

Achieving Sustainable Tourism in a Country in Transition: The Case of Myanmar

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Abstract : The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015 to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. Sustainable tourism is firmly positioned in these Goals, since tourism has significant potential to contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth, as well as to promote sustainable use of natural capital. Recognizing this, the new quasi-democratic government of Myanmar has embraced Sustainable Tourism as a core component of its economic reforms and opening up of the country. However, it is also highly likely that the Democrats within the government also support Sustainable Tourism as a potential contributor to the democratization of the country. This paper outlines how the government of Myanmar has understood the concept of Sustainable Tourism, and how it intends to implement and facilitate Sustainable Tourism. This paper, therefore, focuses primarily on the institutional frameworks that have been put in place, a specific one being the Inlay Lake Destination Management Plan, which is one of the four priority destinations identified by the government. The plan aims to improve local infrastructure, manage the local environment and develop local human resources. Importantly, the Plan also includes the establishment of a Destination Management Organization (DMO) to implement and manage Inlay Lake as a Sustainable Tourism destination. This research aims to investigate, for example, the equality in both input to the DMO and benefits accrued to the various stakeholders. How such equality can be ensured and how this can be reliably quantified will be crucial to ultimately evaluating the success of any such plans to implement Sustainable Tourism in Myanmar in the coming years. However, this research paper concludes that while the establishment of the DMO is a positive development, there are considerable institutional, economic and cultural factors that severely limit the ability of the DMO to function as an agent of sustainable tourism implementation.

Keywords : sustainable tourism, myanmar, country in transition, destination management organizations

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