



Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism

Issues in measuring the employment aspects of sustainable tourism

Discussion Note

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Background

This note is intended to provide a short summary of the key areas that should be the focus of discussion on the employment aspects of sustainable tourism within the broader program of work on the Statistical Framework on Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST).

Four main themes are proposed to focus the discussion

1. Key policy issues in relation to the employment aspects of sustainable tourism.

There are two issues identified in Canada:

- 1) Can the economic growth of tourism be sustained with the available workforce?
 - a. With the assistance of the Conference Board of Canada, [Tourism HR Canada](#) has developed a labor forecasting model to help determine supply/demand projections, which can be used to measure if the supply of labor can sustain the tourism sector's capacity to be a major driver of economic growth.
 - b. This brings into question the objective of generating perpetual tourism job growth, particularly if faced with chronic skill shortages: Would a shift of meeting appropriate job goal targets for the distribution and characteristics of jobs, work, workers and productivity within the tourism sector? This issue has implications on production/experience quality as excess growth may lead to deteriorations in products (which is by definition not sustainable).
- 2) Can the jobs that tourism supports, sustain the well-being of the individuals in those jobs, i.e., be decent jobs as discussed below.

From a measurement perspective, the employment aspect in sustainable tourism should be limited to **employment in the tourism industries**.

- As treated in the TSA, the boarded concept of tourism employment is defined as employment attributable to tourism demand both within and outside the tourism industries.
- But from a policy perspective, we can be accountable only to employment in the tourism industries. In terms of supply management policy, the focus should be narrowed to tourism employment with the tourism industries. In Canada, about 30% of jobs in tourism industries are attributable to tourism activities.

Also, it may be desirable to focus on the **“tourism firm” or tourism establishments** as the first primary focus of accountability and measurement of the employment aspect of tourism sustainability measurement.

- Part of the reason for this is the fact that we do not a formal national or international classification system to identify, specify and recognize tourism specific occupations within the tourism workforce. Canada has developed an informal occupational classification system for tourism, but this has not been integrated into its formal statistical framework.
- To that end, this would lead to a need to identify and recognize the importance of tourism specific occupations as the second key nexus for measurement and accountability in the development and implementation of consistent tourism employment policies and measurement relating to sustainable tourism.

2. Potential perspectives and approaches to consideration of employment and sustainable tourism:

a. Green jobs

According to the ILO, a green job is one that provides decent work (see below) and that contributes to substantially:

- Improve energy and raw materials efficiency
- Limit greenhouse gas emissions
- Minimize waste and pollution
- Protect and restore ecosystems
- Support adaptation to the effects of climate change

At the enterprise level, green jobs can produce goods or provide services that benefit the environment, for example green buildings or clean transportation. However, these green outputs (products and services) are not always based on green production processes and technologies. Therefore, green jobs can also be distinguished by their contribution to more environmentally friendly processes.

Tourism does not directly produce goods or services that benefit the environment, but a tourism job could follow a more environmentally-friendly process. A key issue is to identify a measurement baseline.

- Can we determine the average effect of a given tourism occupation on the environment and then identify the number of jobs that meet a certain threshold to deem them green? If the average cook produces five tonnes of CO₂ a day as part of their work, would a cook who produces three tonnes be a “green cook”.

That would imply measuring at the occupation level. As suggested in our response to question 1, an alternative would be to measure at the business level and all jobs at a “green business” would then be considered green jobs.

Also, should we be measuring the impact of the job’s existence? If the existence of the job allows for a certain level of tourism activity, should the environmental impact of the tourism activity be considered when measuring how green the job is?

b. Human capital (availability of skills and experience)

There are ambiguities on what is entails: Should the focus be on whether the jobs contribute to the skills/experience of the person in the job, or should it be on how the level of skills and experience of those in a given occupation compare? If it is the later, this would require a point of reference (compared to what)?

There is a European study that may illustrate a way to measure this. It was conducted by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). That study examined skill levels across the entire labour force. It determined how many individuals had skills mismatches using four factors: underqualified, overqualified, under-utilized, or obsolete (skills).

We are not aware of a similar study having been conducted in Canada. It may be possible to get at this question by comparing the education level of those in an occupation, with the educational requirements of the job (using the NOC A, B, C, D matrix). This could be done with either the Census, or Human Resource Module to the Canadian TSA data (Tourism HR Canada did a pilot that included an education variable in the HRM in 2014). It requires taking education as a proxy for skills, which may not be the case—one can be highly educated but unskilled for a given occupation. Tourism HR Canada is interested in the CEDEFOP study because it is believed to be a better gauge of skills misalignment as it is a survey of the workers themselves. The European study looked at differences between industries and countries. If such a study were done in Canada, we could apply the TSA framework to the results to get information for tourism. Alternately, a tourism specific study could be conducted, but the problem to surmount is finding a way to reach tourism employees directly.

c. Decent work

The needs of the individual determine what constitutes, “decent work”. Someone who needs a flexible schedule and has low or minimal expenses, will have a different definition than someone who requires a standard schedule and enough financial compensation to support a mortgage and family. Tourism has jobs that meet a variety of needs. But, from a sustainability perspective, if the expansion of tourism pushes people into work that does not fit their needs, then it can no longer be considered a decent job. If the sector has more part-time, low wage jobs than there are people looking for those types of jobs, it presents a sustainability problem for the industry. We either need to find more people who need that type of work or find a way to increase the number of jobs that meet the needs of individuals who are looking for work. Long-term, if people are being forced to take the part-time/flexible tourism job because the work they want is not available, there will be negative effects on the sector. The Tourism HR Canada supply/demand projection model could be used to measure these effects.

What constitutes “decent work” will change as an individual’s lifestyle and needs changes. To determine if tourism is sustainable, it would be worth looking not just at the current job an individual working in tourism has, but at the long-term outcomes of those who work in tourism—whether they stay in the sector or not. There is a US study did focus on this issue.

More broadly, the inclusion of the concept of decent work with the green job concept may be problematic. Decent work as defined by the ILO is a synthetic multidimensional construct that focuses on larger community or society context measures. These are not actually variable attributes of the job of a worker and it is unclear how the concept of decent work relates to the physical environment aspect of tourism. The issues that needs to be clarify is how the decent work concept relates to a job within the tourism industry for which a tourism policy maker or tourism decision maker can influence or be held accountable for.

d. Others

From a measurement point of view there is a need to keep things as simple as possible if we want to move to measurement within a reasonable time period. With respect to the tourism employment in the context of the MST, the initial focus should be narrowed on tourism employment in the tourism industries.

3. Key challenges in measuring employment in the context of sustainable tourism.

- 1) Because the definition of sustainable tourism includes environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects, these need to be integrated into employment measures. It is further complicated by the need to apply them to tourism, which requires applying the TSA framework.
- 2) No baseline to define a job as green or not in the tourism sector
- 3) Measurement of human capital/skills in Canada generally uses education level as a proxy for skills. There no current study of “skills” mismatches in Canada.
- 4) Conceptual and measurement differences between employment (jobs) in tourism industries and tourism employment
- 5) Reference to “green tourism occupations” – a currently undefined and a non-measurable concept
- 6) The need for additional consistent international concepts and measurement standards for “characteristic tourism occupations” and “characteristic environment occupations” in the context of SF- MST
- 7) Problems with reducing “decent work’ to a single uni-dimensional aggregate
- 8) Linking employment in tourism industries with environmental protection expenditures, environmental taxes, and environmental goods and services outside the current statistical structure (this will take time to address effectively).

4. Summary of available measurement frameworks, statistical standards, other references on employment themes

- a. Tourism HR Canada/Conference Board of Canada: Labour Supply and Demand Projections
- b. Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey. Part-time employment by reason, annual. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1410002901>
- c. U.S. Travel Association, Fast Forward: Travel Creates Opportunities and Launches Careers
- d. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP): Skills, qualifications and jobs in the EU: the making of a perfect match
- e. The Human Resource Module of the Tourism Satellite Account (OECD)
- f. The Canadian Human Resource Module of the Canadian Tourism Satellite Account (Statistics Canada <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/170607/dq170607b-eng.pdf>)
- g. The 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS)
- h. The Canadian Culture Satellite Account (CSA)
- i. International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) (see Meis S. and Jackson, (2014). Issue: Proposal for Identifying Characteristic Occupations of the Tourism Industries as a Tourism Thematic View within ISCO-08 and National Occupational Classification Systems. 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians Geneva, 2-11 October 2013
- j. Jackson, C. et al. (2008), "Linking the Canadian Tourism Satellite Account and the Canadian System of Environmental and Resources Accounts to measure the environmental impact of tourism in Canada: An exploratory study for two pilot (SIC) industries", presented to the 9th International Forum on Tourism Statistics, Paris, November 19-21, 2008.