

# The role of destination management in facing the challenges for protected area tourism development

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**Abstract** — These are PAN Parks introduced a holistic approach to protected area management, integrating standards for conservation and management practices, visitor management, sustainable tourism strategies and partnerships. It has been field tested successfully in 10 protected areas. Simultaneously tourism in protected areas became the focus of a growing number of publications. Common ground can be identified in a predominance of strategic, process oriented approaches to tourism. Key issues: planning, visitor management, linkages with the tourism industry, community involvement. Results of the first decade: 1. A more structured and focused co-operation between PA and local stakeholders. Research shows positive results in awareness and co-operation 2. Multi-stakeholder approaches have proven to be effective in formulating tourism strategies 3. Tourism became an integrated part of protected area management, including a more pro-active, strategic approach. 4. The model works in diverse cultural, institutional and political contexts 4. PAN Parks has been a laboratory for sustainable tourism development for protected areas. Five main challenges can be identified: 1. Loading the brand: make value added of PAN Parks tangible for tourist. How can conservation benefits, distinctiveness and quality of the experience be guaranteed? 2. Identify success factors for development, marketing and management of competitive destinations 3. Consequently the brand lacks a decisive impact on the holiday decision making process. Economic stakeholder value is still limited 4. Leverage of local economic activities (synergy with other sectors) 5. Mind shift from process orientation (development) to focus on output (marketing, management). Suggestions for a research agenda for the next decade are listed here: Economic sustainability remains a concern for conservation based tourism development. Local stakeholders, regional economy and tour operators need healthy business perspectives. Eco-tourism markets are highly competitive. Distinctiveness and competitiveness of destinations require market oriented approaches. The positioning of protected areas as (part of) destinations requires research. Expertise must be developed for destination -development and -management. Innovative approaches for local supply chain development should strengthen the role of protected area tourism in regional development. Quality standards for destinations and local providers should be elaborated. Destination management could be the umbrella to integrating these fields of expertise. Probably a “paradigm shift” from sustainable tourism development approaches to a destination perspective is needed.

**Index Terms** — Innovative approach, visitor management, Pan Parks, sustainable tourism management.



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