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# Entrepreneurial responses to sustainability: regulatory, normative and cognitive dimensions in emergent and declining destinations

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This paper examines the characteristics, commonalities and contrasts between emerging and declining tourist destinations from a sustainable development perspective. This paper aims to contribute to current marketing theory relating to the sustainable management of destinations by investigating the influences of the regulatory (government structures), normative (value systems) and cognitive (social knowledge) dimensions on the activities of tourism entrepreneurs. Two regions are chosen as the basis for this research; Northern Ireland, a newly emerging tourism destination, and the Isle of Man, and well established tourism destination, which in recent years has moved into a stage of decline in terms of tourism.

Tourism entrepreneurs encourage tourism development and destination competitiveness (Komppula 2014; Dwyer et al 2009), however this also requires the support of a range of stakeholders and government bodies (Bramwell and Sharman 2009; Hardy and Beeton 2001). Indeed, given that the tourism resources are often owned by various entities in many contexts, the need to achieve consensus in terms of tourism development can be a limiting factor (Jamal and Getz 1995). In addition, sustainability principles may be viewed differently, depending on the stage of development of the region in question (Canavan 2014; Hardy and Beeton 2009),

In more advanced regions, tourism development may be ubiquitous and advantageous to locals; they understand and indeed have benefitted from tourism development. However, regions in decline may find government has retreated from the development process, thereby sacrificing momentum in terms of strategic progress. In emerging regions, government may not have the knowledge or experience to support tourism development from a sustainable development perspective as institutional and sociocultural sustainability principles (Puhakka, Sarkki, Cottrell, Pirkko 2009) have not been established. Some regions may experience opposition to tourism development itself. Both scenarios depict a situation of poor governmental support, thereby demonstrating similarities, and possible opportunities for shared learning and practice.

The research takes a qualitative approach, using case studies to provide rich and in-depth insights into two regions; one emergent (Northern Ireland) and one in decline (Isle of Man). In-depth interviews were carried out with a range of stakeholders, including local entrepreneurs and community associations.

Findings are presented according to regulative, cognitive and normative dimensions. There are many similarities of emergent and declining destinations. Highlighted is the heightened importance of sustainable management in these contexts to avoid fragmentation, degradation and contestation. Also demonstrated are the increased challenges which both emergent and declining destinations pose for destination management, product development and promotion.

Key words: Sustainable tourism development; emerging regions; declining regions; entrepreneurial response

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