

Editorial: Knowledge management (KM) and tourism

Author

G. A. Beesely, Lisa

Published

2010

Journal Title

Current Issues in Tourism

Rights statement

© 2008 Routledge. This is the author-manuscript version of this paper. Reproduced in accordance with the copyright policy of the publisher. Please refer to the journal website for access to the definitive, published version.

Downloaded from

<http://hdl.handle.net/10072/40724>

Link to published version

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13683500802496444>

Griffith Research Online

<https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au>

Knowledge Management (KM) and tourism.

Lisa G.A. Beesley

Encouraging the effective sharing and transfer of intellectual assets is the foundation of knowledge management (KM) and key to innovation (Prusak, 2001). Conceptually this is not difficult to grasp, yet KM remains veiled in confusion (Call, 2005). Early efforts in the field emphasised technology as a means to manage knowledge. As KM moves in to a second generation of research, knowledge is seen as that which resides within individuals and while the role of technology is acknowledged, a more psychological /HR approach is taken in order to realise effective KM practices. The aim of this special issue is to present new perspectives of knowledge management, how these might relate specifically to the tourism sector, and how best to meet the challenges associated with this. While KM is possibly an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary development, there are several aspects of this current phenomenon which taken together represent a significant change in the way organisations manage people, processes and information and, as KM begins to find a balance, it is important to identify salient issues and to produce a body of empirical results that relate to the tourism sector and the role it plays in a knowledge-based economy.

While knowledge acquisition is fundamentally a learning process, what is of special interest to this issue are KM practices that lead to effective dissemination and utilisation of research output. Since there has been an abundance of theorising and conceptualisation in these areas, it was thought important to move discussions forward to how these theories and concepts do (or do not) fit in an applied setting. Thanks go to the authors and reviewers, and the fertile, yet frequently conflicting comments among reviewers demonstrated the vexation often associated with the topic area itself. Today's Information Age has seen discussions of KM move to centre stage, yet the enigmatic nature of knowledge, and in turn, how best to 'manage' it continue to fuel enthusiastic debate among academics and practitioners alike. In spite of the plethora of attention paid to the topic there remains no obvious prescriptive model, which is clearly a source of frustration to those who would initiate KM systems, and justification in the minds of many to dismiss it as just another management fad.

In the first article of this Special Issue Beesley and Cooper present an overview of the evolution of KM and demonstrate why it should not be considered as 'just another management fad' or indeed even as a management technique. Rather they argue that KM is an *approach* to management that organisations must master if they are to survive in an increasingly competitive environment – KM is a *philosophy* that should anchor organisational life. From this perspective they present a holistic approach to KM and identify key elements that must work in synchronicity if the espoused benefits are to be realised.

Drawing from a case on Greece, Chalkiti and Sigala show how information sharing and knowledge creation take place through discussions in a 'virtual' environment. It is widely accepted that rich knowledge exchange occurs through social networks. Clearly, advances in IT mean that these social networks need not be limited by proximity and provide the opportunity for tourism operators to share and build on each others knowledge bases. There is no doubt that information and communications technologies (ICTs) have altered the way we work and function in the tourism sector, and in today's dynamic environment organisations must reinvent their cultures and strategies to survive and create sustainable competitive advantage. Racherla, Hu, and Hyun explore the concept of a 'knowledge based destination' and the role of ICTs in strategic regional development and its relevance to the tourism industry. Their research aims at stimulating further discussion on role of innovative technological applications for the future of a destination along with the resultant policy and research implications.

In her contribution, Rhuanen acknowledges the rapid growth in tourism knowledge in recent years, particularly from academia, yet demonstrates how the failure to apply research findings can most likely be attributed to poor diffusion and knowledge transfer strategies and limited understanding of the processes required to move theoretical concepts to practice.

Nadkarni argues that technology facilitated knowledge flow mechanism subsumed into pro-poor tourism value chains can serve as eco-friendly and economical instruments in poverty alleviation efforts. In evolving a framework for such a mechanism, the semantic appropriateness of knowledge management (KM) as a concept is scrutinized and a more robust term is suggested. Again, this paper highlights the confusions surrounding the concept of KM and the terminologies used to describe the

activities the concept involves. Capacity building is one issue Nadkarni's work has identified as critical to realise the benefits of knowledge driven community-based tourism interventions.

In combination, the contributions in this issue provide valuable insight into the ways that KM practices can be embodied by the tourism sector, and how, in turn, the sector might participate more efficiently in a knowledge-based economy. I thank Chris Cooper and Michael Hall, Editors of the journal, and editorial staff involved in the production of this Special Issue for their continued support.

References

- Call, D. (2005). Knowledge management - not rocket science. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 9(2), 19 -30.
- Prusak, L. (2001). Where did knowledge management come from? *IBM Systems Journal*, 40(4), 1002-1007.