International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration

ISSN: 1525-6480 (Print) 1525-6499 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wjht20

The Need for Business Environmental and Social Responsibility in the Tourism Industry

Azilah Kasim

To cite this article: Azilah Kasim (2006) The Need for Business Environmental and Social Responsibility in the Tourism Industry, International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration, 7:1, 1-22, DOI: 10.1300/J149v07n01_01

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1300/J149v07n01_01

The Need for Business Environmental and Social Responsibility in the Tourism Industry

Azilah Kasim

ABSTRACT. This paper is on the relevance and application of the Business Environmental and Social Responsibility (BESR) concept in the hotel sector. In this paper, the literature is reviewed and analyzed to establish the connection between tourism and the physical and social environments. The review shows an inevitable link between tourism activities with both environments. This and the strong tourism growth in the past, implies that tourism has far-reaching negative impacts that must be mitigated, not only for the good of the physical and social environments, but also for the sustainability of the industry itself.

However, the review also indicates that past misconceptions about tourism as an environmentally benign industry has led to a slow integration of responsible environmental and social considerations into tourism planning and development. It was not until the late 1980s that the industry began to address the issue and acknowledged the importance of sustainable tourism as the industry's new direction. The lack of consensus on a single comprehensive meaning of sustainable tourism further compounded the complexity of operationalizing the concept. The proposition of alternative tourism as the answer for all tourism ills between the late 1980s and early 1990s, was later found to be flawed. This instigated the need for a new way of thinking that takes into consideration the fragmented nature of the industry. In other words, sustainable tourism requires

Azilah Kasim, PhD, is Associate Professor, Faculty of Tourism, Hospitality and Environmental Management, Northern University of Malaysia, 06010 Sintok Kedah Darulaman, Malaysia (E-mail: azilah@webmail.uum.edu.my).

International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration, Vol. 7(1) 2006
Available online at http://www.haworthpress.com/web/IJHTA

doi:10.1300/J149v07n01_01

a collective and conscious effort of all tourism businesses, governmental policymakers and planners as well as the key stakeholders (the society, the NGOs, the CBOs and the tourists) to prioritize environmental and social issues in their daily undertakings. In the case of tourism business, the new shift in thinking mirrors the wider corporate debate that has until recently been focused on the manufacturing sector (see Welford, 2000; Utting, 2002; Elkington et al., 1998). Hotel, as one of the key tourism business, therefore needs to deal with its environmental and social obligations.

KEYWORDS. Sustainable tourism, hotel sector, environmental impacts, social impacts, business environmental and social responsibility

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to show the relevance of the Business Environmental and Social Responsibility (BESR) concept in the hotel sector. BESR, hereby defined as "the responsibility of business irrespective of size towards environmental and social issues relevant to its operation" is a term deemed appropriate when describing the wider responsibility of a tourism business, as opposed to the commonly used 'Business Social Responsibility' (BSR) or 'Corporate Social Responsibility' (CSR).

The reasons for adopting the term BESR are twofold: (1) The term 'Business Social Responsibility' may denote broad meanings and cover various issues such as human rights, poverty, AIDS, prostitution and child labour which may not be under the hotel sector's direct jurisdiction. A narrower set of social variables i.e., labour rights and local community development is assumed to be of priority to a hotel's institution; and (2) Since tourism is a highly fragmented industry essentially made up of many small and medium sized businesses, the term Corporate Social Responsibility is deemed less suitable as it limits responsibility to larger businesses only. In tourism, this limitation may be erroneous because tourism's environmental and social impacts are essentially the accumulation of impacts from all of the industry's players (Kirk, 1995). For example, the hotel sector in Penang, Malaysia is composed of 125 small and medium hotels (rated 3 star and below) as compared to 20

large hotels (rated 4 star and above; the rating is given by the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism Malaysia and is based on the number of rooms and types of facilities offered). Therefore, small and medium sized hotel companies could have a more substantial accumulated impact as opposed to big hotels. In this light, it seems apparent that small and medium hotels have social and environmental responsibilities as well.

In this paper, discussions will focus on understanding the relationship between tourism and environmental as well as social issues, and the changing expectation on tourism's role towards these issues. Then a background to the shift of perspective from eco-tourism as the route towards sustainability to a broader, more inclusive view of sustainable tourism, which mirrors the wider Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) debate that has until now been focused on the manufacturing sector, is provided.

Tourism and Its Negative Environmental and Social Impacts

The impact of tourism in the global economy is significant. Being a worldwide phenomenon, tourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy. In the 1990s, tourism was the single largest revenue producer in the world, topping the performance of the oil industry (Frangialli, 1999). In the year 2000, tourism-related businesses generated an estimated US$2 trillion and provided employment to approximately 15 percent of the world's economically active population (Faulkner et al., 2000). The share of the developing countries' international tourism at this point had also increased from approximately 10 percent in the 1970s to around 30 percent, with the largest growth rates being experienced by the East Asian and Pacific region (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2000). These developments encouraged the World Tourism Organization (WTO) to forecast annual growth rates of 4.3 percent during the next two decades, and they expect the figure to rise to 1,600 million international arrivals by the year 2020 (WTO, 1997a)[1].

The extent and scope of tourism growth raises a question about its negative environmental and social impacts (Table 1). By nature, tourism offerings depend greatly on environmental and cultural resources. As the industry offers predominantly resource-based activities that constantly interact with the natural systems, tourism has the capacity to initiate significant changes in the physical environment (Wahab & Pigram, 1997; Hassan, 2000). For example, tourists' desire for secluded and scenic accommodation may result in increased clearance of natural areas

TABLE 1. Negative Tourism Impacts

ENVIRONMENTAL:

1. Habitats loss to tourism related developments particularly resort development in pristine areas.
2. Land erosion and water runoff during construction.
3. Increased demand on water supply.
4. Increased demand on energy supply.
5. Increased burden on solid waste management.
6. Pollution of water bodies.
7. Air pollution from various mode of transport.
8. Alteration of the natural environment–ocean floor, mangrove area, beaches.

SOCIAL:

1. Transition of traditional lifestyle to modernism.
2. Value conflict or deterioration of local identity and value system from the meeting of different cultures.
3. Loss of traditional economies in favour of tourism related economy.
4. Potential displacement of local people in favour of tourism development.
5. Loss of authenticity of local arts and crafts to commodification.
6. Standardisation of tourist facilities.
7. Increased crimes.
8. Low paying jobs.

Sources: Wahab and Pigram, 1997; Hong, 1985; Mowforth and Munt, 1998.

for the purpose of resorts and hotels development (Wahab & Pigram, 1997). In addition, the transportation of tourists from one destination to another requires the use of some form of transport, and hence the use of fossil fuel, which releases significant amounts of greenhouse gaseous and other air pollutants (Holden, 2000). As reported by the German NGO Forum on Environment and Development in the 7th Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD):

> Tourists consume about 90 percent of the primary energy required during a holiday for transportation during their arrival and related journey. The emissions generated by these are one of the main environmental problems of tourism. Particularly pollution caused by air transport–which is largely for tourism–is continuously rising with an annual growth rate of about 5 percent. Air traffic is expected to double over the next 15 years. Worldwide civilian air

> transport already consumed 176 million tons of kerosene in 1990, releasing 550 million tons of carbon dioxide and more than 3 million tons of nitrogen oxides. While it has been possible to halve energy consumption per aircraft over the past 20 years, the rapid growth in global air traffic has meant that absolute energy consumption has nonetheless risen by 50 percent. (p. 5)

Besides interactions with the natural systems, tourism activities also entail direct or indirect contacts between tourists and the local people. Home stay tourism, agro-tourism and eco-tourism for example, generally involve direct interaction between the visitors and the locals (villagers, farmers, local guides). In contrast, conventional mass tourism requires less involvement of the local people, thereby minimizing direct interactions. In both cases however, contacts between tourists and the local people could lead to problems such as commercialization of arts and crafts, as well as importation of lifestyle and culture, with possible negative consequences to local values, particularly among youth (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1999; Wahab & Pigram, 1997; Hong, 1985). In Malaysia, for example, the first strains of the drug culture were found among the hippie tourists who came in big groups to Penang. The tourists were also observed to be swimming nude and having marijuana parties that involved local youths as well (Hong, 1985).

The negative social impacts of tourism may begin even before tourists arrive in a destination. Rapid and often poorly planned development of tourism in developing countries catalyses the rapid transition of lifestyles from traditional to western-like modernization. This implies a rapid loss of cultural identity and degradation of traditional values. It could lead to far-reaching negative impacts such as the breaking up of family and social cohesion (as people work harder to improve social status, thereby spending less time with families), the abandonment of traditional economies (as activities such as farming and fishing are replaced by tourism related activities), substance abuse, prostitution and more (Hong, 1985; Mathieson & Wall, 1992; German NGO Forum on Environment and Development, 1998).

The inevitable link between tourism and the physical and social environments implies that tourism's survival depends highly on its ability to minimize its negative impacts on these environments and societies. In other words, the quality of tourists' interaction will be diminished considerably, if the natural setting of a tourism activity is polluted, degraded or loses its aesthetic qualities as a result of a poorly planned tourism development. Similarly, a destination may lose its tourist appeal if there are so-

cial problems such as the commercialization of local cultures (which lead to the lowering of that culture's authenticity), increase in crime (from drugs/alcohol abuse and prostitution) and societal antagonism. Therefore, the mitigation of these possible negative impacts appears essential in order to sustain the quality of tourism services.

However, the reality is not so simple. Until the late 1980s, the industry had a lackadaisical attitude towards environmental protection, in spite of its emergence as an important developmental sector (McLaren, 1998). Similarly, there has been no concrete initiative to minimize tourism's social impacts mentioned above. The lack of initiatives may be attributed to the widespread perceptions that tourism is a 'soft option' or a 'white industry,' which can be developed relatively easily without much need for specific planning or resources (Butler, 1997 as cited in Wahab & Pigram, 1997). For example, the industry has been praised as an important instrument for nature conservation because tourism income can (ideally) help to finance conservation of the protected areas and to protect ecologically fragile regions from other more environmentally degrading economic activities.

These misplaced perceptions have, however, been challenged (see Mowforth & Munt, 1998; McLaren, 1998; German NGO Forum on Environment and Development, 1998; Pleumarom, 2000b). The numerous environmental and social impacts of tourism as described earlier in this paper show that the industry can no longer be labelled as 'soft,' 'white,' or 'environmentally benign.' Instead, it is a complicated developmental sector that must be managed with expertise and professionalism (Butler, 1997). The complexity and diversity of tourism functions require policy makers and professionals to keep abreast of changes (including those related to the environment and the society) at all times to avoid the 'decline or immediate decline stage' proposed in Butler's model.

Tourism's Need for a New Direction

Concerns for tourism's negative environmental and social impacts indicate a challenge for tourism's key players to pursue growth by having the flexibility to respond positively to a changing global environment and societal structure, while being responsive to the principles and practices of sustainable development. Thus, tourism needs a new direction in order to address the flaws of its conventional (mass) form. Wahab and Pigram (1997) state that, "Tourism must offer products that are operated in harmony with the local environment, community attitudes and cultures, so that these become the permanent beneficiaries and not the 'victims' of tourism development" (p. 279).

Different propositions about tourism's new direction have been offered at the international level. A prominent conference held in Canada on "Global opportunities for business and the environment" came to a conclusion that sustainable development holds considerable promise as a vehicle for addressing the problems of modern tourism (Tourism Canada, 1990). Likewise, the roundtable session on 'Trends and challenges in tourism-beyond the year 2000' in the tenth general assembly of the WTO in October 1993 in Bali, agreed on the rising importance of environmental issues and highlighted the need for environmentally-friendly tourism development and nature based tourism (Plimmer, 1993). Tourism's social concerns were also addressed in the Manila Declaration on the Social Impact of Tourism (1997), with recommendations on greater local participation in tourism development and stronger governmental priority on social impacts in tourism planning. Although these dialogues offered different propositions, they imply strong endorsement for a sustainable form of tourism development.

Sustainable Tourism–The Complex Search for Meaning and Operationalization

Sustainable tourism–a concept that incorporates sustainable development within the tourism context (Dimitrios & Ladkin, 1999)–has been affirmed as the new direction for tourism. This concept draws attention to the need for balance between commercial and environmental (and later social) interests in tourism. Among the first attempts to define sustainable tourism was made by Butler (1991), who defined it as the long-term viability of a tourism entity (products, services) in an area. In other words, sustainability is tied solely to the survival of tourism players. Butler's definition tallies with that of Reinhardt (1998) who links sustainability to the fundamental preoccupation of tourism business managers–productivity, investment and profit.

However, these definitions are misleading because tourism is viewed as being isolated from other uses of an area's natural resources. In reality, tourism competes for resources with other forms of economic activities, including agriculture and fishery. Thus, resource competition and land use conflict are inevitable issues that need to be addressed. Butler seems to have recognized this when he proposed a later definition that takes into consideration the multiplicity of land use and the trade-offs that must exist between sectors before sustainability can be achieved. His improved definition of sustainable tourism is:

> Tourism which is developed and maintained in an area (community, environment) in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment (physical, human) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and well-being (sic) of other activities and processes. (Butler, 1993, pp. 29)

Moore (1996) defines sustainable tourism development in line with the World Tourism Organisation's characterization–that is, to be sustainable tourism development must meet the need of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Sustainability, according to Moore, also involves total integration with the community in which the tourism organisation is located. Total integration here is referred to as involving health and safety issues, conservation of natural resources, renewable energy supplies, and other environmentally friendly manifestations. Leposky (1997) also dwells on the issue of total integration, and emphasizes that it entails "maintenance and preservation of lifestyle and dignity of the local inhabitants" via the protection of the social fabric of the local community, assuring local economic opportunities, and guarding against exploitation by the outside world (p. 10).

Mowforth and Munt (1998) go a step further in defining sustainable tourism by stating that the concept is not just about the environmental and social dimensions. In fact, sustainability in tourism incorporates dimensions such as (a) environmental sustainability, i.e., avoiding or minimizing the environmental impact of tourist activities via the utilization of tools such as carrying capacity; (b) social sustainability, i.e., the ability of the community, whether local or national, to absorb inputs, such as crowding for a short or long periods of time and to continue to function without or with minimum social disharmony; (c) cultural sustainability, i.e., the ability of people or individuals to retain or adapt elements in their culture which distinguish them from other people; (d) economic sustainability, i.e., sufficient economic return of tourism activity either to cover the cost of any special measures taken to cater for the tourist and to mitigate the effects of the tourist's presence, or to offer an income appropriate to the inconvenience caused to the local community visited–without violating any of the other conditions–or both; (e) having an educational element, i.e., providing greater understanding of how our natural and human environment works as the goal of the activity; and (f) having local participation, i.e., inclusion of the local population, ranging from what Pretty (1995) has identified as the 'manipulative participation' (simply having powerless, un-elected local individual as representative) to the other ex-

treme of 'self mobilization,' or people taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems (Mowforth & Munt, 1998).

Admittedly, these various interpretations of sustainable tourism have numerous merits. However, they are not without their weaknesses. Integration as proposed by Moore (1996) and Leposky (1997) as an essential element in sustainable tourism cannot take place without a united effort towards the same goal. Considering the highly fragmented nature of the tourism industry, the feasibility of a united effort seems remote. Similarly, protecting the local social fabric as Leposky (1997) suggests is difficult because local tourism business in developing countries is often spearheaded by capital-intensive foreign companies. These companies and their business operations inevitably bring foreign culture to the local scene. One example is the building of tourist entertainment facilities such as night clubs and pubs in a Muslim country, which contradicts the local religious belief against alcohol consumption. In addition, the inevitable exchange between locals and tourists will always bring some degree of change to local culture and lifestyle. Finally, the use of 'carrying capacity' proposed by Mowforth and Munt (1998) may be problematic, as 'carrying capacity' is not an easily quantifiable concept. Without a clear understanding of what it really means and how to determine this capacity, it is impossible to maintain environmental sustainability.

The complex search for the meaning of sustainable tourism implies that the difficulties involved in its operationalization are significant. Some authors have discussed these obstacles. For example, Sharpley (2000) takes a critical look at the three basic requirements for sustainable tourism, namely: (1) the existence of national and international cooperation to facilitate the adoption of sustainable tourism policies; (2) the utilization of technology to contribute to sustainable tourism use; and (3) the adoption of a new social paradigm relevant to sustainable living. He contends that the feasibility of accomplishing the first element of sustainable tourism is jeopardized by the political structures and the fragmented nature of the industry. The second element has largely been ignored by those who profess the principles of sustainable development and the third element is doubtful due to lack of specific evidence on the demand towards sustainable living especially by consumers.

As responsibility initiatives may consume considerable resources that would otherwise be used for core functions, Sharpley's third point seems important for this research. This is because a tourism business's propensity to take responsibility considerations ultimately depends on the support and appreciation of the market. Several authors propose that knowledgeable and demanding customers are rising in numbers. These conscious consum-

ers are apparently prepared to adopt the modes of behaviour more appropriate to the environment of the receiving destinations (Wahab & Pigram, 1997; Cater, 1993). On the other hand, empirical evidence on consumer demand for responsible tourism is limited. The findings of Eagles (1992) indicate that the increased number of tourists preferring nature tourism is not specifically related to the emergence of green consumerism. Middleton and Hawkins' (1993) research also found little evidence of a major shift in consumer attitudes backed by willingness to pay for environmental quality. Similarly, McNaghten and Urry's (1998) research reveals significant ambivalence among consumers to different environmental issues, and that stated environmental concerns are rarely translated into consistently green consumer behaviour. These findings imply that the existence of a widespread propensity among tourists to adopt a new, sustainable form of lifestyle during travel is highly unlikely.

Another problem with operationalizing the principles of sustainable development lies in the controversy surrounding the concept 'alternative tourism.' This concept emerged in the 1980s as a possible route towards sustainability. It was thought of as the best medium to attain conservation of natural areas in order to maintain resource sustainability, avoid environmental damage, maintain resources quality and bring in new economies to local people. Alternative tourism was also associated with benefits to the local communities, educational value for tourists and a foreign exchange earner for the struggling developing countries (Cater, 1993; Boo, 1994; The World Bank Group, 1996). The excitement has had a profound effect on the development of tourism in these countries, with many of them opening their doors for tourism development under the pretext of 'eco-tourism,' 'responsible-tourism,' 'green tourism,' 'acceptable tourism' and many others (Faulkner et al., 2000). What these new kinds of tourism supposedly offer is a change from the environmentally and culturally degrading mass tourism to a more 'gentle' tourism that supports the whole notion of sustainability.

Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, much praise was given to the new forms of tourism and much criticism centered upon mass tourism. However, a report by the World Bank Group (1996) reveals that alternative tourism has generally failed to live up to expectations regardless of variables such as the size and management type of protected areas, local cultures, types of tourism enterprises and levels of government involvement. In other words, alternative tourism also carries negative environmental and social impacts traditionally associated only with mass tourism. As argued by McLaren (1998) the disassociation of alternative tourism from conventional mass tourism's problems is in fact inaccu-

rate because the new form of tourism is essentially an excuse for a continuing colonization and control of a destination and all its resources. In other words, these new forms of tourism have been used merely to legitimize and prolong the mainstream industry.

Theobald (1998) also emphasizes that equating sustainable tourism development with eco-tourism is an exceedingly restricted outlook of the potential tourist interest in sustainable tourism, because it implies an 'elitist overtone' and support for a small market segment. He further argues that for sustainable tourism to be effectively supported, its appeal and relevance must be extended beyond eco-tourism. He points out that although mass tourism is often dissociated with sustainability, there are now signs of increased interests on environmental protection and social/cultural aspects of mass tourism destinations. To illustrate his point, he describes the development in Hanauma Bay, a popular marine park outside Waikiki, Hawaii, that has been overwhelmed by tourists. Yet, these mass tourists have indicated willingness to pay fees and accept limits in numbers in order to reduce the problem of crowding which would have ultimately destroyed the park.

One of the major problems with alternative tourism is the unsubstantiated, often refuted claims of eco-friendliness. This led McLaren (1998) to request a 'rethinking' of alternative tourism as its original good intention of conserving the environment has largely failed. McLaren (1998) writes:

> An eco-tourist, like any other tourist, uses tremendous amounts of natural resources to jet halfway around the world to enjoy an outdoor experience . . . eco-tourism popularity is actually magnifying the negative impacts upon the earth, since it promotes development (destruction) of wilderness. For a tourist to have a truly minimal impact, she/he would have to walk to the destination, use no natural resources, and bring her/his own food, which she/he grew and harvested. She/he would also have to carry along her/his low impact accommodation (a tent) or stay in a place that is locally owned and uses alternative technologies and waste treatment. She/he would also have to leave the destination in a good or perhaps even better condition than she/he found it and contribute funds to the local environmental protection and community development . . . eco-tourism may be worse off to the host community since they have few facilities to support tourist population and fewer policies and regulation to monitor its development . . . many conservation projects were opposed by local people and created conflicts in the nearby communi-

> ties . . . eco-tourists are loving nature to death and disrupting the lives of local people. (pp. 98-99)

These views on alternative tourism are strongly supported by Mowforth and Munt (1998), who argue that it is necessary to scrutinise the actions of environmental organizations or the armies of backpackers whose actions are largely seen as benign or benevolent. This challenges the tacit assumption that the emergence of new forms of tourism is both designed for, or will result in, conquering the problems of mass tourism. In addition, these new forms of tourism have drawn developing countries into a highly unequal relationship with developed countries instead of overcoming inequality as was promised. Box 1 summarizes the essence of Mowforth and Munt's (1998) criticisms.

What can be concluded from the different and conflicting accounts of the sustainable tourism concept is that it is still elusive, with few concrete indicators about its operationalization. Thus, the concept remains vulnerable to different interpretation by different people. However, it is maintained that the attainment of sustainable tourism needs to be viewed as a progressive process rather than an absolute goal that can be swiftly realized. As asserted by Suvit Yatmani, director of the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) regional office for Asia and the Pacific (WTO Report, 1996b), concepts and ideas on sound environmental practices such as alternative tourism, although yet to be proven positive, enable tourism planners to progress towards a better approach in tourism development. Of course in the context of developing countries this cannot be attained without the governmental and policy support for sustainable tourism in the first place.

Nevertheless, there is a need to look beyond ecotourism to see how each entity in this highly fragmented industry could contribute towards sustainable tourism. As pointed out by McLaren (1998):

> We cannot simply buy into the ecojargon. What we need is an overview of tourism that acknowledges 'green travel' or ecotravel as merely a point of the larger impact of the industry and that there is an urgent need to look at the broad issues related to tourism impact on earth. (p. 4)

In addition, it is important to recognize that the impact of tourism is not limited to direct interactions with the natural environment alone. Tourism's numerous activities such as transport (travel and tours), accommodation (food and lodging) and entertainment (leisure and pleasure

BOX 1. Mowforth and Munt's Arguments Against Alternative Tourism (Summary)

1. Alternative tourism intervenes the local livelihood and commodifies local heritage.

These ideas attempt to capture the rapid expansion of capitalists relations of production in the developing countries and the way in which the spread of tourism has led to destinations, local cultures and environments (such as national parks, wildlife, flora and fauna, and so on) being transformed into commodities to be consumed by tourists. Examples of commodification are the way in which an Amboselli lion is calculated to be worth $27,000 a year in tourism revenue, or the way in which cultural traditions and ceremonies are packaged and sold to tourists, and the timing of rituals is altered to fit tourist schedules.

2. Alternative tourism perpetrates Western domination and control.

As developed world tourism expands and commodifies developing countries there is a tendency for communities and individuals in these countries to assume unequal or subordinate relationships to both the developed world's interests and those of 'local elites.' It is a reflection of unequal and uneven relationships of power and development.

3. Alternative tourism encourages fetishism of commodities.

The fetishism of commodities (or commonly fetishism and the association concept of reification) is a concept that embodies the way in which commodities hide the social relations of those that have contributed to the production of that commodity (be it a good or a bad experience) from the consumer (such as tourist). In a nutshell, tourists are generally unaware of the conditions of life experienced by the waiters, cooks, tour guides and so on, the people who service their holidays and the other people who form part of their tourist gaze.

4. Alternative tourism encourages aestheticisation.

Aestheticisation represents the process whereby objects, feelings and experiences are transformed into aesthetic objects and experiences (of beauty and desire). It is a notable characteristic of the way in which the new middle classes construct their lifestyles and is well represented in the ascendancy of new forms of tourism as important cultural goods. But aestheticisation must be interpreted broadly, to influence the desire to experience 'real' poverty and really dicey situations that new tourism sometimes presents.

Adapted from Mowforth and Munt, 1998.

pursuits) can accumulatively cause more environmental damage. Each activity can also cause a certain degree of intrusion on the lifestyle of the host communities. Therefore, these communities need to be compensated in the form of social and economic benefits of tourism development. Most importantly, each tourism activity utilizes generally unskilled or low-skill employees (to work as sale assistants, housekeepers, waitresses, tour guides, gardeners and others). Hence, a host of social issues such as employee welfare, wages, health and safety and the right to join

the workers union need to be considered in the quest for sustainable tourism. The United Nations Economic and Social Council Report (1999) highlights that:

> The major challenge facing the tourism industry is to contribute to social development objectives through greater compliance with core labour standards, attention to worker welfare and human resource development and more corporate social initiatives. (p. 8)

Considering the multitude of tourism impacts and the need to address them, it is clear that in order to define sustainable tourism, one needs to take into account the diverse and fragmented nature of the industry and that any attempt towards sustainable tourism practices needs a united and coordinated effort among all parties involved. Therefore, sustainable tourism must be the collective and conscious effort of all tourism businesses, governmental policymakers and planners as well as the key stakeholders (the society, the NGOs, the CBOs and the tourists) to prioritize environmental and social issues in their daily undertakings. This definition precludes the idea that tourism impact management is solely the responsibility of one key tourism player or the government alone, because without cooperation from the numerous and diverse key stakeholders in tourism, any move towards sustainable tourism would seem incomplete.

Indeed, skepticism towards the alternative tourism concept as described above, and the United Nations Economic and Social Council's (1999) emphasis on more corporate social initiatives mentioned earlier in this paper indicates that dealing with sustainable tourism may require a new line of thinking. Perhaps sustainability is not simply about alternative tourism, but about sustainable effort from the industry and all its fragments–hospitality, travel agency, air transport and tour operator and the other actors noted above. Assuming this is true, then tourism businesses need to play a more important and active role in environmental and social responsibility issues.

As a key sector in tourism, hotel business, regardless of sizes and types, therefore needs to play a role as well because hotels have several key environmental and social impacts i.e., (1) energy consumption; (2) water consumption; (3) waste production; (4) waste water management; (5) chemical use and atmospheric contamination; (6) purchasing/procurement and (7) local community initiatives (see International Hotel Environmental Initiative, 1995; Kirk, 1995; www.ggasiapacific.com.au; Green Hotelier,

1999). Therefore, attempts to address environmental and social responsibility may begin by addressing any or all of these key areas.

In a water consumption issue, it can be argued that hotel use is similar to that of a household, but at a much larger scale. In addition, as more hotels are developed, more pressure would be exerted onto the local water resources. Water use in hotels especially in resorts is also leisure oriented–swimming pools, golf courses and in-room bathing facilities rather than need oriented. Thus, during dry spells utility providers may be faced with a dilemma of either to supply for the leisure needs of the tourists or the basic needs of the domestic users. This brings about not only an environmental issue, but an ethical issue as well.

An example of such scenario is Malaysia–a country that used to have an abundant amount of clean water. Malaysians enjoy a per capita renewable water of more than 20,000 cubic meters per year (Water Watch Penang, 2002), as opposed to 95.25 cubic meters per year enjoyed by the Spanish (The Guardian, 2001). However, this has changed drastically in recent years with longer dry spells and growing demands on water resources due to population growth, urbanization, industrialization and the expansion of irrigated agriculture (Lee & Facon, 2002). A combination of these factors have caused a water stress situation in Malaysia despite its wet climatic backgrounds, leading to increasingly frequent water supply shortages that affect many parts of the country. In 1998 when the country felt the effect of El Niño–a climatic phenomenon that leads to longer dry spells and shifting weather patterns, the long dry spell (which occurred again in early months of 2002, though less severe) exhausted many of the states' water reservoirs causing low water pressure to households and denying many citizens the pleasure of running water. But, personal communications with hoteliers and hotel associations in the affected areas revealed that hotels operated as usual during the dry spells and that operations were not interrupted by lack of water supply.

The above example raises a complex ethical issue that will not be dealt with in this paper. However, it highlights the role of hoteliers during water stress times. Obviously, continuing business as usual at this time is inappropriate. Considering the high amount of water needed for hotel operation (see Table 2), hotels need to play a better role by adjusting its operation to mitigate the existing problem.

Hotels also need to play a role in relation to water quality issue. This is especially so within the context of a developing nation such as Malaysia where water pollution is a widespread problem due possibly to open drainage systems, which allows the public to simply dispose all sorts of

TABLE 2. Water Consumption in Hotels Compared to Domestic User (in Cubic Metre Per Year)

HOTEL WATER REQUIREMENTS:
50,000-100,000 (size: 150-200 rooms)
120,000-180,000 (size: 200-300 rooms)
180,000-250,000 (size: 300-400 rooms)
300,000-500,000 (size: > 400 rooms)
DOMESTIC WATER REQUIREMENT:
256 litres (average household)

Source: Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers–Northern Branch, 2003; Penang People's Report, 1999. EMTHIR, 1998.

solid and organic wastes, and inappropriate sewage handling. According to Orwin (1999) out of the 1.2 million septic tanks in the country, only 12,000 had their sludge removed for treatment. Approximately 65 percent of the sewage was dumped untreated into rivers and ultimately the ocean, adversely affecting the quality and appearance of those water bodies. Consequently, many rivers in Malaysia are considered polluted or extremely polluted. In 1998, 13% of the rivers in Malaysia were considered 'very polluted' and 59% were 'slightly polluted' (Lee & Facon, 2002).

Water quality in Malaysia is declining in tandem with the declining availability of clean water supply. Population growth, urban migration and urbanisation galvanized by rapid economic growth in the 90s, have led to increasingly intense competition among various water users and problems of water pollution (Oorjitham, 1998; Penang People's Report, 1999; Sahabat Alam Malaysia, 2001). Increased flooding and numerous environmental degradations associated with economic development also threaten water supply with organic pollution (Sahabat Alam Malaysia, 2001). This is worsened by public apathy about the importance of water conservation. Wastage and negligence by the apathetic general public have been pointed out as one of the contributing factors for water problems in many states including Penang (Water Watch Penang, 2002).

Linking this with the hotel sector, it is common sense that dirty, smelly and unsightly water can lower the economic value of properties located around it. On the other hand, water bodies such as rivers, lakes

and the sea are major assets to the attractiveness of a hotel or resort. Considering this, it can be argued that any initiatives to reduce water pollution could help maintain the attractiveness of a destination, which in turn will benefit the hotel sector itself. Therefore, hotels need to integrate water quality measures in their operations.

In another key area of hotel's environmental impact, i.e., energy, the need for responsible measures is also clear because of high electricity consumption for heating/cooling, lighting, cooking, etc., leading to pressure on local resource and increase costs. Thus, energy conservation measures have a more direct and strong impact on the total cost consumption of a hotel. According to the EMTHIR report (1998), the cost of heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) in a tropical climate could range from 25-50 percent of the total energy cost of a hotel, depending on the size and usage of air conditioning. Lighting requires approximately 15 to 25 percent of hotel's energy consumption, while laundry consumes varying amount of energy–depending on the type of equipment or type of fabrics, and whether it is managed in-house or subcontracted. The situation may be graver for hotels in tropical areas because according to Inter-Continental Hotels and Resorts benchmarking study, the energy use for a luxury hotel in tropical climate could go beyond 280 kWh/m^2 per year as compared to 200 kWh/m^2 per year for that in a temperate climate (in Green Hotelier, 1999).

Another key environmental impact of hotel operation is solid waste. A hotel's solid waste is not only huge but also diverse. A typical solid waste production comprises of 46% food and non-recyclables, 25% paper, 12% cardboard, 7% plastics, 5% glass and 5% metals (EMTHIR, 1998). In other words, approximately 47% of the waste can be recycled (may be higher in developed countries where some plastics can be recycled). The financial benefits of managing solid waste in hotels (EMTHIR, 1998) may also make recycling a worthwhile initiative to hoteliers. For example, reducing and reusing materials could cut down costs (from reduced packaging), while recycling could serve as a side revenue-earning practice from payment made by scavengers and recycling firms for the recyclables. In other words, responsible solid waste practices are not only practical but also beneficial to hoteliers.

Clearly, hotels do have impacts and need to address them by demonstrating responsible behaviours. How they can go about addressing these impacts would require a discussion of its own, taking into account issues such as resource capability and barriers that may exist. However, guidance on how the sector could be more environmentally responsible is well-documented (Table 3). However, these publications are gener-

ally limited to practical 'how to' books written in a technical manner. The lack of a dynamic dialogue has been blamed on the inability to agree on and clarify important concepts such as 'environmentally friendly' and 'sustainability' (Faulk, 2000).

Case studies and examples of 'best practice' have also been well-documented. The International Hotels Environment Initiative (1996) for instance, provides examples of measures taken by various hotels all over the world. But it must be noted that most examples and case studies come from developed countries or established tourism destinations, such as Costa Rica and Jamaica, which are arguably more enlightened about responsible issues. In addition, most of the efforts are piecemeal environmental measures that emphasize cost cutting and resource minimization rather than a comprehensive approach to environmental and social responsibility. Such emphasis, rather than some altruistic one, is understandable because as a business entity, costs and resources are of fundamental concerns to hotels.

TABLE 3. Selected Publications That Offer Guidance on Environmental Responsibility

Type	Examples
Business reports	Inter-Continental Hotels and Resorts with Grecotel Canadian Pacific Hotels and Resorts' Green Partnership Guide–Scandic Hotels' 'Resource Hunt'–a three year programme to address resource efficiency.
Websites	Green Hotels Association (1996). Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES) Corporate Outreach Committee (2000)–Best Practice Survey for Institutional purchasers. EcoNETT (2000). EcoNETT good practice: Eco Audits in Resort Hotels–Grecotel. (online) Green Globe 21, Green Globe Manual, 1994.
Institutional publications	Accor's 'Environment Guide for Hotel Managers' (1998)–guides hotel on calculations of energy and water use. Also covers waste management, recycling, architecture, landscape, awareness and training. IH&RA & UNEP: Environmentally good practices in hotels: Case Studies (1996). Tour Operators Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development: A Practical Guide to Good Practice–managing environmental and social issues in the accommodation sector (2003). The Environmental Management in Thai Hotel Industry Report EMTHIR (1998).
Other publications	Kirk, 1995. Meade and Monaco, 1996.

CONCLUSION

This paper has established that tourism and the hotel sector has a direct relationship with the physical and social environments. The inevitable link between tourism and hotels' activities with both environments, and the strong tourism growth in the past, implies that tourism and all its sectors has far-reaching negative impacts that must be mitigated. This is important not only for the good of the physical and social environments, but also for the sustainability of the industry itself.

The slow response towards integrating responsible environmental and social considerations into tourism planning and development indicates the need for a collective and conscious effort of all tourism businesses, governmental policymakers and planners as well as the key stakeholders (the society, the Nongovernmental Organizations, the Community Based Organizations, and the tourists) to prioritize environmental and social issues in their daily undertakings. Hotels, as key traders in the industry need to play greater roles. The number and range of impacts it has on the environment in particular, indicate an urgent need to address those impacts. The role would be stronger, if social issues (local community initiatives which include the issues of local employment, staff welfare and the preservation of local culture) were taken into account as well.

Nonetheless, the effort should start somewhere and the sector's role needs to be developed. This means that further discourse on this issue should concentrate on understanding the drivers and barriers of adopting responsible behaviours, and possible ways to enhance the former while mitigating the latter. Such knowledge is crucial in the effort to increase hotel business' involvement and adoption of responsible behaviours.

NOTE

1. Several global incidents such as the September 11, 2001 terrorism disaster in New York, USA, and the SARS epidemic that affected several countries all over the world in 2003 have had a detrimental effect on the global travel and tourism industry, thereby dampening the optimism of this forecast. This is discussed further at the end of this paper.

REFERENCES

Belau, D. (2003). The impact of the 2001-2002 crisis on the hotel and tourism industry. International Labour Organisation sectoral working and discussion paper. Retrieved on 30/01/03 from http://ilo.law.cornell.edu/public/english/dialogue/sector/papers/tourism/impact.pdf

Boo, E. (1992). *The Ecotourism Boom: Planning for Development and Management*; *Wildlands and Human Needs Technical Paper #2*. Washington, D.C.: World Wildlife Fund.

Business Social Responsibility (2001). *Issue Brief: Sustainable Business Practice*. Retrieved 7/09/01, from http://www.bsr.org/CSRResources/IssueBriefDetail.cfm?DocumentID= 0106.

Butler, R.W. (1980). The concept of tourist area cycle of evolution: Implications for management of resources. *The Canadian Geographer,* 24 (1): 5-16.

Butler, R.W. (1991). Tourism, environment and sustainable development. *Environmental Conservation, 18* (3), 201-209.

Butler, R.W. (1993). Tourism: An evolutionary approach. In I.G. Nelson, R.W. Butler and G. Wall (Eds.). *Tourism and Sustainable Development: Monitoring, Planning, Management.* Waterloo: University of Waterloo.

Butler, R.W. (1997). Modelling tourism development. In S. Wahab & J. Pigram (Eds.), *Tourism and sustainable development*. (pp. 109-25). London: Routledge.

Cater, E. (1993). Ecotourism in the Third World: Problems for sustainable tourism development. *Tourism Management*. (No. 12), pp. 85-90.

Dimitrios, D., & Ladkin, A. (1999). 'Green' strategies in the tourism and hospitality industries. In F. Vellas & L. Bechere (Eds.), *The international marketing of travel and tourism: A strategic approach*. London: Mcmillan.

Eagles, P. (1992). The travel motivations of Canadian ecotourists. *Journal of Travel Research*, *31* (2), 3-13.

Elkington, J. (1998). *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st-century Business*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society.

Faulkner B., Mascardo G., & Laws, E. (Eds.). (2000). *Tourism in the 21st Century: Lessons from experience*. London: Continuum.

Frangialli, F. (1999). *Observations on international tourism*. Madrid, Spain: World Tourism Organization.

German NGO Forum on Environment & Development. (1998, November). *Tourism and sustainable development*. Position paper prepared for the meeting of the Commissions on Sustainable Development (CSD) in April, 1999, New York, USA.

Green Hotelier. (1999, October). *Magazine of International Hotels Environment Initiative*, *16.*

Green Globe 21 Asia Pacific (2000). *Introduction to Green Globe Standard.* Retrieved February 3, 2001, from http://www.ggasiapacific.com.au

Hassan, S.S. (2000). Determinants of market competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry. *Journal of Travel Research, 38* (3), 239-246.

Holden, A. (2000). *Tourism and environment*. London: Routledge.

Hong, E. (1985). *See the third world while it lasts: The social and environmental impact of tourism with special reference to Malaysia*. Penang: Consumers Association of Penang.

International Hotels Environmental Initiatives (1995). *Environmental management for hotels: The industry's guide to best practice.* Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Kirk, D. (1995). Environmental management in hotels. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 7* (6), 3-8.

Leposky, G. (1997, March-April). Globalization and sustainable development. *Vacation Industry Review*. Vol. 10.

Mathieson, A., & Wall, G. (1992). *Tourism: Economic, physical and social impacts*. Harlow: Longman.

Mclaren, D. (1998). Rethinking tourism and ecotravel: The paving of paradise and what you can do to stop it. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, Inc.

McNaghten, P., & Urry, J. (1998). *Contested natures*. London: Sage.

Middleton, V., & Hawkins, R. (1993). Practical environmental policies in travel and tourism-part 1: The hotel sector. *Travel and Tourism Analyst, 6,* 63-76.

Malaysia Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (2001, March). *Tourism policy in Malaysia*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Seminar in Berlin, Germany.

Moore, W. (1996, July). Address. Miami Conference on the Caribbean and Latin America. Miami, Florida.

Mowforth, M., & Munt, I. (1998). *Tourism and sustainability: New tourism in the third world*. London: Routledge.

Oorjitham, S. (1998, May). *Special report on drought*. Retrieved on 12/12/03 from http://www.pathfinder.com/asiaweek/98/0501/sr3.html

Orwin, A. (1999, August). The privatization of water and wastewater utilities: An international survey. Retrieved November 18, 2002, from http://www.nextcity.com/EnvironmentProbe/pubs/ev542.html

Parasnis, M. (1998). *Environmental Management in the Thai Hotel Industry.* Bangkok, CUC and TEI (Thailand Environment Institute).

Pleumarom, A. (2000). Third World Resurgence. Retrieved 07/07/02 from http://www.twnside. org.sg/twr.htm

Plimmer, N. (1993, June). *Concluding remarks*. WTO Round Table on beyond the year 2000: Tourism trends and challenges. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.

Pretty, J. (1995). The many interpretations of participation. *Focus, 16*, 4-5.

Reinhardt, F.L. (1998). Environmental product differentiation: Implications for corporate strategy. *California Management Review, 40* (4), 43-73.

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (2001). *Environmental alert 2001*. Pulau Tikus, Penang: Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth).

Sharpley, R. (2000). Tourism and sustainable development–Exploring the theoretical divide. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 8* (1), 1-19.

Social-Economic and Environmental Research Institute (1999). *The Sustainable Penang Initiative: Penang People's Report 1999*. Penang: Social-Economic and Environmental Research Institute (SERI).

The Manila Declaration on social impact of tourism (1997). Retrieved 24/06/03 from http://www.eco-tour.org/info/w_10196_de.html

Ti, Lee Huu & Facon, T.G. (2002). Malaysia's water vision: The way forward–The Malaysian water partnership in from vision to action: A synthesis of national water visions in Southeast Asia. Retrieved 21/05/03 from http://www.fao.org

Theobald, W.F. (1998). *Global tourism in next decade*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Theobald, W.F. (1998). *Global tourism* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

The World Bank Group (1996, April 30). *Ecotourism and conservation: A review of key issues*. Retrieved July 8, 2003, from http://web.worldbank.org/WDS_Ibank_Servlet?pcont=detail&eid=000178830_9810191236111

Tourists' water demands bleed resorts dry (2001, May 12). *The Guardian*. Retrieved 17/02/03, from http://greenfield.fortunecity.com/leo/184/p62.htm

Tourism Canada (1990). *Tourism and hotel industry in Indo-China & Southeast Asia: Development*. Retrieved 9/01/01 from http://www.hotel-online.com/swish-cgi.pl

United Nations Economic and Social Council (1999, January 15). *Tourism and sustainable development: Report of the Secretary-General*. Retrieved on 24/06/03 from http://ods-dds ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/010/96/ PDF/N9901096.pdf?

Utting, P. (2002). Towards corporate environmental responsibility? In P. Utting (Ed.), *The greening of business in developing countries* (pp: 61-107). Geneva: Zed Books on behalf of United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Wahab, S., & Pigram, J.J. (1997). *Tourism, development and growth: The challenge for sustainability*, London: Routledge.

Welford, R. (2000). *Corporate environmental management: Towards sustainable development*. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd.

World Tourism Organisation (1996, June). *International arrivals to top 1 billion by 2010*. Retrieved 22/06/03 from http://www.world-tourism.org/frameset/frame_statistics.html

RECEIVED: 11/01/04
REVISIONS RECEIVED: 02/22/05
ACCEPTED: 02/27/05