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Tourism Management

Volume 25, Issue 4, August 2004, Pages 499-506

The use of value focused thinking and the A'™WOT hybrid method in tourism management

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(03\)00120-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(03)00120-1)

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Abstract

Strategic planning which focuses on rural tourism is based fundamentally on the adjusting to changes in the operational environment. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis is a commonly used tool for analysing both the internal and external environments in order to attain a systematic approach and support for a decision situation. In this study, we show how some weaknesses of SWOT analysis can be avoided and how it can be elaborated upon in order to provide more comprehensive decision support. The approach is applied to the question of does local culture have the potential to be a success factor in rural tourism in two case areas, namely in the regions of Ylä-Savo in Finland and Kassel in Germany. The research was based on expert interviews, which were structured according to the principles of value-focused thinking and A'™WOT analysis. A'™WOT is a hybrid method combining the

well-known SWOT analysis and the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP). In this study, SMART techniques are applied in an A²WOT framework instead of the AHP. The objectives and the operating environment, i.e. the two major elements in any strategic management, were covered in the analysis. The results showed that local culture has the potential to be a success factor in rural tourism, in other forms of rural entrepreneurship, and also in the case study regions. Investments which enhance and strengthen local culture are recommended over those that utilise culture and traditions to make products in tourism business. Strengthening local culture opens up possibilities for future innovations and sustainable development. A strong culture and an awareness of one's own traditions form a natural foundation for innovations. Value-focused thinking used as a methodology to define the values and objectives along with A²WOT for strategic planning, provide good means of enhancing sustainable innovations.



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Keywords

Hierarchical analyses; Planning and analyses; Rural tourism; SWOT

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