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Implementing sustainable tourism: A multi-stakeholder involvement management framework

Abstract

Within the extensive body of literature on sustainable tourism (ST), its successful implementation is an emerging and important theme. The lack of or ineffective stakeholder participation is a major obstacle to ST realisation and there is little clarity as to how best to resolve this problem. This paper presents the findings of a purposive UK-based case study that evaluated stakeholder involvement in the implementation of ST. Using over fifty stakeholders' accounts drawn from eight primary stakeholder groups, a 'multi-stakeholder involvement management' (MSIM) framework was developed. The MSIM framework consists of three strategic levels: attraction, integration and management of stakeholder involvement. Six stages are embedded within the three levels: scene-setting, recognition of stakeholder involvement capacity, stakeholder relationship management, pursuit of achievable objectives, influencing implementation capacity and monitoring stakeholder involvement. These are supported by the overarching notion of 'hand-holding' and key actions [e.g. managing stakeholder adaptability] that enhance stakeholder involvement in ST.

Key words: Implementation, Sustainable Tourism, Stakeholder Involvement, Stakeholder framework

1. Introduction

'Sustainable tourism' (ST) signifies a condition of tourism based on the principles of sustainable development, taking "full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts" (UNEP/WTO 2005: 11-12) and addressing the needs of stakeholders. This expanded definition recognises the three pillars that underpin sustainable development, acknowledges the need to act responsibly as indicated in the 1987 Brundtland report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), and emphasises the concerned parties (the stakeholders) as critical in the implementation of ST.

From the early contributions of tourism planners (e.g. Murphy, 1985), the concept of 'stakeholders' is becoming more important in tourism (see Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, 2005; Currie, Seaton & Wesley, 2009; Jamal & Getz, 1999; Hall, 2007; Mowforth & Munt, 2003). The organisational structure of a destination is perceived as a network of interdependent and multiple stakeholders (Cooper, Scott & Baggio, 2009; d'Angella & Go, 2009) on which the quality of the experience and hospitality offered by the destination depends (March & Wilkinson, 2009; Hawkins & Bohdanowicz, 2011). Stakeholder collaboration represents a widely accepted approach to solving the problems associated with a lack of understanding and few shared common goals between the many stakeholders often involved in tourism development (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Hall, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002). To date, a number of studies have called for stakeholder involvement in the sustainable development of tourism (e.g. Dodds, 2007; Getz & Timur, 2005; Hall, 2007; Ryan, 2002). However, the multiplicity and heterogeneity of tourism stakeholders renders the process complicated.

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the knowledge base as to how stakeholders can be more effectively involved in the implementation of ST. In particular, this paper offers a structured approach to the complex process of multi-stakeholder involvement in the implementation of ST in the form of the Multi-Stakeholder Involvement Management (MSIM) framework which is derived from the case study evidence. The MSIM framework offers ST proponents and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), that is, leaders, a means to address key stakeholder-related issues while systematically involving stakeholders in ST. This is a step towards explaining how stakeholder involvement in the implementation of ST can be enhanced and an effort to stimulate further research on the topic. To this end, we used a case study of the Cornwall Sustainable Tourism (CoaST) Project in the United Kingdom to identify and elaborate the components of the MSIM framework that emerged from the analysis. We begin the paper by examining the concept of stakeholders as conveyed by the extant literature before exploring the significance of stakeholders in the implementation of ST, highlighting the related challenges, and presenting the case study context. The methodology adopted is then discussed along with the strategy for data analysis and the resulting MSIM framework is

presented, illustrated with slices of data, and duly appraised. The paper concludes with ideas for future research directions.

2. Stakeholders and Sustainable Tourism

In assessing the existing literature, we move from the broader and more abstract portrayals of the stakeholder concept through to the studies addressing the specific use of stakeholders in ST implementation.

2.1 The Stakeholder Concept

Many researchers agree that the stakeholder concept gained widespread acceptance with Freeman's (1984) book *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* (e.g. Donald & Preston, 1995; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001, Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997). Freeman (1984) argued that stakeholders are a significant component of an organisation's environment. Since then researchers have sought to develop and justify the stakeholder concept in different contexts (e.g. Friedman & Miles, 2002; Frooman, 1999; Savage, Nix, Whitehead & Blair, 1991). Essentially the stakeholder concept holds that an organisation occupies the centre of a network of relationships that it has with assorted interested parties (Donald & Preston, 1995; Neville, Bell & Menguc, 2005). Following research conducted in the early 1960s at the Stanford Research Institute, it was argued that the support of all stakeholder groups is necessary for the continued survival of an organisation (Sheehan, Ritchie & Hudson, 2007). Hence, contrary to traditional management which concentrates mostly on internal stakeholders, stakeholder management attends to stakeholders who are internal to, external to, or interface with an organisation (Polonsky & Scott, 2005; Savage *et al.*, 1991). Freeman (1984) claimed that the old management approaches failed to take account of a wide range of groups who can affect or are affected by an organisation, namely the 'stakeholders'. In this paper, stakeholders refer to those groups or individuals who are associated with tourism development initiatives and therefore can affect or are affected by the decisions and activities concerning those initiatives.

2.2 Implementing ST: the significance of stakeholders

The evaluation and analysis of stakeholders has contributed significantly to an enhanced understanding of ST. There are a number of tourism studies involving stakeholder identification and analysis (e.g. Aas *et al.*, 2005; Byrd, 2007; Hardy & Beeton, 2001; Medeiros de Araujo & Bramwell, 1999; Vernon, Essex, Pinder & Curry, 2005). The tourism literature refers to different stakeholder types (e.g. Butler, 1999; Getz & Timur, 2005; Hall & Lew, 1998; Markwick, 2000; Mason, 2003) with many typologies typically coalescing into six broad categories: tourists, industry, local community, government, special interest groups and educational institutions. These stakeholder groups influence tourism development in many ways including tourism supply and demand, regulation, the management of tourism impacts, human resources and research.

Since the publication of Murphy's *Community Approach* (Murphy, 1985), the necessity of creating links with stakeholders has been widely acknowledged in tourism (Hall, 1999; Simpson, 2008). Murphy (1988) contended that mutually beneficial partnerships were essential for tourism planning. Although the minutia of stakeholder composition varies across different tourism contexts, stakeholders undoubtedly impact on tourism development initiatives (Bramwell & Sharman, 2000; Getz & Timur, 2005; Hall, 2007). Therefore, it is imperative to recognise stakeholders when managing tourism more sustainably and to take account of their different perspectives on the issues (Bramwell, Henry, Jackson & Van der Straaten, 1996; Dodds, 2007; Hardy & Beeton, 2001). Stakeholders should not only be recipients of ST plans but active participants in the planning process (Byrd, 2003; Southgate & Sharpley, 2002). ST proponents and DMOs need to know what processes work because tourism development can result in the heavy exploitation of a locality's resources by the developers, the visitors and other users if it is not managed well (Haywood, 2006). Gossling, Hall & Weaver (2009) observed that the emerging implementation of ST is driven by stakeholder partnerships, which implies that ST implementation is largely dependent upon effective stakeholder engagement.

Despite the rising interest in stakeholders, effective stakeholder involvement is complex, problematic and often underestimated (Friedman & Miles, 2006; Jamal & Getz, 1999; Moworth & Munt, 2003). Collaboration is complicated due to the

existence of multiple and diverse stakeholders that often hold disparate viewpoints (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Markwick 2000). Yet, to date, empirical research on issues involving stakeholders in the context of tourism is sparingly documented (Dodds, 2007; Hall, 2007). Although ST encompasses the economic, social and environmental dimensions of tourism development, most research has concentrated on the environment and economic development while largely disregarding the social aspects and stakeholder processes (Hardy, Beeton & Pearson, 2002; Ryan, 2002). It has been observed that managers develop ST strategies *without* considering stakeholder perspectives (e.g. Byrd, Bosley & Dronberger, 2009; Currie *et al.*, 2009; Polonsky & Scott, 2005). As a result, ST strategies do not necessarily favour stakeholder participation. Moreover, Pretty (1995) found that there were many interpretations of participation which had evolved, some of which hindered rather than supported sustainability. Woodland & Acott (2007) called for greater understanding of the opportunities and barriers that stakeholder involvement may entail and exploration of the factors influencing stakeholders when engaging with sustainability.

2.3 Implementing ST: issues and challenges

Many authors contend that the problem of implementing ST lies in its practical application and in the complexity of its parental paradigm (e.g. Dewhurst & Thomas, 2003; Harris, Griffin & Williams, 2002; Hardy *et al.*, 2002; Sharpley, 2000). The various terms that are assumed to be synonymous with ST and their alternative approaches to tourism development have been controversial (Butler, 1990; Hunter & Green, 1995; Mowforth & Munt 1998; Pforr, 2001; Wheeller, 1991). As Robson & Robson (1996) observed, the method of delivering ST is not fully explored and although the concept has been widely endorsed, routes and directions for its practical application remain unclear (Wall & Mathieson, 2006).

Some early studies foresaw the salient and practical issues of ability, agreement, coordination, collaboration and responsibility (e.g. Butler, 1990; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Sautter & Leisen, 1999; Wheeller, 1991). These issues were associated with mistrust of government policy, poor administration, failure to involve local rural communities and unclear lines of communication (e.g. Berry & Ladkin, 1997; Ioannides, 1995).

Similar attitudes were identified in later studies. Notably, the lack of stakeholder involvement or buy-in, lack of government support, lack of leadership, lack of awareness and lack of coordination (e.g. Dodds, 2007; Timur & Getz, 2009). As a result, low levels of awareness, problems with coordination and bureaucracy, feelings of disempowerment, fragility of common interests, the failure to clarify goals and an unwillingness to make significant changes to current behaviour have been rife among stakeholders (e.g. Cooper *et al*, 2009; Dodds & Butler, 2009; 2010; Getz & Timur, 2005; Miller, Rathouse, Scarles, Holmes & Tribe, 2010; Weaver, 2000). Stakeholders need the opportunity to discuss issues that influence the quality of their lives and to be sufficiently empowered to do so (Norton, 2005; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Overall, the issues that hamper the implementation of ST are stakeholder-related and are associated with priorities, organisation and resources.

Tourism development problems of natural resource management and global warming affect numerous individuals and groups (Bryson, 2004; Grant, 2004; Jamal & Stronza, 2009). Furthermore, the call for greater stakeholder participation is a rejection of the traditional policy short on informed, open participatory public processes for decision-making (Baker 2006; Nelson, Butler & Wall, 1993). Therefore, implementing ST with multi-stakeholder processes requires leadership, incentive structures, priority setting, long-term vision, resilience and financial resources (Elkington, 2004; Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2005; International Institute for Environment & Development, 2002; Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development, 2001). The stakeholder concept aims to coordinate the multiple relationships involved (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & Colle, 2010) and assumes that managerial decisions and actions are the key factors that influence organisational-stakeholder relationships (Phillips, Berman, Elms & Johnson-Cramer, 2010).

3. The Case Study Context

A case study strategy was used to investigate how stakeholder involvement in the implementation of ST could be enhanced to achieve sustainability objectives within a “real-life context” (Yin, 2003:13). The Cornwall Sustainable Tourism Project (CoaST) was selected for three key reasons (Figure 1). Firstly, the organisation is committed

to ST based on economic, social and environmental (ESE) principles and the triple-bottom line (TBL) concept in Cornwall and other regions. Secondly, CoaST relies on the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders both within and outside Cornwall to implement its ST strategy. Finally, the organisation has become nationally recognised (e.g. Sustainable Development Commission, 2007; VisitBritain, 2010) for its best practices and contribution to the advancement of ST in the public arena.

Figure 1 here

CoaST is situated in the county of Cornwall in south-western England. The appeal of Cornwall as a tourist destination is in large part based upon its landscape and natural environment. CoaST is a social enterprise (CoaST, 2012) founded on a network of varied individuals and organisations, namely its stakeholders (CoaST, 2008a). According to Social Enterprise UK (2012), the national body for social enterprise in the United Kingdom, a social enterprise is “a business that trades for a social and/or environmental purpose”. This organisation started in Cornwall but has expanded with members collaborating under the 'One Planet Tourism' network from across more than 50 counties in the UK and 15 countries worldwide (CoaST, 2009). Membership of CoaST is voluntary, and funds for activities are generated from public and private sources and the organisation uses the network and its web of connections to extend its sustainability agenda (CoaST, 2008c; 2008d). More specifically CoaST's declared aim is to

work towards one planet tourism; a type of tourism which provides benefits to the people, economy and environment, and which operates within our social, financial and environmental means. In other words, the triple bottom line (CoaST, 2008b; 2010)

The tourism sector in Cornwall is dependent on individual initiatives rather than on the implementation of a macro-policy (Coles, 2009). Likewise, ST in Cornwall is dominated by partnerships and joint projects (Vernon *et al.*, 2005). Indeed, much of the progress that has been made towards implementing ST in the UK has been through initiatives such as CoaST (VisitBritain, 2010). CoaST operates as a popular network for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and expertise for tourism operators interested in sustainable practice (South West Tourism, 2009). CoaST contributed to the Sustainable Development Panel which was launched in 2006 by the Sustainable

Development Commission (SDC), the UK's former independent watchdog on sustainable development. The panel participated in the development of SDC strategies and informed national debates on critical issues (SDC, 2007).

4. Methodology

This case study is deemed purposive because of its likelihood to offer theoretical insight about the relationship between the implementation of ST and stakeholder involvement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Stakeholders (individuals) were the primary data collection source while CoaST (the case study organisation) was the focus of analysis. The case study sought to gain in-depth understanding of what has been and is being experienced by the people involved, because stakeholder perceptions (multiple realities) have an effect on the overall success or failure of implementing ST. Qualitative data in the form of stakeholder accounts provided a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The stakeholder perspective adopted used informants belonging to eight primary stakeholder groups. This selective notion of primary stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995) as opposed to all stakeholders has been applied to previous tourism and environmental studies (e.g. Buysse & Verbeke, 2003; Getz & Timur, 2005; Hardy & Beeton, 2001; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). By definition, primary stakeholders have the greatest impact on determining the outcome of an organisation's or destination's initiatives (Cooper *et al.*, 2009; Currie *et al.*, 2009; Mitchell *et al.*, 1997). Thus, it was the primary stakeholders of CoaST that were targeted as they were likely to yield the richest data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Data collection was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved three focus groups that were held with a total of twelve stakeholders. The second and main phase consisted of forty individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from the eight primary stakeholder groups. These were (1.) Businesses (2.) Residents (3.) Government (4.) Special Interest Groups (5.) Employees (6.) Board of Directors (7.) Educational Institutions and (8.) Visitors .

The three focus groups provided initial insight which underpinned the interviews because of the participants' close working relationship and active involvement with CoaST. As recommended for focus groups (e.g. Robson, 2002; Krueger & Casey,

2009), there was sufficient variation among participants to stimulate discussions. Table 1 depicts the composition of the participants and details of the focus groups.

Table 1 here

The participants in Focus Groups 1 and 3 ran diverse businesses in different parts of the county of Cornwall; hence they had had a variety of experiences with ST. At the same time they shared with one another the common factor of being key stakeholders as CoaST members. Focus Group 2 comprised CoaST staff and provided insight into how the organisation operated internally and what its professed aims were for the implementation of ST. Although the participants of all three focus groups were key stakeholders of CoaST, their different perspectives facilitated the exchange of ideas and communication without restraint as the topic was appropriate to all of them.

The aim of the forty individual semi-structured interviews was to explore the insights attained from the focus groups by delving into the data and extending participation. Theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) enabled selection of participants who were suitable for illuminating the problem of stakeholder participation in ST initiatives. Interviews were conducted at diverse locations and lasted between forty-five minutes and one and a half hours. Each interview was recorded and averaged around eight pages of text after transcription.

Analysis can entail examining, coding, categorising, conceptualising, abstracting, comparing, pattern-matching, integrating and iterating to draw/verify conclusions (e.g. Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 2008, Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Yin, 2003; 2009). However, these processes are neither discrete nor sequential. Moreover, the 'jumble of labels' used to describe research including grounded theory building, qualitative research, theory building from cases and naturalistic inquiry can be confusing to different audiences (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007:26). For example, Charmarz (2000) argued that grounded theory need not be rigid and the methods can be used by diverse researchers to develop studies from interpretive approaches. As such, the purpose

of this section is to describe and explain the approaches and methods applied to this study.

Analysis and interpretation was based on a general analytic framework (Yin, 2009) which defined priorities for what to analyse and why. This comprised three stages: (1.) analysis of individual interviews and transcripts (*within-case analysis, initial coding and categorisation*); (2.) identification of shared themes (*categorical aggregation and a search for patterns*) and (3.) analysis of shared themes. Each transcript was analysed separately as a unit of analysis to both understand the experience of those individuals and to identify the emerging themes (*within-case analysis*). Although coding was unrestricted and imaginative, a coding scheme that was not content specific was employed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It included (1.) the setting or case study context (2.) verbal meanings or definitions of informants (3.) perspectives of how things are done (4.) process or sequence of events or changes over time (5.) activities in the study context or regularly occurring kinds of behaviour (6.) events or specific activities (7.) strategies or ways of accomplishing things (8.) relationships such as cliques, coalitions, friendships (9.) participation or adaptation to situations in the setting and (10.) others such as concerns, proposals, comments, dilemmas, and benefits. As anything can be coded (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), this scheme helped to avoid meaningless coding and to focus on 'how' and 'why' stakeholders participated in the implementation of ST in the case study context.

Instances from the data about an issue were collected (*categorical aggregation*) (Creswell, 2007). The coding scheme was useful for thinking about the categories in which codes were developed although there was scope for other codes to emerge progressively. Using processes akin to the ones described above to explore stakeholder involvement in ST, data was reflected on systematically by taking one piece of data and comparing it with the rest for similarities or differences. The coding technique involved both deductive and inductive approaches which Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007: 25) described as 'mirrors of one another'. Tentative themes and twenty categories were identified from the transcripts as this process of coding and categorisation or *data reduction* (Miles & Huberman, 1994) made it possible to focus on selected data that was most useful for the research.

For example, during stage one, one slice of data was coded 'university course' to indicate the source of awareness about sustainability when a respondent suggested that she first heard about the concept while studying geography at university. Another slice was coded 'seminar attendance' in the same context resulting in a group/sub-category named 'origin of awareness'. During the second stage, a shared theme that included the above group/sub-category was identified and labeled 'information quality and accessibility' because of the role that information had played in spreading knowledge and understanding of ST. Other connected group/sub-categories included 'stakeholder perceptions of ST', 'aspects of stakeholder involvement', and 'challenges of stakeholder involvement'. Finally, seven categories of shared themes linked to different aspects were created and their conceptual labels were more abstract to denote shared experiences across informants' accounts. These were (1.) leadership qualities (2.) information quality and accessibility (3.) stakeholder mindsets (4.) stakeholder involvement capacity (5.) stakeholder relationships (6.) contextual circumstances and (7.) ST implementation priorities.

The third stage aimed at developing comprehensible theory from the identified shared themes. The data was revisited to search for relationships between the shared themes and the different concepts that had been merged. Potential patterns and relationships within and between the shared themes and the core theme of *stakeholder involvement* were examined to determine what exactly constituted the shared aspects of the informants' lived experience. Following constant comparison, the themes were grouped together under an even higher level descriptive concept. For instance 'scene-setting' was found to represent well the issues related to awareness, understanding, information and communication.

Therefore, the data was organised into increasingly more abstract units of information by building categories and patterns inductively so that meaning could be extracted in order to develop theory. Consequently, the search for meaning was a search for patterns and consistency within certain conditions (Stake, 1995).

4.1 Limitations of the study

Although this case study is a commendable example, the force of which should not be underestimated (Flyvbjerg, 2006), the findings are not generalisable statistically

but rather analytically. Albeit developed from an analysis of over fifty real life accounts of lived experiences from the individual interviews and the focus groups, these informants were limited to the eight primary stakeholder groups identified for CoaST in Cornwall, the pattern of which may not replicate to other contexts where alternative key stakeholder groups may be applicable. Despite the arguments for prioritisation, the inclusion of secondary stakeholder groups in the case study may have detected tweaks in identified concerns or comprehensiveness of issues. Similarly, the interviews may not reflect participants' experiences elsewhere accurately. Nonetheless, the MSIM framework offers a sound contribution towards the better understanding of ST implementation and stakeholder engagement at both the theoretical and practical level.

5. The Multi-Stakeholder Involvement Management (MSIM) Framework

While there are increasing recommendations for the involvement of stakeholders in ST, there is no clear understanding of how best to achieve that goal. The stakeholder concept which was adopted in this study recognises stakeholders and enables organisational and destination managers in the tourism industry to understand them and their needs. Stakeholder perceptions are accepted as crucial for evaluating participatory processes and devising effective strategies for implementing ST (Hardy & Beeton, 2001; Wall & Mathieson 2006). This stakeholder approach is therefore underpinned by three basic assumptions: (1.) stakeholders are acknowledged as a core component of the implementation of ST (stakeholder identification) (2.) stakeholder perceptions are sought to facilitate the development of effective stakeholder involvement strategies (stakeholder engagement) and (3.) 'stakeholder involvement' can facilitate the achievement of ST objectives (multi-stakeholder involvement).

However, multi-stakeholder involvement in ST is complex and influenced by a multitude of factors among which seven were identified in this study: leadership qualities, information quality and accessibility, stakeholder mindsets, stakeholder involvement capacity, stakeholder relationships, contextual circumstances and ST implementation priorities. Drawing on these key influential factors, the MSIM framework responds to calls for DMOs to involve stakeholders effectively in the

implementation of ST. It was generated in agreement with an interpretivist stance on the case study empirical evidence as a logical and structured approach to enhancing stakeholder involvement in ST and it is presented in two parts.

- The first part of the MSIM framework introduces three strategic levels: attraction, integration and management (see Figure 2) which represent the three main strategic decisions that ST proponents and DMOs need to consider in the adoption of a stakeholder approach to implementing ST. These are supported by the concept of ‘hand-holding’ which symbolises the wide range of activities that encourage stakeholder involvement in the implementation of ST

Figure 2 here

- The second part of the MSIM framework constitutes six stages which are embedded within the three strategic levels. As indicated in Figure 2, these six stages are (1.) scene-setting (2.) recognition of stakeholder involvement capacity (3.) stakeholder relationship management (4.) pursuit of achievable objectives (5.) influencing implementation capacity and (6.) monitoring stakeholder involvement.

5.1 Strategic levels of the MSIM framework

The three strategic levels govern the MSIM framework and play a key role in enabling ST proponents and DMOs to systematically address critical stakeholder involvement issues, such as the lack of a common understanding and diverse stakeholder interests and capabilities.

5.1.1 Attraction

The attraction level is the first of the three strategic levels of the MSIM framework. At this level, there is need to draw attention to the concept of ‘sustainable tourism’ and build a common view of how different stakeholders perceive it. It is at this stage that barriers to the practical achievement of ST first arise. In its early days, CoaST initiated the ‘Building on Distinction’ (BoD) programme in order to both highlight the

importance of ST in Cornwall and identify interested participants (CoaST, 2005). BoD involved six workshops which culminated in the discovery of 23 tourism businesses that were perceived to be enthusiastic about sustainable business practices. These became the first 'CoaST Ambassadors' and they represented the beginning of the 'CoaST network'.

5.1.2 Integration

The integration level is the second of the three strategic levels of the MSIM framework. This level facilitates stakeholder collaboration in the pursuit of sustainability objectives. With its ambassadors and other partners, CoaST runs a variety of workshops and events that facilitate this collaboration, objective setting and achievement. For example Community Energy Plus (a charity that offers solutions for sustainable energy in Cornwall) and CoaST Ambassador businesses collaborated to gain a better understanding of behaviour change. Other collaborative events helped tourism businesses understand oil vulnerability whilst joint working with the Cornwall Marine Network and other marine partners furthered sustainable tourism in the marine leisure industry (www.cstn.org.uk). Focusing on stakeholder concerns and seeking practical solutions is central to implementation at this level.

5.1.3. Management

The management level is the third and final strategic level of the MSIM framework. The aim here is to monitor stakeholder involvement and motivate stakeholders while addressing any issues that arise during implementation. CoaST was at the forefront of launching the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS – a sustainable tourism certification scheme) in Cornwall and the South West to serve that purpose. Of the first eight businesses to be accredited by GTBS, six were CoaST members and ambassadors (CoaST Board of Directors report, 2006). In order to support the scheme, CoaST provided free site visits, training, workshops and events in addition to email and phone access for queries.

As a result of the above three strategic levels, 'hand-holding' has been an on-going responsibility of CoaST. Hand-holding is defined as the reassurance, support,

guidance or inspiration afforded stakeholders as they engage in ST in order to overcome obstacles. The Managing Director of CoaST stated:

Our hand-holding is the beginning...[businesses] they sort of wanna start but they don't know where to...so we do that through our events, workshops, presentations but also through the website...

As a sector, tourism is fragmented with diverse stakeholders and it is clear that leadership (usually from within a DMO of some form) is an essential pre-requisite to deliver a common understanding of the value of ST and its implementation.

5.2. The six stages of the MSIM framework

There are six stages embedded within the three strategic levels of the MSIM framework (see Figure 2). At the attraction level are scene-setting and recognition of stakeholder involvement capacity. At the integration level are stakeholder relationship management and pursuit of achievable objectives. At the management level are influencing implementation capacity and monitoring stakeholder involvement. Each stage is associated with a key action which addresses a particular purpose and results in a specific effect.

5.2.1 Scene-setting

The aim of scene-setting is to tackle a major and long-standing concern regarding the confused public understanding of ST. Scene-setting enhances awareness and understanding of the concept through communication strategies that different stakeholder groups can comprehend. In addition to the workshops, talks and events, CoaST's online strategy has been central to effective communication. Via the member messaging system of the network, CoaST responded to various queries. Breaking news was added to the website and members were encouraged to debate issues on the online forum (www.cstn.org.uk).

There was evidence to suggest that stakeholders' interest in ST increased once they became familiar with the concept and its benefits. For example, a member of the Board of Directors remarked:

Having read about what CoaST was doing, I thought this is phenomenal...it's kind of a realistic pragmatic approach...so that's how I got involved

Yet despite the significant attention paid to sustainability over recent years and CoaST's attempt to build on that base, communication does not always resonate with the targeted audience as one employee explained:

I do find it very difficult to explain what I do to friends and family...they are like what for? Why? How is it helping anybody?

Similarly, one resident expressed frustration with getting people to understand what it means to be involved in ST:

I find it very difficult to tell people that I am involved in ST because they go like, what? They don't really I think get what it is...they are like, Oh, so you are an eco-geek ...does that mean you won't go shopping, you won't do this, you won't do that?

As it becomes increasingly important for stakeholders to participate in ST, the need to develop communication strategies that can help stakeholders understand the concept becomes a primary concern. CoaST has strategically capitalised on the use of its website whilst closely working with its network and partners to fulfill outreach activities. This combination is useful because information quality and accessibility are crucial at this stage for effective communication. The purpose of scene-setting, as highlighted in Figure 2, is to raise stakeholder awareness and interest in ST in order to elevate stakeholders' perceived value of the concept. However, this is likely to be gradual and dependent on stakeholders' mind-set and capacity to respond to communication strategies.

5.2.2 Recognition of stakeholder involvement capacity

Recognition of stakeholder involvement capacity is the second stage of the MSIM framework. It is also embedded within the first strategic level of attraction and it maps a route through the numerous and diverse stakeholders. For CoaST, the TBL idea translates into working collectively to ensure that Cornwall operates within its social, environmental and economic means. However, there is substantial literature suggesting that stakeholders are varied and therefore will have different capabilities

(e.g. Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Simpson, 2008). Identifying stakeholders and analysing them, can aid the understanding of stakeholders' different situations so that stakeholder engagement is targeted.

Since misunderstanding is still widespread and compounded by the complexity of the concept, CoaST established strategies to manage stakeholder involvement capacity. As the Managing Director explained:

...once they [stakeholders] have found their way into that [accepting ST] our job really is to try and find very engaging ways helping them get their head round the connections with all the other things [financial and non-financial resources]

However, stakeholder circumstances can be limiting and their expectations difficult to meet as indicated by one female resident:

...they gonna have to provide lots of money because you can't suddenly say to people living below the poverty level [GAP] 'Oh by the way, by 2020 you have got to have X millimeters of insulation in the loft...

This demonstrates the need to be conscious of stakeholder situations when developing stakeholder engagement strategies. CoaST offers support in the form of email, phone and face-to-face advice to all issues pertaining to tourism and sustainability such as where to buy a small kettle or where to buy locally-made products. The purpose of recognising stakeholder involvement capacity is to identify and assess stakeholder situations in order to engage stakeholders appropriately through activities and support that suit their needs and capabilities.

5.2.3 Stakeholder relationship management

Stakeholder relationship management is the third stage of the MSIM process and the first of the integration strategic level (see Figure 2). It deals with the varied stakeholder perceptions and secures support for the implementation of ST through multi-stakeholder interactive networking. As the Managing Director of CoaST explained:

...there is a big spectrum there and I suppose everybody is on that spectrum somewhere...so we try to move along that spectrum and try to

encourage our members to move along that spectrum...find different ways of inventing new collaborative ways forward

For CoaST, interactive networking involved talks, presentations and informal discussions with tourism associations, town councils, businesses, local authorities, colleges and community groups. It also worked with strategically-minded bodies to strengthen the position of ST on long-term agendas. Examples include Environment Kernow which provides advice on opportunities, policies and knowledge about the environment (www.environmentkernow.org.uk) and the Cornwall Strategic Partnership which promotes the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Cornwall (www.cornwallstrategicpartnership.gov.uk/) (CoaST, 2008g).

Stakeholder relationship management involves encouraging different stakeholder groups to extend their aspirations beyond their core economic, social or environmental goals. In this way, a shift towards the wider goals of the TBL concept is set in motion. For example, the CoaST visitor charter is used by members through their websites (e.g. **Green** pages, Bedknobs Bed and Breakfast, 2010) to help visitors minimise their impact while on holiday in Cornwall. However, managing stakeholder relationships is not easy as stakeholders tend to respond to initiatives in accordance with their interests as one hotel manager observed:

The problem is... businesses think it is a marketing advantage so they keep all their cards quite close to the chest...they just don't openly or willingly share information

Multi-level interactive networking is critical for the diverse range of stakeholders to connect and pursue a common goal. Thus, the purpose of this third stage of stakeholder relationship management is to promote positive stakeholder relationships and collaboration in order to achieve sustainability objectives.

5.2.4 The pursuit of achievable objectives

The pursuit of achievable objectives is the fourth stage of the MSIM framework. It supports the integration strategic level in terms of stakeholder adaptation to the wider goal of ST. To manage stakeholder adaptability, practical sustainability initiatives are encouraged without ignoring potential financial and non-financial

obstacles. For example CoaST helped instigate recycling sites at the Royal Cornwall Show with partners such as the Environment Agency and Cornwall County Council, an award winning initiative. In a further example, CoaST helped two ambassadors, Pollaughan Farm Cottages and Cornwall Classic Car Hire with a group of Truro college students to plant trees for a joint project to offset carbon dioxide emissions from Cornwall Classic Car Hire (Classic Car Hire, 2006; CoaST 2008f). CoaST has also partnered with its stakeholders such as the Cornwall Wildlife Trust and The Primrose Valley Hotel to encourage visitor gifting schemes that enable visitors to donate to the local communities and environmental conservation efforts.

To demonstrate the impact of this strategy, one female environmental business adviser noted:

...it's been just particularly inspiring for people to get things done through seeing it as an example, seeing it done and it's really been a good motivator for businesses from what I have seen

Through hand-holding and the sharing of best practices, CoaST pursues achievable objectives in partnership with its stakeholders in order to build stakeholder confidence in ST. Yet although stakeholder adaptability is enhanced when the results of sustainability initiatives are visible, it is hugely affected by stakeholders' circumstances. For example one Bed and Breakfast owner stated:

We are so busy in the summer that there are certain things that I just wouldn't have time to implement... so as long as it's not something that creates extra work for me then I'm more than happy to try and get involved

Consequently, the degree of stakeholder involvement in ST initiatives varies. Stage four supports stakeholder involvement strategies in order to ensure opportunity optimisation.

5.2.5 Influencing implementation capacity

Influencing implementation capacity is the fifth stage of the MSIM process, found in the management strategic level. As a member of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group (STWG), CoaST helped deliver a comprehensive business plan for Cornwall's tourism sector (CoaST 2008e, Cornwall County Council 2009). For example, the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) obtained Europarc's Charter

for ST Award through the work of CoaST in collaboration with the STWG and the National Trust, Cornwall Council and the Cornwall AONB unit (Cornwall AONB, 2009). Europarc manages Europe's biological diversity and the Charter is a practical management tool that enables protected areas to develop tourism sustainably (Europarc Federation, 2010). In another collaboration, CoaST enabled over 100 businesses to benefit from training on ST and over 200 individuals to gain qualifications through Cornwall College with teaching input from CoaST and CoaST Business Ambassadors (CoaST, 2008e).

However, ST is a journey and stakeholder expectations rise especially when positive outcomes are experienced in practice and policy. This presents further challenges as demonstrated by one female business owner:

...there'd be a large number of businesses who would put in alternative energy sources if there was some sort of funding to help...a lot of businesses have gone as far as they can you know in terms of sustainability and now need to go further

Evidently, hand-holding is continuously desired as a support mechanism if progress with the sustainability agenda is to occur. Nevertheless, the purpose of this stage (see Figure 2) is to influence stakeholder involvement outcomes and increase the degree of stakeholder involvement.

5.2.6 Monitoring stakeholder involvement

Monitoring stakeholder involvement is the sixth and final stage of the MSIM framework. It supports the management strategic level through the review of implementation and the reward of effort and achievement. The sustenance of both stakeholder interest in ST and active engagement with on-going issues are targeted. Such an approach was adopted by CoaST as indicated by one education provider:

...I have been fairly regularly going to the main annual events ... they are very inspiring ... CoaST is very well networked with other organisations so there is good selection of other organisations who turn up to events like that from businesses, schools, policy makers

However, the MSIM framework entails managing a process involving a broad range of stakeholders which makes it complex. The Managing Director of CoaST noted that ST requires

making it [ST] accessible for someone at the beginning of the journey or those working for years and years looking for better ways...

Moreover, although ST is increasingly recognised as an imperative for the survival of the industry, adapting to the concept is still problematic as one tourism business owner explained,

...the theory of sustainable tourism is good, making it work practically is not always straightforward...so you'll have those for whom the environmental issues are so paramount that all other issues are secondary you know that's how they are driven

This reveals the problems of translating the concept into practical actions.

Therefore, on-going effective communication and stakeholder engagement are necessary to motivate active stakeholders and set the scene for new entrants. It is important to continually assess interests, capabilities and needs as stakeholder engagement tends to be so issue-specific that a previously supportive stakeholder may become disinclined to be cooperative on future issues (Friedman & Miles 2006). The purpose of stage six, as highlighted in Figure 2, is to maintain the stakeholder involvement process in order to raise/maintain the level of stakeholder motivation. Consequently, stakeholder involvement is a cyclical continuous management process and hand-holding is essential for stakeholders to retain an accurate overview.

6. Discussion of the MSIM framework

It is clear that stakeholders become involved in ST initiatives only when they have an awareness and understanding of its significance. As long as ST remains contentious and stakeholder interests diverge, management intervention is necessary. The three strategic levels of the MSIM framework allow active prediction and engagement with stakeholder concerns. As the MSIM framework seeks to reach a diverse range of stakeholders, effective communication at the attraction level provides comprehensible and accessible information. Stakeholder identification and analysis facilitates appropriate and targeted stakeholder engagement in recognition of stakeholders' varied situations. At the integration level, interactive networking promotes positive stakeholder relationships whilst paying attention to both effective

communication and differing stakeholder circumstances to ensure sustainability objectives are achievable. As such, the MSIM framework takes into account the complexity of ST and the need for stakeholders to adapt. The notion of hand-holding ensures that opportunities are optimised at every stage.

While researchers can engage with the MSIM framework, it also offers a practical tool for ST proponents and DMOs. The case study has provided concrete examples of how the MSIM framework might cause stakeholders to become involved in ST.

These are summarised below:

1. By raising stakeholder perceptions of the value of ST through initiatives such as CoaST's BoD programme (section 5.1.1), attention can be drawn to ST and potential 'ambassadors' identified.
2. An effective communication strategy including different activities such as workshops, talks, events and online forums (section 5.2.1) acknowledges diversity and supports appropriate stakeholder engagement.
3. Both formal and informal multi-stakeholder networking strategies in the form of presentations and casual discussions with stakeholder groups (section 5.2.3) can encourage positive stakeholder relationships and partnerships in ST initiatives.
4. Recognising the need for stakeholder adaptation to ST can enhance stakeholder trust in collaborative schemes such as visitor charters, recycling, visitor gifting and tree planting (section 5.2.4)
5. Strategic targets as exemplified by CoaST's active participation in the STWG can increase the degree of stakeholder involvement (section 5.2.5).
6. Finally, continuous stakeholder engagement with ST issues at various events helps to raise stakeholder motivation and rejuvenate the process (section 5.2.6).

Tourism is known for its dynamic and multi-faceted nature. Similarly, stakeholder involvement in ST is not a static process; stakeholders rely on ST proponents or DMOs for direction setting, information provision and problem solving. As such, the MSIM process is continuous and requires constant management and monitoring to adapt to changing conditions. Figure 3 is a simplified cyclical representation of the

MSIM framework combining the three strategic levels, the six stages and the act of hand-holding.

Figure 3 here

The MSIM framework targets raised stakeholders' perceived value of ST, appropriate stakeholder engagement, consolidation of sustainability objectives, opportunity optimisation, higher degrees of stakeholder involvement, and higher levels of stakeholder motivation. Therefore, effective leadership is underscored in instigating and maintaining the MSIM process.

7. Conclusions and further developments

Despite an extensive ST literature, contributions to its implementation are currently limited yet emerging. An acknowledged impediment to ST is the meaning of 'sustainable tourism'. The term is controversial and does not automatically refer to tourism developed in line with the principles of sustainable development. As such, implementing ST is challenging with theoretical best practices not necessarily translating into practical outcomes (Sharpley, 2009; Weaver, 2000). This situation has encouraged researchers to focus attention on the implementation stage to better understand the application of sustainable development principles to tourism practices.

The role of stakeholders in the implementation of ST is becoming more prominent in both academia and industry. Given the 'multi-stakeholder nature' of both sustainable development and tourism, the stakeholder concept was an appropriate lens through which to explore stakeholder issues. Stakeholder perspectives of ST and subsequent actions have an overall effect on sustainability initiatives, hence the need for stakeholder analysis. The case study of CoaST provided an understanding of the significance of stakeholder recognition, engagement and participation in ST. As stakeholders are instrumental to achieving sustainability objectives, stakeholder views are pivotal for the development of effective stakeholder involvement strategies. Key factors influencing stakeholder involvement in ST were identified as leadership quality, information quality and accessibility, stakeholder mindsets, stakeholder involvement capacity, stakeholder relationships and implementation priorities. These

are underpinned by the complexity of ST, contextual circumstances and the diversity of stakeholders.

This paper has presented a novel framework rooted in case study evidence for enhanced stakeholder involvement in the implementation of ST. The MSIM framework was developed at three levels purposely to: *attract* stakeholders to ST, *integrate* them into the stakeholder involvement process, and *manage* that process (see Figure 2). Guided by six stages embedded in the three levels, the MSIM framework addresses stakeholder issues while providing relevant support for them. Stakeholder identification and analysis is essential as it enables effective partnerships. Collaboration had the greatest positive impact on sustainability initiatives in the study and was the result of proactive leadership.

The MSIM framework conveys something of the possibilities and desirability of stakeholder involvement in ST and its effectiveness in the pursuit of sustainability. It provides a holistic management framework that integrates stakeholder involvement into the implementation of ST. Although the importance of leadership is neglected in the academic tourism literature, we contend that most responsibility rests with the type of leadership and the associated stakeholder interactions. With careful planning of the participatory process, groups of stakeholders can strongly influence tourism policy at the strategic and delivery levels.

7.1 Future research directions

The embryonic state of affairs with regards stakeholders and the implementation of ST presents research opportunities into how stakeholders interact, how they influence ST and what motivates them in specific contexts. At the same time, the lack of appreciation of stakeholder perspectives limits the ability of ST proponents and DMOs to understand and act on the key issues. Consequently, ST concerns more than sustainability and more research involving stakeholder accounts in different cultures and contexts is required. In recognition of this trend, it was highlighted that people are at the centre of sustainable development at the Rio+20 conference themed 'the future we want' (United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 2012). It is also evident that the internet facilitates communication across a wide range of people creating on-line communities. Hence, additional case

studies or multiple-case designs of other organisations or destinations purporting to implement ST with the stakeholder imperative in mind should be conducted to add to the body of knowledge. These case studies would aid the confirmation or challenge the robustness and generalisability of the MSIM framework proposed in this paper.

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