

## **The Role of Knowledge-based Networks in Sustainable Tourism Development – A Conceptual Framework**

*Ehsan Ahmed and Larry Dwyer*

### **Abstract**

In practice, tourism organisations tend to be more serious towards their financial viability and therefore undermine long-term socio-cultural and environmental consequences. In so doing they impede their own ability and that of the destination to develop in a sustainable way. This may lead to 'strategic drift' where, organisation's existing strategy gradually, if imperceptibly, moves away from addressing the forces at work in its environment. The paper argues the role of effective knowledge management (production, use and distribution of knowledge) as a possible resolution to the problem. Essentially, any tourism experience can be seen as an amalgamation of a wide range of products and services. A diversified group of both tourism and non-tourism organisations provide the ultimate tourism experience through their networks of relationships. In that sense, combining the concepts of tourism networks with the insights provided by knowledge management may merit new managerial and theoretical endeavours to ensure the sharing and adaptation of tourism knowledge across tourism networks. In other words, learning tourism networks, characterised by processes of mutually reinforcing interactions and collaborations of knowledge creation and flow among tourism organisations, is the future imperative for sustainable tourism development and may be a possible resolution to avoid strategic drift. A conceptual framework and a set of research propositions are discussed in the paper. The conceptual framework of the paper depicts the nature of sustainable tourism practices of a tourism destination (micro and macro) and aims to address how network-based knowledge management process can effectively enhance the sustainability-related practice and avoid strategic drift.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Tourism, Strategic Drift, Knowledge Management, Tourism Networks