



RESEARCH NOTES AND REPORTS

This Department publishes research notes, reports on the work of public and private agencies, conference reports, field (industry) reports, and other relevant topics and timely issues. Individuals interested in submitting notes and reports should write directly to the Associate Editor for Research Notes and Reports, Turgut Var (Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-2261, USA). Tel: (409) 845-5395, Fax: (409) 845-3211.

• Research Note

A Framework for Ecotourism

Ralf Buckley

Griffith University, Australia

Tourism is one of the world's largest industry sectors (WTO 1991; WTTC 1993); and its environmental management issues are relatively little studied (Buckley and Pannell 1989; Butler 1991; Westcott and Molinski 1993; WTTTC 1993). Ecotourism is arguably its fastest growing subsector (Matthews 1993), but poorly defined.

There are four main links between tourism and environment: components of the natural environment as the basis for a marketable tourism attraction or product; management of tourism operations so as to minimize or reduce their environmental impacts; economic or material contribution of tourism to conservation, either directly or indirectly; and attitude of tourists towards the environment and environmental education of clients by tourist operators. Therefore, there are environmental aspects to every major component of tourism business: products and markets, management, money, and people.

Environmental organizations have generally insisted that only tourism that is nature-based, sustainably-managed, conservation-supporting, and environmentally-educated (Figure 1) should be described as ecotourism (Baez and Rovinski 1992; Boo 1990; Ceballos-Lascurain 1992; Eber 1992; EAIPR 1992; Figgiss 1993; Lee and Snepenger 1992; Richardson 1993a, 1993b; Swanson 1992; Young 1992; Young and Wearing 1993; Ziffer 1989).

Industry and government, however, focus more on the product aspect, often treating ecotourism as effectively synonymous with nature-based tourism. Environmental management aspects are generally considered under rubrics such as sustainable, ecologically sustainable, environmentally appropriate, or environmentally responsible tourism (Ashworth and Goodall 1990; Australia 1991, 1992, 1993; British Airways 1992; British Airways Holidays 1993; Buckley 1991; Butler and Waldbrook 1991; English Tourist Board

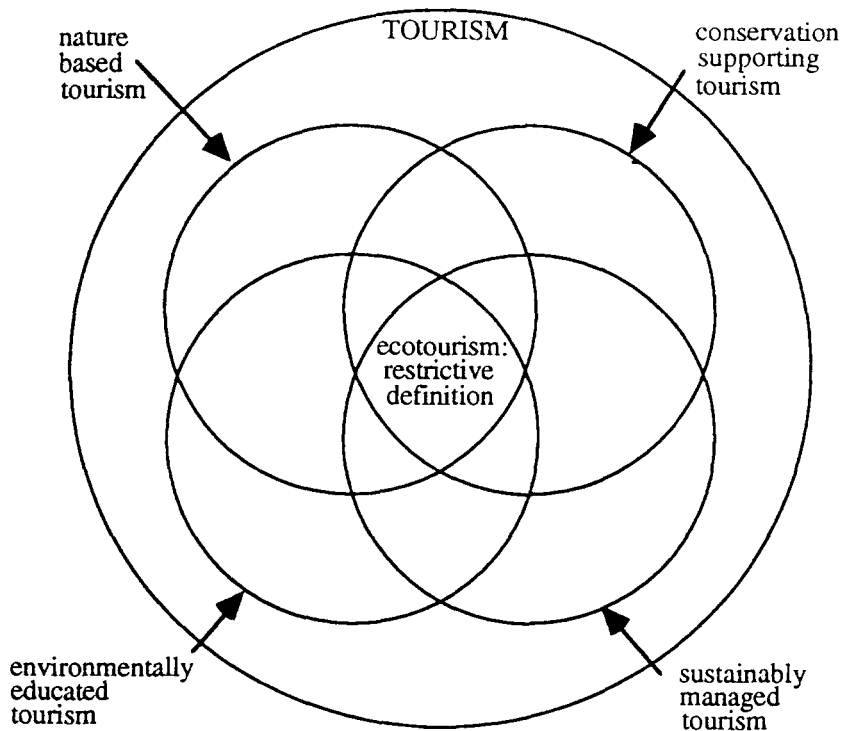


Figure 1. An Ecotourism Framework

Table 1. Ecotourism Framework

Industry Subsector Descriptor	Nature-Based Tourism	Sustainably-Run Tourism	Conservation-Supporting Tourism	Environmentally-Aware Tourism
Aspect of Tourism Industry	product, attraction	operations, management	revenue, purchasing	behavior, attitude (individual tourist); education, ethic (service provider)
Alternative Names in Common Use	[ecotourism], natural-areas tourism, green tourism	ecologically sustainable tourism, environmentally responsible tourism	[includes NGO's trusts, societies, firms]	[ecotourism]
Distinguishing Characteristics	aspect or component of natural environment is principal attraction to destination	deliberate steps taken to reduce environmental impacts and improve environmental management performance	revenue or activities contribute to environmental conservation organizations or activities	attitude to nature, deliberate behavior to minimize impacts (individual tourists); education or regulation of clients to change attitudes and/or behavior (tourism service provider)

(continued)

Table 1. Continued

Industry Subsector Descriptor	Nature-Based Tourism	Sustainably-Run Tourism	Conservation-Supporting Tourism	Environmentally-Aware Tourism
Environmental Issues	impacts on conservation values: ecological carrying capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. energy efficiency, greenhouse effect, air and water pollution b. resource use, disposables and consumables, recycling, sewage and sillage 	funding for conservation through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. direct payment to NGO's in country-of-origin b. direct payment to NGO's in country of destination c. indirect economic contributions to country of destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. impacts on conservation values: ecological carrying capacities b. crossover from tourism to other aspects of individual behavior
Industry Subsector Affected	resort owners, safari and tour operators	resort owners, airlines, bus companies, hotel chains, tour operators	specialist ecotourism companies, not-for-profit organizations	specialist ecotourism companies, not-for-profit organizations, individual tourists
Size and Growth	medium size, growing rapidly	most of the industry, stable size	small subsector, growing slowly	currently small, growing rapidly
Industry Component	destination, marketing	operations, management	purchasing, profits	educational programs
Aspects of Corporate Operations Involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. green marketing b. access to land c. impacts on revenue: recreational succession, recreational carrying capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. client expectations b. energy conservation c. waste management d. interaction with health and safety requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. corporate structure, shareholders' priorities b. niche marketing, conservation funding as sales tool c. sourcing labor supplies in country of destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. client expectations b. client relations c. niche marketing d. education programs
Corporate Environmental Management Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. modifying client behavior; e.g. by experienced guides, leaders, or through group ethic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. client education b. environmental and energy audits c. improve technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. marketing strategies b. purchasing and employment policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. modifying client behavior, e.g. by guides, education programmes, conditions on tour package, or group ethic
Policy Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. education of tourists b. hardening of environment c. limiting numbers d. industry codes of practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. environmental legislation b. energy prices c. industry codes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. country of origin: none required b. country of destination: fees and taxes; local-content requirements for purchasing and employment; limits on foreign ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. interpretive and instructional signs b. in-flight videos c. compulsory (examined) education programs as permit condition d. optional displays etc.
Information Needs	quantitative measurements of impacts of specific activities by known numbers of people on specific ecosystems at known times of year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. actual impacts of major travel and accommodation operators b. potential to reduce such impacts c. costs of such reduction d. client expectations and flexibility e. revenue implications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. total and proportional revenue contributions from individual operators b. size of subsector c. direct and indirect financial flows to and from countries of destination d. actual effects on conservation 	quantitative measurement of impacts by tourists with different attitudes and or subjected to different education programs.

1991; Farrell and Runyan 1991; Manning 1992; Pigram 1990; Somerville 1992; Soltys 1992; Troyer 1992; WTTC 1992). Parallel or related terms such as educational, sideline, cultural, or endemic tourism have also been proposed (Kelly and Dixon 1991; Oelrichs and Prosser 1992).

A precise definition of ecotourism is perhaps unnecessary unless the term is to be used in legal or administrative documents, such as planning and development control instruments or grant guidelines for funding agencies. Everyone involved in tourism has to make decisions related to environmental issues, however, even if the connection is indirect. Most decisions rely on information, so it is important to be able to identify critical issues, decisions, tools and information needs. This is being attempted in Table 1, using the framework outlined earlier—that is, nature-based products and markets, sustainable management to minimize impacts, financial support for conservation, and environmental attitudes and education of individual people.

The framework (Table 1) is clearly only one of many possibilities, and could be expanded and elaborated indefinitely. It does, however, integrate the various themes which have been raised in previous discussions of tourism, environment, and ecotourism. Much of this applies across broad segments of the tourism industry, including ecotourism. □ □

Ralf Buckley: International Center for Ecotourism Research, Griffith University, Gold Coast Mail Center, Southport QLD 4217, Australia.

REFERENCES

- Ashworth, G., and B. Goodall, eds.
1990 *Marketing Tourism Places*. London: Routledge.
- Australia
1991 Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Group on Tourism. Final Report. Canberra: ESD Secretariat.
1992 *Tourism: Australia's Passport to Growth*. National Tourism Strategy. Canberra: Department of Tourism.
1993 *Tourism. A National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Baez, A., and Y. Rovinski
1992 *Ecotourism in Costa Rica: The Tough Road for Remaining Number One*. Adventure Travel Society Newsletter (Fall):1,6.
- Boo, E.
1990 *Ecotourism: The Potentials and Pitfalls*. Baltimore: Worldwide Fund for Nature USA.
- British Airways
1992 *Annual Environmental Report*. London: British Airways.
- British Airways Holidays
1993 *Environmental Review 1993*. Crawley: British Airways Holidays.
- Buckley, R. C.
1991 *Environmental Planning and Policy for Green Tourism*. In *Perspectives in Environmental Management*, R. C. Buckley, ed., pp. 226–242, Heidelberg: Springer.
- Buckley, R. C., and J. Pannell
1990 *Environmental Impacts of Tourism and Recreation in National Parks and Conservation Reserves*. *Journal of Tourism Studies* 1:24–32.
- Butler, R. W.
1991 *Tourism, Environment, and Sustainable Development*. *Environmental Conservation* 18:201–209.
- Butler, R. W., and Waldbrook, L. A.
1991 *A New Planning Tool: The Tourism Opportunity Spectrum*. *Journal of Tourism Studies* 2:3–14.
- Ceballos-Lascurain, H.
1992 *Tourism, Ecotourism and Protected Areas*. Proceedings of IV Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas. Caracas: IV Congress of National Parks and Protected Areas.

- Eber, S., ed.
1992 *Beyond the Green Horizon*. Godalming: Worldwide Fund for Nature UK, U.K. EAIPR
- 1992 Ecotourism. Association of the Indo Pacific Region Newsletter 1(1):1.
- English Tourist Board
1991 *The Green Light: A Guide to Sustainable Tourism*. London: ETB.
- Farrell, B. H. G., and D. Runyan
1991 Ecology and Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 18:26-40.
- Figgiss, P.
1993 Ecotourism: Special Interest or Major Direction? *Habitat Australia* (February):8-11.
- Kelly, I., and W. Dixon
1991 Sideline Tourism. *Journal of Tourism Studies* 2:23.
- Lee, D. N. B., and D. J. Snepenger
1992 An Ecotourism Assessment of Tortuguero, Costa Rica. *Annals of Tourism Research* 19:367-370.
- Manning, E., ed.
1992 *Canada's Report on Government Initiatives in Support of Sustainable Tourism*. Ottawa: Tourism Canada.
- Matthews, A.
1993 Ecotourism: Fostering Australia's Biggest Growth Industry. *Australian Environment Review* 8(5):10-11.
- Oelrichs, I., and G. Prosser, eds.
1992 *Endemic Tourism*. San Francisco: Pacific Asia Travel Association.
- Pigram, J.
1990 Sustainable Tourism: Policy Considerations. *Journal of Tourism Studies* 1(2):2-9.
- Richardson, J.
1993 Australia Takes Sustainable Tourism Route. *The Ecotourism Society Newsletter* 3(2):1-2,5.
- Richardson, J.
1993 Editorial. *Tread Lightly* 5:3.
- Soltys, R.
1992 *Ecotourism: Policy and Implications*. Unpublished MBA thesis, University of Brisbane, Australia.
- Somerville, H.
1992 *Airlines, Tourism and Environment*, Vancouver: GLOBE '92 Tourism Stream.
- Swanson, M. A.
1992 *Ecotourism: Embracing the New Environmental Paradigm*, Caracas: Proceedings, IV World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas.
- Troyer, W.
1992 *The Green Partnership Guide*. Toronto: Canadian Pacific Hotels and Resorts.
- Wescott, G., and J. Molinski
1993 *Loving Our Parks to Death?* *Habitat Australia* (February):13-19.
- World Tourism Organisation
1991 *Yearbook of Tourism Statistics*. Madrid: WTO.
- World Travel and Tourism Council
1992 *The World Travel and Tourism Environment Review*. Brussels: WTTC.
1993 *Travel and Tourism*, Brussels: WTTC.
- World Travel and Tourism Environment Research Center
The World Travel and Tourism Environment Review - 1993. Oxford: WTTERC.
- Young, M.
1992 *Ecotourism: Profitable Conservation?* Proceedings of the conference on Ecotourism Business in the Pacific. Auckland: University of Auckland.
- Young, M., and S. Wearing
1993 *Ecotourism Discussion Paper*. Sydney: Worldwide Fund for Nature Australia.
- Ziffer, K. A.
1986 *Ecotourism: The Uneasy Alliance*. Washington DC: Conservation International.

Submitted 10 August 1993

Resubmitted 12 September 1993

Accepted 15 November 1993

0160-7383(93)E0039-G