

AIEST Congress 2009: Abstracts Core Stream

Enhancing Knowledge in Tourist Firms: between Maintenance and Change

Paola Paniccia & Marco Valeri

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to analyse the problem of learning and knowledge within tourist firms. The main theoretical background and the most recent developments in knowledge management will be illustrated to this purpose.

Design/methodology/approach: The main assumption that learning is the essence of evolution in a firm, is here seen as a process of both maintenance and change along with the dynamics of the reference context. A firm changes as it learns and unlearns along with the dynamics of the social interactions that characterise its evolution in time. This obviously is true for tourist firms, too, be they producers or intermediaries. This kind of tourist is evermore an “élite” tourist not a “mass” one.

Findings: The basic idea is that consistent, therefore successful, delivery services (goods), are primarily the result of an ongoing, complex dialectic firm-environment confrontation. At this point the firm must not only be able to boost the environment but also to provoke changes especially in customers behaviour. These customers then become co-actors in their own value system.

Originality/Value of the Paper: The foregoing analysis showed that the valuable role of the time-knowledge interaction in promoting a new cultural approach to change management of tourist firm, which increasingly acts within a co-evolution perspective with their environment, still not widespread in practice. Adequate levels of knowledge in time and over time generate inequality, differentiation vis-à-vis competitors and, hence, represent a fundamental source of competitive advantage as well as an important firm-environment co-evolution factor.

Type of paper: theoretical paper

Keywords: time – knowledge binomial, change management, innovation, tourist firm, competitive advantage.

The Swiss Tourism Sector and Web 2.0 Change Management

Miriam Scaglione, Colin Johnson & Jean-Philippe Trabichet

Purpose: To examine if Web 2.0 may be considered a disruptive type of innovation or is rather a “normal” technological evolution from Web 1.0.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A literature review evaluated the classification of Web 2.0 as a disruptive innovation along with Dosi’s concept of innovation. A review was also presented of Web 2.0’s application to the tourism sector. The research used a customized web crawler or softbot applied to more than 4’000 tourism companies’ websites to build a data base. A manual check yielded the age for each Website in order to apply Bass-Rogers’ diffusion of innovation model on Web1.0 adoption.

Findings: The adoption of Web 2.0 features has a positive link with the level of internalization and a negative link with the Bass-Rogers’ category of adoption of Web 1.0; the presence of user-generated content is still very limited across all sectors. The kind of Web 2.0 features most adopted are those oriented to establishing satisfaction in stakeholders of IT requirements.

Research Limitations/Implications: A softbot was used instead of a human assessment. Additional limitations were due to the representation of the total number of restaurants obtained in the database.

Practical Implications: The adoption of Web 2.0 seems to be mostly influenced by the level of internationalization and the pressure of the stakeholders more than a revolution of “wikieconomics”.

The economic component that characterizes a disruptive innovation is not yet present in the market.

Originality/Value of the Paper: A large number of websites were analyzed and linked with the Bass-Rogers category of adoption. Theoretically the application of Dosi theory was shown in the tourism industry.

Keywords: SME tourism, Web2.0, UGC, disruptive innovation, Swiss restaurants.

Explaining Decisions for Change in Tourist Destinations: The Garbage Can Model in Action

Pietro Beritelli & Stephan Reinhold

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to present the garbage can model's explicatory value in illustrating decisions for change in Swiss destinations.

Design/methodology/approach: Comparative case studies were elaborated for four Swiss tourist cantons (Berne, Grisons, Ticino, Valais) based on project reports and secondary sources including key informant interviews.

Findings: The paper provides insights about perceived problems, available solutions and participants in the researched tourist destinations at the time the choice was taken to establish destination structures. The garbage can model is a useful tool to analyze change in destinations. It explains why and how decisions in complex environments are established, why seemingly rational choices are not taken or taken too late, and it allows including stakeholders and particularly public intervention in public-private partnership structures.

Originality/value: The paper brings a new perspective in change management research for the tourism industry as it applies a model which has been derived from the public administration theory.

Keywords Tourist Destination, DMO, Change, Garbage Can Model, Choice

Destination Marketing Organizations facing the Challenges of Change

Arja Lemmetyinen

Purpose: In this paper the purpose is to study the role of the destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in managing the change.

Design/methodology/approach: The chosen comparative case method is presented with qualitative approach leaning on the narratives of the key actors as well as the critical incident technique.

Findings: The analysis shows the most significant differences between the DMOs in the capability of orchestrating and visioning the destination networks, where Turku Touring has the organizational form of enterprise as its strength as well as the close contact to the national Expertise program. Moreover, the value creation as the outcome of coordinated cooperation becomes best materialized in Åland where the tourism enterprises form a homogeneous group with an ease to cooperate compared to the more heterogeneous group in the Turku area. In Roslagen the obvious strength is the ability to market the region under an umbrella brand.

Research limitations: As a limitation for the study the problem with comparing the cases can be risen. In future, the process of building the online brand identity would be of interest to report as way of enhancing the competitive advantage of a destination.

Practical implications: The value of the paper lies on its managerial implications for the DMOs by giving an overall picture of the ways of managing the change.

Originality/value: The concept of change is discussed from the viewpoint of the industrial network approach by applying the contemporary destination management and marketing research.

Keywords: case study, change, DMO, destination brand, network, value creation

The Change Corridor in transition from Region to Destination – The case of the Franconian Lake District

Harald Pechlaner, Christopher Reuter & Monika Bachinger

This case study aims at introducing the concept of a change corridor into the tourism area life cycle. It is assumed that a temporarily limited phase between pre-tourism and tourism era is given, which provides the chance of destination building through a network approach. This assumption gets supported by empirical findings. The study shows that destinations can be seen as virtual service companies. For a region in transition to becoming a destination it implies putting special emphasis on developing relevant network structures. The ability of reaching a sufficient network quality (shared goals, resources and interaction) makes the difference between simple region and qualified destination. This becomes clear when looking at the case of the Franconian Lake District where missing network structures prevent the region from moving forward towards becoming a destination. The paper draws its findings on a single region, therefore further research has to be undertaken to broaden the understanding of the processes within the change corridor. However, added value is created by calling attention of both academic and practical staff to the fact that a timely and network based management approach is indispensable for seizing the chances provided by the change corridor.

Keywords: Case Study, Tourism Area Life Cycle, Change Corridor, Network Structures, Virtual Service Companies

Evaluating Operators' Dependence on local Tourism Resources: Barrier to Change in the Case of traditional rural Tourism in Japan

Yasuo Ohe

Purpose: This paper evaluated the barriers to change from traditional rural tourism to diversified activity through exploring the connection between the performance of farm-based accommodations and the attitudes by operators for mid-term future directions in a mountainous area in Hiroshima by taking into account farmers' dependence on local resource use and aspects of service production.

Methodology: We estimated the attitudes' determinant functions for development and examined what actual factors work for conservative or positive attitudes for the mid-term future. Four types of data were linked to create a database, including information from a questionnaire survey of operators in 1993. To compensate for this long passage of time, an ex-post evaluation was performed after 14 years to test the initial results.

Findings: The higher the dependence on local ski slopes, the more conservative were operators with regard to the future. Operators having a higher number of repeat visitors embraced more positive attitudes for the future. Thus we can say that the portion of repeat visitors works to reduce dependence on local tourism resources.

Research limitations: Although the relationship between the two factors, profitability and portion of repeat visitors, should be more widely tested empirically, these findings suggest that looking only at profitability will not be sufficient from the mid-term perspective. We should also consider the significance of repeat visitors to evaluate rural tourism activity by lowering the dependence effect on local tourism resources.

Practical implications: In the long term, however, good performance in relation to either profitability or repeat visitors should be connected to capacity building by operators that enable them to endogenously utilize local resources for diversification through their own initiative.

Originality: Framework and findings presented new and effective points in rural tourism research on the relationship between operators' attitudes and local resource management.

Global Warming as a driver of change in Alpine skiing areas

Mariangela Franch, Umberto Martini & Maria dell Lucia

Purpose: Verifying the awareness of cableway operators in the Dolomites of the effects of global warming (GW) and the presence of innovative strategies, classifiable in terms of change management.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The theoretical background illustrates the main issues linked to GW in winter tourism in the Alps. The research concerns cableway associations of the Trentino (Dolomite region) and consists of desk analysis and field research.

Findings: The research has shown the awareness of cableway operators of the effects of GW and indicated the path dependence to technological adaptation responses. They consist in investments for cableway plants and accommodation, supported by large public financings, in spite of the wide under-employment of the capacities of both. Instead, there is a lack in radical innovations in terms of behavioural adaptation.

Research and practical implications: The inadequacy of the technological adaptation responses, that appears to be even more critical in the light of the OECD forecast, makes it necessary to reflect upon innovative strategic solutions that should involve the whole system of the offer.

The conditions that have guaranteed the competitiveness of these skiing areas could represent a barrier to radical changes in terms of sector specific investments, managerial culture, power of the cableway operators and the role of the public entity in sustaining the sector.

Originality/Value of the paper: The paper presents the strategic and managerial implications caused by GW on primary stakeholders of the community-type destinations with a strong winter tourist valence, highlighting some possible innovative behavioural adaptations and the barriers to change.

Keywords: Global Warming, Change Management, Community-type destination, Cableway operators, adaptation strategies, path dependence

Type of paper: Research Paper

The Life Cycle of a specific Tourist Product – Christmas in Lapland

Raija Komppula, Sanna Hakulinen & Salla Saraniemi

Purpose: Christmas in Lapland is typically a package holiday based on the visitor wanting to meet Santa Claus and experience the winter attractions of Lapland. As a tourist experience product it has undergone many changes over the years from a one-day exclusive trip via Concorde to a week's holiday for the mass tourist market. The focus of this paper is the product life cycle of Christmas in Lapland. The theoretical foundation of this study lies at the combination of a traditional product life cycle model and a destination life cycle model, referred to as the tourist product life cycle. The main difference to just applying a destination life cycle is that the changes in content and price of the product are also examined.

Design/Methodology/approach: The study is a historical, intrinsic case study where both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used. The data consists of statistics, interviews, newspaper articles and other documents. The time span is between 1984 and 2006.

Findings: According to the results of this study, combining a traditional product life cycle and a destination life cycle is fruitful. For example, when only considering the number of travellers, upon examination, the Christmas product is still in the growth stage. But when also examining the qualitative measures, they indicate that the product is in the middle ground of the growth and maturity stages.

Research limitations/implications: As usual with historical studies, this study has limitations. First, data is mainly based on subjective recollection of interviewees. Second, analysis of qualitative data is always more or less subjective. In order to avoid these shortcomings, data and researcher triangulation have been utilised.

Originality/value: The main theoretical contribution of this study is the application of a combined life cycle model to the life cycle of a specific tourist product. The criteria used in examining the product life cycle may be applied when examining other destination specific tourist products.

Keywords: Tourist product life cycle, destination life cycle, destination image, package tour, Lapland

Paper type: research paper