

Book Review

Information and Communication Technologies for Sustainable Tourism

Ali, A., & Andrew, F.J. (2013).

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Sustainable development on tourism is a highly topical issue because environment is the utmost significance for the continued development and prosperity for this industry. For this, there have been greater emphases placed by various stakeholders from different related field in order to minimize its impact on sustainability. It has been observed that there have been numerous research done/text written on sustainability key areas. None of these attempts seem to highlight the importance of using ICT as a major tool. It is agreed that sustainability and technology are by no means new topics. However, in the growing globalised world where resources are finite and tourism scope it broadening on a daily basis, a new innovative approach is needed, in order to cope up with the challenges industry will face in future.

The approach of this book is innovative in terms of using ICT as a major mechanism in managing sustainability practice. It provides an understanding on the interrelationship of these two important topics by demonstrating their innovative approaches to manage sustainable tourism development. Secondly, it emphasises on critical understanding of cutting-edge technologies used by the tourists and various stake holders in managing sustainable tourism development both in micro and macro level. In particular, the authors use examples and practical applications to show how ICT can be used as a valuable mechanism in managing sustainable tourism development. It is well organised into nine chapters. The first chapter is the most important, especially for readers who are not familiar with ICT applications and its tools. Similarly, chapter 2 gives you the link between ICT applications and tourism. Moving on, other chapters mainly discussed and highlighted different potential areas of ICT and tourism and how they are in current practice and what can be further done to enhance the sustainability practice. Chapter 1 begins with the general background of tourism as a major economic tool and its contribution towards the GDP of developing and developed country. Nevertheless, consequences of tourism on social life and environmental issues have been highlighted. The role of ICT is described – it is an innovative tool whereby demonstrating that technology can indeed be useful in helping the tourism industry to mitigate and manage negative impacts regarding sustainability practices. Meanwhile this chapter gives a concise description of these two defined terms by analysing the existing gap between strategy formulation and implementation. This seems to have emerged due to the inadequate linkages between industry and academia.

This leads into Chapter 2 whereby authors provide a detailed and concise analysis of how tourism and ICT are linked together on existing ICT application. It gives an understanding of different types of ICT applications which can be used in sustainable tourism by various stake holders, by giving an in-depth understanding of how these applications can be used as

a practical tool in managing and implementing sustainable tourism destination. Moving on to Chapter 3, this chapter initially starts with the definition of destination and the characteristics that attract the tourist. Nevertheless, impacts of these tourist activities are heavily felt on this destination. This chapter explores the relationship between sustainable development and sustainable tourism. Whereby, identifying some of the technologies which can be used by destinations for sustainable tourism development. Overall, this chapter gives an understanding of major concepts and tools of ICT used by various destinations in achieving sustainable tourism development along with the successful case studies to manage tourism negative impacts. Chapter 4 enters into the field of business and allows reader to switch to different perspective, namely, tourism business. This chapter gives a descriptive nature of tourism business by linking with the use of technology. It seems interesting because tourism itself is an interdisciplinary field and authors have integrated this complex business with technology, especially ICT. For example, how ICT helps tourism business to keep up to date regarding sustainability practice by providing them relevant information in common space.

Adopting a business perspective, Chapter 5 leads to investigate the relationship between technology and sustainable supply chain management which takes an approach to the market perspective. Purpose of this chapter is to explore how technology can be used to support supply chain management in tourism with the aim of encouraging sustainability. The chapter has justified the fundamental goal and focus of tourism supply chain management is towards tourist satisfaction, whereby suggesting and providing the better use of ICT information and its system in advance amongst various partners in the industry. Chapter 6 deals with the ways in which tourists engage with ICT in the context of sustainability practice. The principal focus is on the leisure traveller in relation to each stage of their journey: pre-trip, transit, in-trip and post-trip. Certification, labelling and branding of these approaches are envisaged as playing a major role in consumer choice. To assess the motivation for travelling, discussion on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) have been highlighted. The authors have analysed each stage of the trip by the traveller which comes along with these motivational issues such as, education, increased awareness and demand among consumers about sustainability practices. Chapter 7 introduces Web 2.0 and its tools such as wikis, blogs and podcasts, etc. This chapter emphasises the use of ICT more on virtual community rather than providing on practical implications. On the other hand, the authors argue that virtual community itself has created its platform by entering in the online marketing creating a demand by embracing the commercialisation. Moreover this chapter tries to promote understanding on how social networks are influencing these practices at both macro and micro level in tourism, and how they can be supportive to sustainable tourism development.

Chapter 8 addresses the critical issues related to the progress of technology for sustainable development. The objective of this chapter is to contribute to knowledge and greater understanding of these 'influencing factors' among various stake-holders that will play a vital role while doing strategic planning. Chapter 9 deals with the immediate, mid-term, and long term steps for the industry. The authors suggest how integration of technology can promote sustainable tourism in the future. In this regard, three areas are highlighted: (a) potential technological environment of future tourism; (b) the way the industry will respond to changed environment; and (c) examples of potential tourist activities. This chapter also highlights some of the advance mechanism used by this industry or will be used in future, and ends with its discussion and assumptions.

Overall this book is written in a well organised manner. Every chapter is systematically

organised from theoretical point of view to managerial implications. List of figures, tables, acronyms and abbreviations of different ICT terms are described to enhance understanding. Ideas and assumptions of authors are justified with relevant case studies. It is clear how industry players can utilise the content of this book. However, this book is not without a few shortcomings. It can be argued that this book is partially written from a very academic standpoint. Similarly, among all the chapters, Chapter 9 seems to be more hypothetical, judging from the flow and patterns of the authors' description and explanation about their concepts followed by the previous chapters. It might not be relevant for every reader to conceptualise, as the authors' explanation on their theories on this chapter. Since this book emphasises operational level, it would be more effective if authors had conceptualised their idea from the community point of view.

In conclusion, this book is good as an introduction to brief the readers on the current trends of ICT on tourism. Similarly, it has good inputs for various related scholars, experts, NGO's and researchers. To the students, it opens doors for future research by clearly indicating the possible directions for each topic and themes. Moreover, the epilogue helps the reader understand about the use of technology in a practical manner.