green
Soft physically	Hard physically

Source: Adapted from Acott *et al.* (1998)

Table I.
Dimensions of
an EST

2002, p. 4). Usually, criteria for sustainable tourism include indicators of social and economic sustainability in addition to indicators of environmental sustainability (Medina, 2005). In the last couple of decades, numbers of ecocertificates, labels and approval schemes have significantly increased (Honey, 2002). Within the tourism industry alone, over 100 certification or eco-labeling programs have been developed (Honey and Stewart, 2002, p. 4), making a systematic review of the certificates a challenge for both customers and industry in terms of their credibility (Buckley and Crabtree, 2007) and market value (Font and Epler Wood, 2007).

However, currently, there are a few established certification schemes such as Danish Green Key, Nordic Swan, Swedish Nature's Best, Ecotourism Australia and Costa Rica's Sustainable Tourism Certificate. About two-thirds of all eco-labels are established and run by private tourism organizations and non-governmental organizations, while the other one-thirds have been developed by government agencies (WTO, 2010). However, Costa Rica is an exception in that it has the responsibilities for both establishing and running the sustainable tourism program (Honey, 2008, p. 203). Table II compares the certification schemes of Australia, Costa Rica and Sweden, and lists how the schemes are organized, financed and implemented. The Appendix also presents Costa Rica's Sustainable Tourism Certification Baseline Criteria (RFA, 2014).

Launched	Australia 1996	Costa Rica 1997	Sweden 2002
Owner	Cooperation between tourism organizations and NGOs	Authorities	Cooperation between tourism organization and NGOs
Certifies	Accommodations Tours Cruises and charters Attractions	Hotels and tour operators	Products/activities operators
Financing development	Public and private	Public	Public and private
Financing regular operations	Private (self sustained) government grants for further development of program	Public	Public and private (also use of sponsors)
Number of certified businesses/products until 2009	Tour operators Products: 223 Accommodation: 77 Attractions: 40	Hotels: 2007:61 (Honey, 2008)	Products/activities: 206 Operators: 75
Auditing Levels	External Nature tourism Ecotourism Advanced ecotourism	External 5 levels (1-5 leaves awarded)	Internal Basic
Specifically Addressing Protected areas	Yes	No	No
Fees	Annual fees and application fees based on annual turnover	Annual fees: unknown application fee: sponsored	Annual fees and application fees based on annual income

Table II.
Comparison of the three certification schemes

Source: Haaland and Aas (2010)

The SET

For the purpose of our study, we use the SET for the development of the integrated framework in the form of a typology that identifies the four segments and their related products and services. The SET is a general sociological theory for understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation (Ap, 1992). According to the theory, people engage with other people with the aim to receive benefits or incentives from the other party. Based on this premise, the EST has emerged as the most widely accepted theory in tourism-related research (Perez and Nadal, 2005) in which tourist (people) engage with local residents (other people), environment and activities to gain experience as benefits. In line with the theory, our conceptual framework indicates that residents who welcome tourists and view tourism as valuable and believe that the environmental costs do not exceed the benefits will favor the exchange. The same is true for the tourists who believe that visiting a tourist designation would not undermine the environment will participate in the exchange. As such the exchange would be moderated by the environment certification, assuring the tourists that the environment is preserved. Based on the SET theory and the different factors (political, economic, social, environmental and the certification) discussed earlier, we propose the following conceptual framework and discuss the segments while drawing implications for marketing managers. The purpose of initiating a mandatory global certification is to plan, market and sustain growth of tourism that ensures potential benefits to local communities, tourists and environment (Swanson *et al.*, 2007). As such, the advances in technologies, transportations and the globalization present an opportunity to establish global certification standards to regulate the ecotourism and sport industry.

Methodology

For the purpose of the study to develop a conceptual framework, we use the qualitative method as it allows us to become a more of an insider and discover the worldview of social actors (Blaikie, 2000) and gain deeper understanding of specific issues by listening and by being sensitive to what is being observed and revealed (Henderson and Bialeschki, 2002). We make use of the listening, observing and revealing by reviewing extant literature on sports, tourism and the certification. In fact, sports management scholars have recently noted that the discipline could benefit from the use of methodological alternatives to positivism (Funk *et al.*, 2003; Rinehart, 2005; Tsiotsou and Ratten, 2010). Some even argue that researchers should spend less time tracing epistemological and ontological roots of their methods and more time on the stories of what they have learned the hard way while conducting their qualitative studies (Andrews *et al.*, 2005).

True, no one paradigm that can capture the richness of real-world situations but pluralism could be sought in both method logical and philosophical perspectives (Mingers, 1997). Our view is that the contribution of each perspective should be valued for its unique contribution to the knowledge and understanding generated by the research study as a whole. From this viewpoint and consistent with the methodology suggested by Arnegger *et al.* (2010) for the development of a typology, we use deductive approach by reviewing literature and discussing pertinent issues such as environmental certification in relation to sport and ecotourism. It is clear from the literature that increasing multiplicity of tourism experiences has inspired various scholars to develop typologies which take into account pluralist pattern instead of portraying tourists as a homogenous group (Arnegger *et al.*, 2010; Yiannakis and Gibson, 1992; Pearce, 1982).

We also admit that like any conceptual model, a four-cell diagram may be over simplification of the complex reality and that any given segment of human behavior may fall anywhere within the total field (Hamilton-Smith, 1987, p. 341, 336). So, we have tried to strike a balance between our desire to overly simplify (e.g. all types of tourists) the complex tourist behavior (e.g. decision-making behavior relating to environment) with the need to present a typology in a logical, comprehensive and structured form. Cohen's (1979) seminal work on typologies serves as a starting point for the conceptual development but we have adapted it to accommodate the role of environmental protection certification in developing our typology. Our premise and assumption is that tourists have psychological attributes such as travel motivation, and that they need to refer to a visible institutional arrangements (such as environment protection certification in our case) when selecting tourist destinations (Uriely *et al.*, 2002, p. 521). Consistent with this view and using the SET, which has been used extensively in tourism-related studies (Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Vogt and Jun, 2004), we conceptually propose a framework in Figure 1 for the determination of the certification needs. Our typology has four segments which we explain in the next section.

The framework and the segments

Our proposed framework identifies four strategic segments based on the two dimensions: Ecotourism and sports tourism. Each dimension is split between two subgroups (low and high) depending upon their levels of orientations toward environmental friendliness (ecotourism) or sport activities (sport tourism). We label the segments as vacation tourist, green tourist, action-oriented tourist and active tourist:

- (1) Vacation tourist (low on ecotourism, low on sport tourism and low on the certification) emphasizes the travel experiences in a city (e.g. UNESCO sites ...) or nature (e.g. beach ...) which has direct economic benefits to local people. This segment is developed in a way that may resemble historical pattern of colonization and economic dependency (Lea, 1988), defined as a conditioning situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others (Dos Santos, 1970). Because the majority of tourists come from developed countries, these tourist destinations can be designated as heritage sites (and thus protecting it) which could be a source of income through entrance fee; for example, Portuguese and British

Sport Tourism	HI	Active Tourists 4 Certification: MI Ex: FIFA, F1...	Action-oriented Tourists 3 Certification: HI Ex: Hiking, Rafting...
	LO	Vacation Tourist 1 Certification: LO Ex: City/UNESCO sites...	Green Tourist 2 Certification: HI Ex: Animal or desert safaris
		LO	HI
		Ecotourism	

Figure 1.
The framework – nature of tourism and need for certification

Notes: LO, low; HI, high; MI, medium

Source: The authors

slave trade practices of Accra in Ghana in Africa. This segment of tourists may like relax, observe and experience the environment. Experiencing life in Indian Ashram or a Kibbutz in Israel may also be an example of this segment (Arnegger *et al.*, 2010).

- (2) Green tourist (high on ecotourism, low on sport tourism and high on the certification) focusses on activities that operate in an environmentally friendly fashion. This segment should meet the needs of tourists while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Green tourism is a rapidly expanding industry with a wide range of positive economic benefits, enhancing both regional job creation and investment; however, it is also recognized as an industry with potential for manifold negative impacts on natural environments, societies and cultures (Haig and McIntyre, 2002). Reliance on green tourism to generate revenue and growth has led to the destruction of renewable resources and the negative perceptions of the host community because of overcrowding, overloaded infrastructure and pollution (Brohman, 1996). Many of the natural resources on which the green tourism industry depends such as sea, sand and coral reefs, among others, are being over exploited by excessive use and unsound environmental practices (Wilkinson, 1989). Therefore, this segment is in high need of environmental protection through the certification. In fact, green tourist can be considered as people having environmental identity expressed as they interact with the natural environment (Weigert, 1997). So stronger the environment identity, the more positive attitude a green tourist will have toward nature-based tourist destinations. Tourism manager can use the intimate contact of tourists with the nature to promote positive values of the natural environment (Kellert, 2002).
- (3) Action-oriented tourist (high on ecotourism, high on sport tourism and high on the certification) usually requires physical skills and includes risks and inconvenience such as mount hiking, skiing, rope sliding while looking down rivers or tress (Costa Rica), river rafting, etc. The growth of the action sports industry is the result of innovation and technology that adapts to changing consumer and corporate demands (Cianfrone and Zhang, 2006). The global media attention to action sports has also facilitated their popularity. For example, Tony Hawk, an action sport star, pioneered skateboarding in the 1980s and then lent his name to a video game (Ratten, 2011b). National Sporting Goods Association has recognized skateboarding and snowboarding as the fastest-growing action sports. From managerial viewpoint, the action sports segment offers a practical marketing direction as to how they can enter the emerging type of sports that will appeal to different demographics and international markets (Ratten and Ratten, 2011). Because action-oriented sports can be situated in nature, this segment has a high priority for the certification.
- (4) Active tourist (low on ecotourism, high on sport tourism and medium on the certification) sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place through events such as FIFA, F1. The globalization of sports has led sports teams to collaborate with sports sponsors on international marketing campaigns, creating opportunities for customers, business individuals, groups and organizations (Chadwick, 2005). Given that now more sport is televised than before to a worldwide audience, large sports institutions such as FIFA, International Association of Athletic Federation have been involved in the

development of sports brands; for example, Manchester United has created a worldwide community of fans by being the most valuable sports franchise in the world. FIFA also has partnerships with many multinationals firms such as Adidas, Hyundai, Coca-cola, Emirates, Sony and Visa (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1998). Active tourists are more interested in watching action rather than getting into action themselves. Because these activities mostly take place in urban areas, this segment has a medium level priority for the certification.

From marketing viewpoint, these segments are useful as governments and leaders are beginning to appreciate the value of sports with regard to both the national economy and international relations. Thus, encouraging a reciprocal relationship between tourism industry and certification agency can build a better understanding of sustainable tourism. Indeed, the certification status of the organization can be used for marketing and enhancing revenue for the organizations. It is particularly important for developing countries and small economies that may not have export capabilities but by bringing tourists to their home countries, they can sell local products (particularly perishable items such as fruits) to the tourists in domestic markets. Thus, marketing managers can target desired segments and satisfy these tourists' specific needs.

Discussion

Several governments around the world have adopted sustainable ecotourism as a policy, planning and strategy to minimize tourism' impact on the environment and local culture while generating revenue, providing employment for locals and promoting the conservation of local ecosystems. In this context, a global certification should provide a strategic direction to preserve the nature and contribute to growth of EST industry in a sustainable manner. To formulate the global certification strategy, a variety of standards such as certification, code of conduct, registration, and monitoring and incentive mechanisms need to be set up. Certification is also a tool to maintain sustainability. Honey (2002) suggests that ecotourism certification should include businesses, service and products that describe themselves as involved in ecotourism in a particular country, state or region in the world. The ecotourism industry could be monitored for quality, health, hygiene, safety and sustainability. This global regulation would require all products, facilities and services in the EST industry to meet the same standards. Like WTO, regulating and supervising international trade among its members, a global certification could encourage countries to take the social and environmental responsibilities seriously. As in UN, the international human rights law is a universal jurisdiction, similarly, a global certification scheme under a global umbrella is necessary for EST industries.

The EST industry does not only operate in the developed countries but also in developing countries and emerging markets. The cultural complexity and social reality may offer obstacles to the implementation of the certification globally. In this regard, an international standard mechanism should be implemented in EST industry, but the local government, businesses and communities should be able to adjust the policies to fit their local cultures, values and practices. The adjustment is important because when values and cultures become commodities, the selling of the commodities has to meet the local, social and political standards (Hall, 1994). To develop a realistic yet binding system and create consensus around it, is often the most costly part of developing a good certification system, which includes assessment of state-of-the art knowledge as well as negotiations among the involved stakeholders (Haaland and Aas, 2010).

Contributions, limitations and future research direction

We make three distinct contributions to literature: first, from theoretical viewpoint, we studied the combined effects of two related but somewhat different industries (ecotourism and sports tourism) on the need for a global certification, and contribute to knowledge by providing a typology as to when the certification is required and for which segment of the tourists. This should lead to a better understanding of the need for the certification. Second, our notable contribution is the identification of the four strategic segments of the typology – vacation, green, action oriented and active tourists. Indeed, there is methodological challenge in developing a conceptual framework such as the typology; nonetheless, our examples in the study should aid understanding of the typology and its segments. Obviously, a tourist can fall in two categories depending upon their motivation. Therefore, the segments should be interpreted in light of the limitations. However, our typology provides a theoretical base for future research in terms of the expansion of the typology (e.g. 3×3 matrix being more precise than 2×2 proposed here) and empirical investigation and validation of the typology. Another line of enquiry would be to refine the certification checklist (presented in the Appendix) for each segment of the typology and test for its suitability, reliability and validity. Finally, from methodological viewpoint and future direction for research, our framework can be tested empirically by measuring the activities for the each segment and assessing its impact on tourism performance.

Implications for marketing managers

Our study offers a few implications for EST managers. First of all, ecotourism and sports tourism-related activities offer a unique opportunity for tourism managers to positively influence conservation in and around communities, protected areas, and sports events, which can be a source of memorable experience for the tourists. Thus, applying and implementing a global certification standard is paramount to attract tourists and enhance credibility for businesses. Although we emphasize on a global certification standard, a regional approach to certify EST businesses may also be necessary, as different countries have different needs. For example, a developed country such as Australia may not have the same needs as an African developing country, so the standardized certification may result in being inefficient in some markets (Fennell, 2008). To regulate the market, different levels of governments will need to cooperate, coordinate and implement the global certification. Managers would also need to update themselves on a regular basis to monitor the trends in EST, necessitating the need for training and development for administrative staffs. We suggest that a certified EST would ensure that a certain proportion of EST-based revenue would be mandatory for EST businesses to invest in protecting environment and empowering local people.

Managers should be cognizant of the fact that their efforts to set criteria for EST in global context may lead to a vague general prescription about how an international certification standard could appropriately set standards for their businesses, given their local concerns (Epler Wood and Halpenny, 2001, p. 129). In this regard, a national certification scheme may be more likely to produce concrete measurable criteria relating to sensitive issues such as local people. Otherwise, a resulting standards may be too low to provide adequate protection for the environment and too high for small and medium businesses in developing countries to meet, exacerbating global inequities. Managers should also realize that different jurisdiction standards in different countries may also make it difficult to implement the same ecotourism policy worldwide. To help

managers implement the widely acclaimed Costa Rica Sustainable Tourism standards, we present the baseline criteria in the Appendix which managers can adapt and use for benchmarking (RFA, 2014). True, the market for certified tourism products should be sufficiently large to enable certification program to be economically viable (Sharpley, 2001). Managers can use the framework presented in Figure 1 to assess priorities for the need for the certification.

Finally, managers should avoid being accused of greenwashing when developing a scheme for certification of EST. They should endeavor to get credibility for their certification by having external auditing and accreditations. Although financial aspect may be an impediment to auditing, choosing easy and simple solutions in the short term might become costly in the future.

Conclusion

If EST market remains unregulated, it will lead to the development of unhealthy business practices. Businesses may only concentrate on revenues, ignoring the negative impact of overcapacity, employment opportunities, polluted environment and diluted culture, among others. Also, EST will accelerate the pace of social and environmental degradation and destruction of the remaining untouched parts of the world. A global certification to regulate EST is urgently needed. This study concludes that the certification standards could increase predictive power of the segments in the context of sport and ecotourism industries. Understanding the impact of certification on the segments is crucial to promote the concept of sustainable tourism development to minimize environmental and socio-cultural impacts while maximizing the economic benefits for tourist destinations. As Ratten and Ratten (2011) suggest, sports marketing can provide opportunities for firms to advertise their services in a sports-related context such as buying the naming rights to a sports stadium, sponsoring individual athletes or providing clothing and sports equipment. The implication of our study is that the segments and related products and services can be used by sports marketing managers to enhance their business performance.

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Appendix. Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas Baseline Criteria

Water consumption is periodically measured and meter reading records are kept.

There are written plans, with water usage and consumption reduction goals.

Measures are taken to save water (for drinking, irrigation, swimming pools, etc.); when applicable, devices are installed to use water efficiently.

Policies and measures to save water and use it efficiently are deployed to customers, employees and owners.

Energy consumption is periodically measured and meter reading records are kept.

There are written plans, with energy usage and consumption reduction goals.

Renewable energy sources are used, when applicable.

Measures are taken to make the best use of natural lighting.

Turning off equipment and lights when not in use is encouraged, through either communication or special devices.

Equipment and devices are in place to use energy efficiently.

When applicable, high performance and efficient vehicles (i.e. four-stroke boat motors) are used.

Measures are adopted to prevent or minimize heat or cold losses in areas with room heating or air conditioning.

Endangered species, or products thereof, or items stemming from unsustainable practices are not consumed, sold, traded or displayed.

No captive wildlife is kept, except for wildlife breeding farms, rescue or reintroduction, according to law and best practices.

Artificial feeding of wildlife is prevented, except when it is done by sowing host or food plants.

Measures are taken to prevent company noise and lighting from having an impact on wildlife.

In sensitive areas, measures are taken to prevent pest and exotic species introduction.

The company joins or supports conservation and management of some state-owned or private natural area located within company influence zone.

Specific waste sorting actions have been identified and implemented.

There is a program to minimize procurement of waste-producing inputs.

Waste of any kind is sorted to be reused or recycled, and its final disposal is verified, including construction waste.

Company organic waste is used in some management program, such as composting, fertilizer manufacturing, mulching, farm animal feed and others.

The company supports and joins recycling programs, if any.

Both toilet and soapy wastewater are managed in such a way they do not affect public health nor pollute.

No bodies of water are polluted with toxic, hazardous, or eutrophivating products.

Properly treated wastewater or effluents are reused, when feasible (for instance, in irrigation, cleaning, or other).

Measures have been implemented for storm water adequate channeling, use and disposal.

Measures are adopted to minimize gas, pollutant spray, and strong odor emissions, as well as unpleasant noises.

The soil is not polluted with oil derivatives or persistent toxic compounds.

Biodegradable and non-eutrophivating cleaning and cosmetic products are used.

Specific actions are taken on environmental education and other issues focussing on neighboring communities, customers, employees and owners.

Environmental education programs (committees, groups) existing in the area are supported, or their creation is encouraged.

Responsible behavior is encouraged among visitors.

Visitors are provided with information about the protected areas they are about to visit.

Visitors are provided with information about nearby protected areas, and they are encouraged to visit them.

Visitors are provided with information on native wildlife and plant species found in the area.

Visitors are informed about water conservation and rational use practices, and they are encouraged to help.

Visitors are informed about adequate waste management practices, and they are encourage to help.

Signs are posted to guide and educate both customers and employees.

Visitors are informed about energy conservation and rational use practices, and they are encouraged to help.

Neighboring community cultural, sports and recreational activities are supported and disseminated, with stakeholders' prior consent.

Visiting local businesses and communities is encouraged, when they wish it.

The company joins or supports neighboring community development initiatives, with stakeholders' prior consent.

Products and services from micro, small and medium local businesses are used, particularly sustainable ones.

Local staff hiring and training is promoted, at all levels in the company.

Making and selling handicrafts and other local products is encouraged.

The company should have a widely known and feasible contingency plan that includes communities.

No selling, trading or displaying of archeological pieces/objects should be allowed, unless the corresponding permits are obtained (in the case of displaying them).

Specific measures are adopted to promote an understanding and respect of indigenous cultures and customs.

Provision of basic services to neighboring communities is not to be jeopardized.

Policies against sexual commercial exploitation, particularly of children and adolescents, are followed and deployed.

A sustainability policy addressing environmental, socioeconomic and service quality issues is in place.

Environmental policy is made known to customers, employees, and owners.

No social, gender or racial discrimination of any kind is practiced or supported.

The company has an ethical code for directors, customers, and employees, and behaves accordingly.

The company has and implements a business plan that is suitable to its reality/scale, including environmental, sociocultural and financial issues.

There are programs and mechanisms in place to favor participatory approaches in managing and operating the business.

The company complies with labor laws (both domestic and international) and social rights.

The company complies with environmental laws, standards and regulations.

The company complies with laws, standards and regulations concerning the protection of site historical and cultural heritage.

Regardless of service category, facilities are kept in perfect sanitation and cleaning conditions.

Group size is appropriate and group members respect visited site regulations.

There is a preventive maintenance program in place for all facilities, vehicles and equipments.

The necessary measures are adopted to ensure product and service quality.

Clear, complete, and truthful information is given about provided product and service conditions.

Promotional materials are truthful and do not promise more than can be reasonably expected by customers.

Customers are provided with information on the site's history, culture, and natural environment.

Policies are in place, and specific actions are implemented, regarding staff training on environmental issues related to company operations.

Policies are in place, and specific actions are implemented, regarding staff training on socio-cultural issues related to company operations.

Policies are in place, and specific actions are implemented, regarding staff training on the company's quality system, and on operating issues.

Policies are in place, and specific actions are implemented, regarding staff training on emergency response.

Buildings are designed at the right scale and respecting the landscape.

When applicable, facilities for people with special needs should be built.

Environmentally friendly building materials and techniques are used.

Health and safety conditions required by employees, guests, and neighbors are provided.

All measures needed to ensure customer safety during their tourist and recreational activities are taken.

A contingency plan for environmental emergencies is in place.

A contingency plan for health and safety emergencies is in place.

Visitors are provided with information on the safety measures they should take while on the premises.

Insurance policies and other customer and staff protection instruments are in place.

Water used for human consumption, including ice, is demonstrably safe.

Insect and rodent control is biological and environmentally friendly.

There is a food handling program in line with best manufacturing practices.

The company has a policy of favoring certified suppliers or suppliers following best environmental and social practices.

Environmentally friendly supplies are purchased, such as recycled or non-traditional paper, organic food, certified wood and others.

There is a record-keeping program or plan to identify and monitor (environmental and social) impacts generated by company operations.

There is a mechanism to receive customer inputs, complaints, and comments, in addition to keeping a record of such inputs and their corresponding corrective actions.

Both corrective and preventive management actions needed to ensure continuous improvement are monitored and critically analyzed.

Source: RFA (2014)

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