

Sustainable Collaboration: The case of Green Destination Orlando

Summary of Case

This case study critically examines the collaborative efforts of stakeholders in their collective development of a sustainable “green” urban destination; Green Destination Orlando. The case study builds on previous research in the domains of destination collaboration and sustainability, and provides insight into future such developments across cities both in the U.S. and beyond. This study provides contribution to knowledge by highlighting the successes and shortcomings of an emerging collaborative organization comprised of various stakeholders with a desire to embed a culture and practice of sustainability within an urban destination planning context.

Target Audience

This case study is suitable for junior and senior level undergraduate and graduate (master’s degree) students in hospitality, tourism, urban development and/or sustainability. The intention of the case is to develop an understanding of collaboration within destination stakeholders as it pertains the emergence of a greener, more sustainable destination.

Analysis of Teaching Objectives and Theoretical Concepts

In its attempt to examine the collaborative efforts of stakeholders promoting the sustainability of a given destination, specifically as a ‘green destination’, this case study on Orlando, Florida, builds on previous research in the domains of destination collaboration and sustainability, and provides insight into future such developments across cities both in the U.S. and beyond. The teaching objectives are intended to shed light on the successes and shortcomings of an emerging collaborative organization comprised of various stakeholders with a desire to embed a culture and practice of sustainability within an urban destination planning context. While the concept of sustainability is the primary foundation for this case, collaboration, stakeholder theory, and strategic management theory are discussed and utilized in the study, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the concepts.

Explanation of Teaching Objectives

Fyall, Garrod, and Wang (2012) quoted Manente and Minghetti (2006, p.23) stating that “a destination is essentially a group of actors linked by mutual relationships, where the action of each actor influences those of the others so that the common objectives must be defined and attained in a coordinated way” (p.10). It takes considerable collaboration amongst key stakeholders for a destination, of any scale, to market themselves successfully and, even more so, when

developing a particular focus such as putting themselves forward as a ‘green’ destination. Wang and Xiang (2007) and Munanura and Backman (2012) discussed the importance of stakeholder collaboration approaches as a significant tool that can assist in promoting inter-relationships among tourism stakeholders to ensure sustainability of tourism programs. In this regard, the desired learning outcomes of this study are to enable students to:

- Understand the role and dynamics of sustainability in the particular context of tourist destinations;
- Identify and explain the means by which destinations collaborate generally, and more specifically in the context of seeking to be a “green” destination;
- Critically analyze the contributions of strategic management and stakeholder theory in providing a theoretical justification for the collaborative actions of Green Destination Orlando;
- Compare and contrast the different motivations for participating in Green Destination Orlando and how each in their own ways shape the future direction of the collaborative entity;
- Critically examine the process of collaboration formation and how each “stage” of formation is influenced by personal and business motivations;
- Identify and explain how communication can be enhanced with such a disparate collaborative organization such as Green Destination Orlando
- Formulate an alternative form of collaboration for a destination of your choice seeking to enhance its “green” competitiveness in the market.

To meet the above learning outcomes, the paper begins with a review of the literature of sustainability and collaboration with both themes serving as the foundation theoretical platform for the study. The paper utilizes the theoretical framework proposed by Wang and Xiang (2007) as the means by which to closely examine the specific case of Green Destination Orlando and its contribution to making the city a greener place to both live and visit.

The study expanded upon previous research in destination collaboration within the specific context of sustainability and utilized a destination marketing alliance framework as the foundation in which to discuss the findings of the semi-structured interviews. The findings from the study suggest that this collaboration is somewhere between the implementation and evaluation stages, as discussed by Wang and Xiang (2007). While there is a board of directors and governance structure, the lack of a recognized leader, official or otherwise, seems to be causing for developmental issues within the organization, possibly contributing to

a confusion of the driving vision of the organization. This lack of leadership could become problematic to the growth and development of the organization and impact the future relationship between the stakeholders (Fyall et al., 2012; Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Todorovic, 2014).

Recommended Teaching Approach and Strategy to be Adopted

It is recommended that this case be paired with information pertaining to destination development, management and marketing as well as more generic domains such as strategic management, urban planning and sustainability.

The benefit to presenting the case in conjunction with the above themes is that students will become more familiar with the concepts and be able to connect the foundation concepts within a broader sustainability context. Teaching sustainability can be difficult, particularly with undergraduate students, as strategies often seem distant and utopian. However, this case brings forth an urban destination where tourism is truly mass in orientation, with an estimated 72 million visitors in 2017, but is eager to become truly green and sustainable for residents, businesses and its tourist populations.

The case can be utilized as a discussion piece in both an online and face-to-face context. Highly engaging components for discussion include individual and business motivations, process, and outcomes as they pertain to sustainable planning within a destination.

Having asked students to read the case study in advance and research, a discussion can be dedicated to discussing the future of GDO based on the motivations, process, and outcomes as identified by respondents as well as how such a collaboration may then work or be used as an example of good practice in other destinations.

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