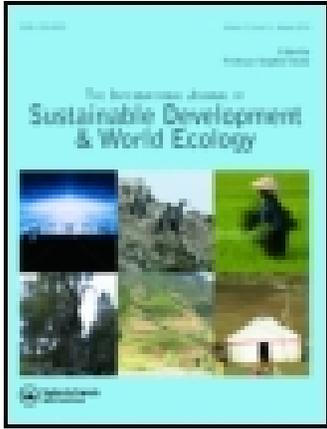


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Sustainable development and tourism destination management: A case study of the Lillehammer region, Norway

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Key words: Sustainable tourism, stakeholders, Norway, management

SUMMARY

This paper reviews some of the literature and guidance provided for businesses considering responses to the environmental aspects and impacts of their tourist activities. It concentrates on the role of destinations and stakeholders within the destination cooperating and networking to improve environmental performance and on generating a 'green' image. In order to move towards a type of tourism consistent with sustainable development (sustainable tourism), it is argued that we need to see enhanced management of a destination, creating opportunities for networking and cooperation between, in particular, service providers. In a case study of Lillehammer, Norway, three projects negotiated, developed and delivered by service providers in the area are examined. These projects looked at hotel management, transport and aesthetics. Success factors are identified, including the involvement of stakeholders, the development of locally orientated codes of conduct, the role and participation of local authorities and the importance of leadership. Findings add to the body of practical help in moving destinations towards sustainable tourism.

INTRODUCTION

It is often asserted that tourism is the world's largest industry (WTTC *et al.* 1995). It employs approximately one in nine workers worldwide, comprising 6% of global gross national product (GNP) and, in many nations, (in particular, lesser developed countries) has been seen as a panacea for solving many social problems and for driving economic growth (McMinn 1997). However, the potential environmental and social impacts of tourism are significant and, although in the past tourism was almost always considered to

be beneficial for both host and home countries, more recently the negative aspects have been recognized and more closely analysed (Briassoulis and van der Straaten 1992). Although it is recognized that the tourism industry is largely dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), public sector organizations and the increasingly large tourism operators and agents play a particularly active part in the tourism sector (McGregor 1996). They therefore have significant potential to control and develop

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tourism in socially and environmentally beneficial ways and need to monitor and react to current issues (Buckley 2000; Cleverdon 2001).

Tourism is, therefore, an industry (like many others) that is an important source of income for many groups, but posing a potentially serious environmental problem for others. According to Clarke (1997), research energy should be channelled into practical ways of assisting all forms of tourism to move the industry towards sustainable development. This must include (although it is often forgotten) social and cultural impacts of tourism development. Moreover, it requires a new emphasis on the management of destinations in a way that is consistent with sustainable development.

This paper explores issues relating to destination management, first, through a review of relevant literature and then in an analysis of the region of Lillehammer in Norway. It seeks to be practical in identifying characteristics and success factors in the attainment of tourism management that are more consistent with sustainable development and are potentially transferable to other regions, as Clarke (1997) advocates.

THE RHETORIC OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Many of the potential impacts of tourism are well known to people involved in the industry. Thus, when the notion of sustainable development was raised in the 1980s it was not long before the concept of 'sustainable tourism' followed, with its many derivatives such as eco-tourism, alternative tourism, green tourism and responsible tourism (McMinn 1997; Buckley 2000). All of these concepts have been used, misused and to some extent usurped and, although there is a great deal of rhetoric surrounding sustainable tourism, this is often not translated into useful action because endless theories regarding the concept have not been operationalized.

Clarke (1997) charts the history of the use of the term sustainable tourism. The earliest use was such that mass tourism and sustainable tourism were conceived as polar opposites. As a force, sustainable tourism was understood to be pulling away from mass tourism, which served as a point of repulsion. The negative social and environmental impacts experienced at destinations were

usually attributed solely to mass tourism. Sustainable tourism was held up as some sort of solution but, being small-scale, it could provide few solutions to a growing demand for leisure travel and neither manage the number of arrivals nor replace the economic benefits accrued through mass tourism. The idea of early versions of sustainable tourism was therefore a 'micro solution' struggling with a 'macro problem' (Clarke 1997), which had very little hope of success in countries with increasingly wealthier populations.

Somewhat expectedly the concept of sustainable tourism has not been precisely defined and, like its roots in the concept of sustainable development, is open to considerable interpretation. According to McMinn (1997), sustainable tourism:

'suggests that proposed tourism developments should have economic advantages, create social benefits for the local community and not harm the natural environment. In addition, these goals should apply not only to the present generation, but to future generations as well.' (p.135)

The World Tourism Organization (WTTC *et al.* 1995) suggests that:

'sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.' (p.30)

Perhaps more usefully we can simply see sustainable development as having three important elements: economics, environmental issues, and social and cultural issues (Welford 1995). While environmental and socio-cultural sustainability seek to ensure that non-renewable physical and cultural resources are not consumed in the process of the tourism activity, economic sustainability represents a degree of self-reliance at the local level community structures, employment and human resources are maintained (Butler 1997; Henry and Jackson 1996).

The three perspectives on sustainable tourism are not inconsistent, of course. They point to the fact 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 such that a destination's environmental resource base (including natural, built, social and cultural features) is protected for future development. However, this dominant paradigm has been criticized because it fails to provide a conceptual vehicle for policy formulation which explicitly connects the concerns of tourism sustainability with those of sustainable development more generally (Hunter 1997). There is indeed a great deal of rhetoric associated with the concept of sustainable tourism and rather less guidance on how to operationalize it.

ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACTS OF TOURISM

The product that the travel and tourism industry packages and sells ultimately relies on clean seas, pristine mountain slopes, unpolluted water, litter-free streets, well preserved buildings and archaeological sites, and diverse cultural traditions (WTTC *et al.* 1995). As such, tourism is an industrial activity that exerts a series of impacts that are similar to most other industrial activities. It consumes often scarce resources, produces waste by-products and requires specific infrastructure and superstructure needs to support it. The very activity of tourism often degrades what tourists came to experience and results in the common assertion that *tourists destroy tourism*.

As a huge, broadly based, diverse industry that lacks a clear legislative focus, tourism defies attempts to control its impacts. Moreover, as an industry that is highly integrated into host communities, tourism is both dependent on the host communities for its survival while exerting impacts on all sectors of the host community. A unique characteristic of tourism is its necessity to import clients rather than export a finished product. This often results in conflicts with host communities (McKercher 1993; Ballantyne and Hughes 2001; Holden and Sparrowhawk 2002). Therefore, if tourism development is to be consistent with sustainable development, we must recognize the need for an enhanced management of the destination.

For sustainable tourism to occur, it must be closely integrated with all other activities that

Table 1 Some fundamental truths about tourism (after McKercher 1993:7)

-
1. As an industrial activity, tourism consumes resources, creates waste and has specific infrastructure needs.
 2. As a consumer of resources, it has the ability to over-consume resources.
 3. Tourism, as a resources-dependent industry, must compete for scarce resources to ensure survival.
 4. Tourism is a private sector dominated industry, with investment decisions being based predominantly on profit maximization.
 5. Tourism is a multi-faceted industry, and as such, it is almost impossible to control.
 6. Tourists are consumers, not anthropologists.
 7. Tourism is entertainment.
 8. Unlike other industrial activities, tourism generates income by importing clients rather than exporting its products.
-

occur in the host region (Welford and Ytterhus 1998). Integration can only occur if there is a broadly based understanding of some 'fundamental truths' about all types of tourism development (see Table 1). It is only through this understanding that the costs and benefits of tourism can be fully assessed and understood (McKercher 1993). Indeed, the difficulty in controlling tourism in a sustainable way is indicative of the fundamental problems we have in moving towards sustainable development.

According to Byrkjeland (1995), when discussing the possibility of sustainable tourism, there are two different dimensions that should be taken into consideration. First, the environmental impact that results from the overall amount of tourism-related activity must be considered; and second, the environmental impact that results from the tendency of tourism to concentrate people. The complexity of the environmental impact caused by tourism requires an integrative approach that focuses on the totality of tourism and leisure-related activities within an area.

Tourism organizations are in the business for profit. If a hotel can minimize costs by discharging untreated sewage directly into the sea, because building regulations permit, it will usually do so. The hotel takes advantage of the sea as a common property resource even though this imposes social costs, from pollution, on the

destination as a whole (Cater and Goodall 1997). But in acting in this way, it is damaging its own prospects for survival. What service providers therefore have to be convinced of is a need to protect their own futures by protecting the environment in which they are located. By profit maximising in the future it is possible to damage business in the longer term. Service providers need to see the benefits of working together with other service providers (even at times competitors) in order to work for the common benefit within the destination region.

SOLUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM?

The difficulty in prescribing corrective action in order to create a tourism industry development more compatible with sustainable development (defined here as sustainable tourism) is in attempting to overcome the inherent biases that have influenced other work to date. Many of the guidelines published have been strongly influenced by large, sometimes dominant, companies. They tend to be rather general and cannot, of course, be specific to the destination under consideration and they therefore tend not to be 'owned' by the stakeholders in that destination. Clearly, if practices are to be achieved which are more compatible with the principles of sustainable development, there needs to be increased recognition paid to the situation of each actor involved in this prescriptive endeavour and to the particular circumstances of the destination. Each stakeholder must recognize their inherent responsibilities with regard to the development peculiarities of each tourist destination in question, and also realize the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic costs associated with inaction. In addition it is important that individual actors are networked and integrate their efforts thus creating new partnerships (Buckley 2000). This requires a degree of management and coordination at the level of the destination.

In discussing action which must occur for sustainable tourism to be slowly realized, Middleton and Hawkins (1998) outline the supply and demand dichotomy, a situation which must be recognized as being of paramount importance with regard to tourism industry policy and

planning. The interconnection of hosts and guests through the natural and built environment at any one destination, and the influence on the actions of each predicated upon the action/inaction of each of the demand and supply-side variables, demonstrates the variety of stakeholders which must be accommodated from a policy perspective. Governments, as well as industry associations, have attempted in the past to address these varied groups' interests while still attempting to placate the broader Western agenda of sustainable development.

The travel and tourism industry has established the following guiding principles from the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (WTTC *et al.* 1995:34):

- Travel and tourism should assist people in leading healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature;
- Travel and tourism should contribute to the conservation, protection and restoration of the earth's ecosystem;
- Travel and tourism should be based upon sustainable patterns of production and consumption;
- Nations should co-operate to promote an open economic system, in which international trade in tourism services can take place on a sustainable basis;
- Travel and tourism, peace, development and environmental protection are inter-dependent;
- Protectionism in trade in travel and tourism services should be halted or reversed;
- Environmental protection should constitute an integral part of the tourism development process;
- Tourism development issues should be handled with the participation of concerned citizens, with planning decisions being adopted at a local level;
- Nations shall warn one another of natural disasters that could affect tourists or tourist areas;
- Travel and tourism should use its capacity to create employment for women and indigenous peoples to the fullest extent;

Müller (1994) states that businesses should be prepared to:

- Let locals share in the development process;
- Take the wraps off cultural conflicts;
- Seek dialogue, and encourage discussion about future tourism development;
- Prepare guests better for their holiday situation.

Welford and Ytterhus (1998) expand on these sporadic instances of 'greenness' with a transformation proposal for sustainable tourism. It suggests the invocation of some necessary destination development conditions which must be accepted in order for tourism industrial activity to move towards sustainable development. These are based on the fact that a tourist destination as an entity as well as a service provider, and local individuals within that destination area, may benefit from development which is both sustainable and conducive to life quality improvements. Hence, in order to transform tourist industrial practices, they advocate the introduction of:

- Parallel development policies so that other sectors of the economy are developed with tourism and that tourism does not displace other activities and impact negatively on culture;
- A 'futurity' planning horizon ensuring that longer term considerations are taken into account;
- Education of consumers in order to both protect the local environment and enhance the experience of the tourist;
- Fiscally neutral local taxation through local taxes on tourists that directly contribute to local environmental improvements;
- Active promotion of biodiversity and conservation and the identification of problem areas to be restored;
- Management of change at the level of the destination requiring good proactive leadership;
- Policies encouraging strong local cohe-

sion and locally determined codes of conduct;

- Participation, integration and networking of all stakeholders in the destination;
- Supply-chain management pushing best performance down to suppliers ensuring a wider commitment to environmental improvement;
- Destination management policy and strategy with clear objectives, plans and policies communicated to all stakeholders in the destination.

Resource management issues include the monitoring and control of sensitive sites, visitor numbers, and local and regional development plans and environmental quality. Organizations must become aware of the direct and indirect environmental impacts (and long-term consequences) of their activities, as well as their role in mitigating these impacts. Destinations, and in particular local authorities, must be definitive in their approach to incorporate proactive (and reactive) measures in order to instigate the change necessary (Carey *et al.* 1997; Laws 1995; Middleton and Hawkins 1998). An emphasis on human resource management, involvement of works and building strong team cohesion within organizations seems important here (Jithendran and Baum 2000)

Destination management is a theme which can incorporate the socio-cultural and economic aspects of a destination, and relates to the organizational and destination response required to achieve significant change. Cooperation between organizations and local authorities is paramount to achieving any semblance of an industrial culture shift towards sustainable tourism. The involvement of local stakeholders and an emphasis on increasing the accumulation of local economic benefit from this growing industry is necessary and required. Only through increased cooperation and economic benefit can we reduce the inequitable power distribution so evident in many of the world's popular destinations (and appallingly so in most, if not all, of the lesser developed country destinations). The social, political and economic exclusion present in these 'arenas of conflict' must be rectified if change is to occur.

- Tourism development should recognize and support the identity, culture and interests of indigenous peoples;
- International laws protecting the environment should be respected by the travel and tourism industry.

Accepting that the concept of sustainable tourism is still evolving, the absence of a precise goal definition is less important than general movement towards actions consistent with sustainable development. Appreciating the wider role of sustainable development, this final position recognizes two interpretations of sustainable tourism. The large-scale interpretation of sustainable tourism is predominantly expressed as a physical/ecological business orientation, while the small-scale interpretation offers a social slant from a local or destination platform (Clarke 1997).

We can see that the emphasis (in theory at least) is on the need to manage supply (the provisions of tourist services) and manage demand (the behaviour to tourists). On the demand side, however, there is mention made of both education and campaigning activities and taxation to influence choice. These instruments are in line with the recommendations of a previous paper (Welford and Ytterhus 1998) but have not been operationalized in any meaningful way within the EU.

France (1997), in addressing the operationalization of industry-related change, suggests some possible strategies and related checklists for host area stakeholders, tourists and tour operators in moving towards environmental improvement. Not surprisingly, social and cultural issues are given rather low priority in such checklists. This is because businesses actually find it very difficult to decide what line to take on these often contentious issues. Such issues are often location specific and will vary in importance from one destination to another. If there is to be a move towards sustainable tourism, therefore, there needs to be an alliance between all the various stakeholders in a particular role for local co-ordination of efforts.

Any attempts to promote sustainable practices must be decided upon and co-ordinated at the regional level, with a single clear contact point for support and advice. Decision-making and

implementation must have a strong regional and local focus in order for these principles to become workable practice (Berry and Ladkin 1997; Forsyth 1996). With respect to this point, Middleton and Hawkins (1998) have identified five management tools for local and regional governments. These include:

- Reactive and proactive land-use planning regulations;
- Reactive and proactive building regulations;
- Provision of adequate infrastructure and the provision or denial of access to specific destination areas;
- Investment incentives, fiscal controls, and regulations; and
- Influence over demand through pricing, licensing, marketing and information.

Through policies and regulations aimed specifically at controlling the demand and supply relationship at a particular destination, they accurately demonstrate the role that policy must play in the transformation towards more sustainable tourism development. Further, they highlight the necessity of cooperative action by organizations at the destination level in order for this change to sufficiently occur.

Within the tourism industry, the accommodation, restaurant and transportation sectors have received the most attention for their greening programmes. Hotel sustainability programmes have concentrated on waste reduction, energy conservation and water conservation. More sophisticated programmes have included the use of organic foods, non-toxic cleaning products and chemical-free pest management techniques. Indeed, several hotel companies have grouped together to produce manuals to promote environmental awareness and action (Kirk 1996). In the transportation sector, airline programmes for noise reduction, fuel efficiency and emissions reduction have been the most widely reported. Greening activities described in the restaurant sector have focused mainly on solid waste and energy reduction, as well as on broader community conservation activities. A few tourism organizations are now going beyond their immediate environment by

Table 5 Market structure for hotels (guest nights in 2000)

	<i>Lillehammer</i>	<i>Øyer</i>	<i>Gausdal</i>
Business/Leisure (%)			
Conference	16	20	8
Business	22	7	3
Leisure/holiday	62	73	89
Domestic/foreign (%)			
Domestic market share	69	67	46
Foreign market	31	33	54
Change 1999–2000 (%)	-16.1	-8.7	-1.0
Foreign tourists (%)			
German	23	8	9
Swedish	8	12	13
Danish	23	60	58
Other	46	20	20

Source: <http://www.statistiknett.com>

SWOT analysis of the region. This identified four priority topics to be addressed with agents from the tourism business, municipality and other organizations:

- (1) The potential for cooperation in areas such as marketing, bookings, waste management and transport and for increased networking amongst tourism services providers.
- (2) Enhancement of the profile of the destination and the clear communication of an environmental profile to all stakeholders.
- (3) Development of new products associated with nature and the cultural characteristics of the region.
- (4) Strengthening the credibility between customer expectations and delivery of tourism services and products.

The four priority topics represent aspirations and therefore require actions to begin to achieve them. Based on these aspirations and the results of the detailed SWOT analysis, three projects were identified that were seen as achievable and which had the ability to create momentum in the region and act as a possible 'springboard' to future development. A characteristic of all the projects is that they required cooperation and networking amongst different sectors of the tourism service providers.

Project 1 – 'Eco-Lighthouse' certification of infrastructure in the travel and tourism industry

The SWOT analysis identified that, although there was a strong brand name associated with Lillehammer and its natural environment, nevertheless there were large variations in tourism service competencies among travel service providers. This meant that environmental performance was very patchy and uncoordinated. It was identified that there was a great deal of potential to bring together a number of service providers in a cooperative project and demonstrate the benefits of sound environmental practice consistent with a destination known for nature. To do this it was felt that some sort of recognition of achievements scheme would be helpful.

The Eco-Lighthouse Programme for environmental certification of small and middle-sized companies in Norway encourages companies to reduce their impact on the environment, reduce costs and make use of an environmental profile in their marketing. The certification of an initial group of service providers was completed by the beginning of 2003. They were:

- Birkebeineren Hotel & Apartments, Lillehammer
- Hafjell Alpinanlegg Alpine Resort, Øyer
- Skeikampen Hotel & Apartments, Gausdal

encouraging more sustainable practices amongst their suppliers and other related organizations (Todd and Williams 1996). However, these actions have been primarily spurred by regional and local regulations to that effect, rather than being influenced by any specific organizational growth in more sustainable destination management and awareness.

The WTTC *et al.* (1995) suggest some pointers for organizations to start towards the objective of environmental sustainability at the destination level. It suggests tourism organizations implement an environmental management system (EMS), and then establishes ten priority areas for action by travel and tourism companies by the year 2005 (Table 2).

Table 2 Priority areas for action by travel and tourism companies by the year 2005 (WTTC *et al.* 1995)

-
1. To minimize resource inputs, maximize product quality and minimize waste outputs through reuse and recycling.
 2. To reduce energy use and reduce potentially damaging atmospheric emissions.
 3. To protect the quality of water resources and to use existing resources efficiently and equitably.
 4. To minimize wastewater outputs in order to protect the aquatic environment, to safeguard flora and fauna, and to conserve and protect the quality of fresh water resources.
 5. To replace products containing potentially hazardous substances with more environmentally benign products.
 6. To reduce or control harmful emissions into the atmosphere and other environmental effects of transportation.
 7. To deal with the multiple demands on land in an equitable manner, ensuring that development is not visually intrusive and contributes to conserving environment culture while generating income.
 8. To protect and incorporate the interests of communities in developments and to ensure that the environmental lessons learnt by staff, customers and communities are put into practice at home involving staff, customer and community environmental issues.
 9. To ensure that new technologies and products are designed to be less polluting, more efficient, socially and culturally appropriate, and available worldwide.
 10. To form partnerships to bring about long-term sustainability.
-

Hawkins (1994) describes the starting point for environmental management as often being the development of programmes to:

- Use energy efficiently;
- Minimize waste from facilities by asking suppliers to reduce packaging, implementing programmes to reuse products, composting biodegradable wastes and recycling non-avoidable wastes;
- Minimize water use by installing water-saving technology and reusing water for secondary activities such as watering gardens;
- Dispose of waste effectively.

More advanced activities include:

- Using transport efficiently for company purposes, and encouraging tourists to use soft transport options, or at the very least, to have their car serviced before they leave home;
- Incorporating community concerns into tourism plans and programmes;
- Replacing potentially hazardous products (including chemicals and pesticides) with more environmentally benign varieties;
- Purchasing local goods and products and including local specialities on menus, thus ensuring the viability of local agriculture, which in turn protects the character of landscapes and reduces transport-related emissions;
- Consideration of environmental implications in the design of new facilities and conducting full environmental impact assessments prior to decisions regarding development;
- Encouraging visitors to travel by alternative means within the resort destination;
- Providing visitors with information about their product choice and the means to identify products which respect the quality of the environment and those which do not.

To promote social compatibility in tourism,

THE CASE OF LILLEHAMMER

The Lillehammer region is in Oppland county, in the southern part of Norway and is probably best remembered for hosting the Winter Olympics in 1994. The town and surroundings of Lillehammer have almost 25 000 inhabitants and are a centre for arts, culture and tourism as well as the administrative capital of Oppland county. The Lillehammer region is made up of three municipalities: Lillehammer, Øyer and Gausdal (Table 3).

In winter, the destination is popular for skiing, which brings large numbers of visitors to the region. But the area is also popular in summer because of its natural beauty, museums and arts centres, thus providing an all-year-round tourism destination. Tourism is very important in the region with 12.1% of the labour force employed directly in hotels and restaurants in Øyer, for example, and many others involved in other services feeding into these services. Oppland county has the second largest number of hotels of any county in Norway, and a 13.6% share of all tourism in Norway. At the end of the 1990s it was, however, clear that trends in tourism were beginning to reverse and that, for example, there

had been a 5.7% reduction in guest nights in hotels in Lillehammer between 1999 and 2000. Between 2000 and 2001 the number of visitors to Lillehammer's Olympic Museum fell 11.2% and to other attraction by about 5%, on average. Other statistics pointing to a decline in tourism can be seen in Table 4.

More characteristics of the market structure in the tourism sector are presented in Table 5. Again this shows a decline in tourism visitors at the end of the 1990s and a strong (over)-dependency on domestic visitors and tourists from neighbouring countries.

A problem with tourism development in the Lillehammer region was that it was uncoordinated and fragmented and this meant that it was often difficult to ensure a high quality tourism product. Whether the basic resources deliver a high-quality product crucially depends on natural and cultural resources, tourist facilities, infrastructure (e.g. roads), accommodation and restaurants. In 2000 a group of researchers (including the authors) working alongside a small Lillehammer-based NGO (Lillehammer Miljø, that carries out environmental and sustainable development projects) undertook a

Table 3 Figures on area and population in the Lillehammer municipalities(2000)

	<i>Lillehammer</i>	<i>Øyer</i>	<i>Gausdal</i>
Area (km ²)	477	640	1190
Population	24 873	4859	6186
People density per km ²	51.8	7.5	5.1
Change in population 1991–2000 (%)	8.7	5.6	–3.8

Source: Statistics Norway

Table 4 Tourism facts in the Lillehammer region (2000)

	<i>Lillehammer</i>	<i>Øyer</i>	<i>Gausdal</i>
Number of guest nights in hotels/cottages	353 000	289 000	171 000
Change 1999–2000	–5.7%	–1.7%	–0.1%
Change in the number of visitors (2000–2001)			
Maihaugen, Lillehammer	–12.5%		
Norway Olympic Museum, Lillehammer	–11.2%		
Hunderfossen Family Park, Øyer	–4.5%		
Norsk Vegmuseum	–7.9%		

Source: <http://www.statistikknett.com>

The certification process involves undertaking an environmental review, setting up an environmental policy, action plan and targets, complying with regulations and the usual process of continuous improvement. Working together, the participants identified energy and waste as particular areas for work. Consistent with the literature cited above, they also put emphasis on teambuilding, cooperation between workers and organizational learning. In the first year of building the system, one participant reported energy savings of Euro 10 000. Positive experiences from these pilot projects have created an impetus for environmental certification in other tourism providers who are currently in the process of building their own partnerships for improvement.

Project 2 – Transport co-operation

Although the region under consideration is not huge, nevertheless poor local public transport was mentioned as a weakness in the SWOT analysis. Furthermore, a potential for cooperation in areas like transport and a need for networking was one of the main conclusions. More coordination of services, timetables and ticketing had the potential to provide a better more streamline service. There was a need to divert travel within the destination to more sustainable modes. It was also identified that there was a potential for the development of cycling tracks. To improve the transport services in the region, representatives from the travel and tourism industry, department of roads, department of transport, state railways, bus companies and ferry companies were invited to a meeting to discuss a better organized transport offer to tourists in the region. This led to a new tourism strategy aimed at:

- Improving the internal transport provision and more clearly identifying local tourist needs.
- Establishing more coordinated transport services within and to the Lillehammer region to reduce car dependency.

By way of an example, one of the services provided in the winter was a bus taking people between Lillehammer town and the popular alpine resort of Hafjell (that had itself been part

of the certification programme). This was seen as an unreliable, uncoordinated and expensive service. In order to improve the situation, the bus company reduced the price of the service for young people and introduced a multiple trip ticket. They increased the number of buses and better coordinated these with the timetables of other transport providers. The first season after doing this the number of passengers more than doubled, reducing dependencies on cars. Moreover, revenues increased and costs turned out to be significantly lower than budgeted for.

Project 3 – Aesthetics, clean-up and visual profile at the destination level

Beautification of the city centre in Lillehammer was started before the Olympics in 1994. However, one of the outcomes of the SWOT analysis was identification of a number of areas where visual degradation had since occurred. It was also seen that local, traditional colours of buildings needed to be enhanced and better signposting achieved. There was, in some places, also a litter problem. To some extent, the project started before 1994 had lost its way and to re-establish efforts partners from the municipalities, tourist organizations and other service industries had a start-up meeting in April 2002 to discuss new priorities for action. Since then, field visits have been made and will continue to be undertaken in order to decide and prioritize which measures are needed in order to improve the visual impression of the different destinations and 'hot spots' that require significant clean-up attention or development. Representatives from the municipalities, the travel and tourism organizations, local residents and other stakeholders (e.g. shops and other local businesses not related to tourism) were invited to participate and the response was very positive. Cooperation between a diverse range of tourism service providers and their stakeholders led to a common plan of action aimed at an improvement of aesthetics in the autumn of 2002. This included a set of principles to be followed throughout the region:

- Enhancement of the Norwegian character through improved landscaping, use of materials from the local environment and the use of typical Norwegian colours.

- New emphasis on environmental protection, including aspects of design, new environmentally friendly products and architecture.
- All buildings recognized as subordinate to the landscape, and to be designed according to main features in the landscape. Size and architecture to take into consideration local architecture and traditions.
- Permanent buildings and construction should reflect local identity and be anchored to materials and colour from the Norwegian environment. Temporary buildings and construction should reflect a neutral character.
- Each Olympic municipality should showcase a sports facility or an identification element as a symbol both for the games and for the municipality.
- Impression of facilities from the different access areas and viewpoints should be taken into consideration.
- Access and entrance are important elements for the first impression on arrival at a venue.
- How functions are organized in relation to topography and their neighbours are important, and landscaping and vegetation must be consistent with this.

This action plan is currently being implemented with some significant success stories to date. In particular, within the town of Lillehammer, a repainting programme has added significantly to the local attractiveness of the main street.

Lessons to be learned: linking literature with the Lillehammer case

Consistent with the calls from Clarke (1997) to provide practical guidance for destinations, we can see that the literature outlined above seems highly relevant in the case of Lillehammer. The Lillehammer region has a strong identity and, in part, has been able to build on its reputation gained in hosting the Winter Olympics in 1994. However, statistics seemed to indicate that the

destination was losing some of its attractiveness, was too dependent on a narrow group of visitors and that tourism services were rather uncoordinated and fragmented.

With this in mind, the development of the three projects outlined above is timely and shows what can be achieved when there is strong leadership encouraging networking and cooperation. The position of Lillehammer Miljø in promoting a new vision of Lillehammer is absolutely crucial and we would point to that leadership as being one of the most important factors in managing any destination. However, this leadership needs a 'followership' and service providers in the region have shown their willingness to participate and network in the projects and have been supported by the active involvement of the local authorities. These aspects are seen as particularly important by Buckley (2000), Middleton and Hawkins (1998) and Welford and Ytterhus (1998).

Hotels are, according to Kirk (1996), a natural starting point for a region wanting to develop a sustainable tourism policy. The Eco-Lighthouse project has proved to be successful in demonstrating that hotels can move to a more environmentally conscious way of operating and, at the same time, reduce costs. Simple systems and checklists, as advocated by France (1997), have led to tangible results. As Jithendran and Baum (2000) note, a lot of emphasis here was placed on human resources and the development of a commitment to improvement amongst workers.

The transport policy in the region has developed out of the networking and cooperation seen as important by so many of the authors cited. In particular, Hawkins (1994) sees transport as a sector where there is a need for increased coordination, with priority given to managing travel and transport within the destination.

Other than the Eco-Lighthouse certification, Lillehammer has not adopted generic codes of conduct but instead is working on specific codes that take into account the socio-cultural mix of the region. In the area of aesthetics, for example, cooperation led to an impressive action plan being implemented. As discussed in the literature, ownership of these codes is very important. This has helped to build a strong alliance between the various stakeholders involved. Successful networking, cooperation and

involving stakeholders are beginning to show tangible benefits. This reflects the type of destination management strategies identified as important by Welford and Ytterhus (1998). Building on strong cohesion in the region, good leadership by the local NGO, active support from local government (seen as vital by Middleton and Hawkins 1998) and participation of stakeholders, the region is now starting out on the long road towards sustainable tourism.

Clarke (1997), Forsyth (1996) and Welford and Ytterhus (1998) all point towards the importance of using the local destination itself as the platform for action. Here we have seen success stories coming out of a recognition of mutual interdependence and the treatment of the destination as the focus for action. There have also been clear achievable tasks laid down and rapid achievement of tangible results in quite a short period of time (particularly amongst the hotels). This has been useful in demonstrating the practical benefits of the environmental measures put into place. Moreover, it encourages others to be part of an ongoing process of continuous improvement towards sustainable tourism. A step-by-step approach, building on successes is, therefore, far more likely to work than something more grandiose and inspirational.

CONCLUSIONS

Lillehammer is only starting out on its path towards sustainable tourism and much more will have to be done before it can ever be considered to be acting on the best principles of sustainable development. Nevertheless progress has started and through three successful projects we can see

the benefits of networking and cooperation at the destination level.

Somewhat interestingly, Lillehammer began its move towards sustainable tourism not as a great inspirational objective but as a response to a decline in tourists. The beginnings of this strategy were facilitated by funding from the Nordic Industrial Fund, which allowed the researchers and a local NGO to bring together interested participants. In effect, this leadership was required to pull together people who, once connected and networked, worked very effectively together. Support from the local authorities was also significant in maintaining momentum.

Other destinations can learn from the experiences of this project. They need to identify funding to kick-start the project. This is best channelled into finding local leaders who can begin a process of networking between service providers and their stakeholders. The experience of this case suggests that once this is done, momentum for improvements can be built up.

We have shown how important many elements of the academic literature are in practice. Management of the destination as a whole, cooperation and networking, an emphasis on hotels and transport in the short term, the role of local government and the involvement of people at all levels within organizations, all seem to be significant factors in the success of these projects.

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