

Title: An Analytical Systems Framework for Tourism Product Development: Reflections from the Craft-beverage Tourism

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Abstract:

Several existing frameworks are suitable to evaluate different types of tourism products. Among them, the sustainable development framework is salient because it enables an economic, environmental, and socio-cultural cost-benefit evaluation of tourism in destination communities (Butler, 1999). The Community Capitals Framework (Flora, 2004) is also useful to identify the types of resources (i.e., Built, Cultural, Financial, Human, Natural, Political, and Social capitals) needed to foster community development. As such, both frameworks have been used to assess the effect of tourism development of different tourism products (e.g., Barbieri, 2013; McGehee, Lee, O'Bannon, & Perdue, 2009).

Yet, the aforementioned frameworks have a predominant large (community) scope, and thus, fail to capture the cost-benefit dynamics that niche tourism may create at the entrepreneur or family levels. The complexity of entrepreneurship (e.g., its impact on family dynamics) and the current societal context (e.g., necessity to address climate change) calls for developing systems approaches that capture a holistic evaluation of tourism endeavors. Systems approaches, although seemingly logical, are difficult to operationalize because they require simultaneous evaluation of multiple indicators (Francis et al., 2008).

We propose a systems approach that identifies the inputs (resources needed) and outputs (benefits and costs) associated with the development of a tourism product within the three dimensions of sustainability. Different from existing macro-scale frameworks, our model captures the inputs and outputs needed/produced at the entrepreneur and family levels beyond the community scope. We will operationalize the model using data garnered from in-depth interviews with key stakeholders of the craft-beverage tourism industry in North Carolina (USA) in two points of time. The first project phase was conducted in 2016 among five craft-distill producers (361 minutes recorded interviews). The second phase (ongoing) is expanding data collection in terms of types of stakeholders (e.g., business development organizations) and craft-beverages (e.g., craft beer).

Preliminary findings indicate that craft-beverage tourism produces (e.g., partnership building among producers, enhanced community pride) and is built upon (e.g., traditional family knowledge, new beverage legislature) different types of capitals. The application of our model is valuable in two ways. Classifying the inputs and outputs of a given tourism product in different scales (from personal-to-society) and dimensions (types of capitals) can help stakeholders to program and market their products more efficiently. It can also help to identify knowledge gaps that can prevent misinformed decisions. In putting both (existing and lacking) information together, tourism endeavors can better boost wellbeing of the actors involved and more accurately inform policy development, which altogether can foster community development.

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