Chapter 10
Sustainable Tourism and the Moral Limits of the Market: Can Asia Offer Better Alternatives

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Abstract Despite its entanglements with society, tourism is still an industry that uses the market for economic exchange, so as to price tourism goods, services and experiences. The market serves important functions in society but there are two moral limits. The first is on how market exchange may transform some products, services and experiences in ways that denigrate and even destroy their intrinsic values. The second is on the failure of the market in distributing benefits from economic exchange more equitably, and to those who need them more. This does not mean that the market is immoral, it just means that there are inherent limitations to how the market maximises or enhances the welfare of society. This chapter looks at four common sustainable tourism approaches, and argues that they all address the moral limits of the market, from local perspectives. And subsequently, can lessons be learned from the Asian experience in doing sustainable tourism? The answer is yes but with caveats.

Keywords Triple bottom line · Public-private partnerships · Community-led tourism · Market redesign · Regenerative tourism · Asian models of sustainable tourism · Moral limits of the market · Social justice · Social equity

10.1 Introduction

At the biggest United Nations (UN) conference ever, the 2012 Rio+20 UN conference on sustainable development affirmed the position that a comprehensive and holistic approach is needed if we are to have continuous global prosperity and growth. The diverse and overlapping needs of the community, the environment, workers and civil society must be integrated into economic development.

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Globalization and international trade create competition, and opportunities for all countries to cooperate, to support each other and to benefit together. Tourism is one of many areas that should contribute to achieving various social development goals. Paragraphs 130 and 131 in the conference outcome report pertain specifically to sustainable tourism (Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 2012):

> 130. We emphasize that well-designed and managed tourism can make a significant contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development, has close linkages to other sectors, and can create decent jobs and generate trade opportunities. We recognize the need to support sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity building that promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, flora, biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural diversity, and improve the welfare and livelihoods of local communities by supporting their local economies and the human and natural environment as a whole. We call for enhanced support for sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building in developing countries in order to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

> 131. We encourage the promotion of investment in sustainable tourism, including ecotourism and cultural tourism, which may include creating small and medium sized enterprises and facilitating access to finance, including through microcredit initiatives for the poor, indigenous peoples and local communities in areas with high eco-tourism potential. In this regard, we underline the importance of establishing, where necessary, appropriate guidelines and regulations in accordance with national priorities and legislation for promoting and supporting sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism is part of the wider concern for more balanced development around the world. The subtext is that the current economic agenda has dominated development at the detriment to the environment and the community, and tourism is part of the problem. International tourism is sometimes viewed as an ongoing force of colonization and domination by rich Western countries over poorer ones (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015; Hales et al., 2018; Mietzner & Storch, 2019). Environmental destruction, worker exploitation and community suffering embedded in a set of lucrative and popular tourism activities generate worries because they confront our sense of justice, fairness and morality (Fennell, 2018; Jamal, 2019). If we do not address the ethical issues embedded in the impacts of tourism, the industry cannot stay viable as it will be resisted by civil society, workers and members of host communities. Tourism is beyond business, it is entangled socially, culturally and politically in society.

Many scholars, activists, politicians and even businesspersons are advocating alternatives to end exploitative tourism. One way of looking for alternatives is to look at non-Western methods of managing social and economic life, including tourism. So can Asian experiences offer local community-driven alternatives that bring about a more sustainable form of tourism globally? A so-called "non-Western", more community-driven approach to sustainable tourism has appeal because it accepts and respects the host society in its own contexts and circumstances. A modern and efficiency-driven approach – often caricaturized as "international" and "Western" – tends to marginalize local situations, and the strategies may not be

appropriate and relevant. Tourism development strategies for a small village in Italy cannot be replicated in a village in Taiwan, for instance. This chapter however explains why this approach should be embraced with caution.

A "truly" local or indigenous approach to tourism is hard to find. Social, cultural and economic diversity has diminished across the global tourism industry because tourism is a product and perpetuator of globalization. To participate in the global tourism industry, countries must largely embrace international tourism-related institutions and practices, such as passports and border controls, maintaining safety standards for air travels, and embracing English as the *lingua franca*. Widespread modern cross-border travels are possible because they are facilitated by common technologies, standards, systems and procedures. Best practices are shared internationally; destinations develop similar attractions (e.g. observation towers, themed-parks, contemporary art museums), host similar events and festivals (e.g. film festivals, marathons, heritage food events) and sell almost identical souvenirs (e.g. T-shirts, chocolates, trinkets) (Ooi, 2011). The lines between so-called Western and non-Western approaches are blurred. Regardless, putting the local community first is considered a necessary step to a more sustainable tourism. Respecting social, cultural, political and economic differences between destinations, local communities and ways of doing business is part of the localization strategy that underpins common approaches to sustainable tourism development globally. In this context, sustainable tourism encapsulates the entanglements of global and local practices. This chapter focuses on four internationally-common sustainable tourism approaches that are also locally embraced: (1) the triple bottom line; (2) public-private partnerships; (3) redesigning the market; and (4) community-led initiatives.

This chapter argues and will show that these four common approaches deal with a more fundamental problem embedded in global tourism. Despite its entanglements with society, tourism is still an industry that uses the market for economic exchange, so as to price goods and services, and to provide incentives to buy and sell experiences, goods and services. The capitalist market however has two moral limits. This does not mean that the market is immoral, it just means that there are inherent limitations to how the market maximises or enhances the welfare of society. These four sustainable tourism approaches attempt to mitigate these two moral limits, through varying methods and with different results. They have to be adapted into the local context and circumstance, and address these moral limits to some extent. While laudable, caution is however still needed because Asian adaptation may not be better because local interventions may further aggravate the moral limitations of markets. The following sections will unpack this argument.

10.2   The Moral Limits of the Market

The market is a human-made social economic institution (North, 1991). It serves important functions in modern society; it distributes and allows for the convenient exchange of goods and services. The market brings great benefits and welfare to

society. Compared to bartering, transactions in the modern market are straight for-
ward and efficient. The market facilitates exchange between individuals who may
not necessarily know each other (Fligstein, 2002; North, 1991; Roth, 2015). Money
is the common denominator that enables us to trade and to acquire products and
services seamlessly. However markets that use money as a medium of exchange
have at least two moral limits (Sidelsky & Skidelsky, 2015; Simmel, 1978). Let me
elaborate.

10.2.1   Moral Limit 1: Price and Impact on Non-Economic Values

> I recall an awkward encounter when I visited a Jain temple in Delhi. I was told not to bring
> animal products and money into the temple. The priest is also not supposed to touch money.
> So in my respectful manner, I left my leather wallet and belt in the locker outside. At the
> end of the temple tour by the priest, while still in the temple, he demanded a tip and chided
> me for not having my wallet with me. I sheepishly stepped out of the temple to collect my
> wallet, and went back in to give him the so-called tip. That encounter was awkward.

The use of money as a means for universal exchange has consequences. It has
become a common denominator that allows economic exchange on – arguably –
everything. Money has created a market that we have come to recognize today
(North, 1991; Simmel, 1978). There are many advantages. Money liberates the indi-
vidual and provides accessibility to almost all goods and services. Money enhances
personal liberty and individual freedom but it is also responsible for weakening
personal relations (Simmel, 1978, p. 295). Instead of having to build trust and closer
relations between persons to facilitate bartering, money is used. This means of
exchange is efficient and effective (North, 1991; Roth, 2015; Williamson, 1998).
Tourism today is made possible because people can travel to places without know-
ing their hosts personally. Visitors have access to experiences and attractions in
exotic places.

But some things are not supposed to be priced because they are sacred, revered
or supposedly priceless. These are repugnant transactions (Roth, 2015). My experi-
ence with the Jain priest is an example of how I have misunderstood the guest-host
relationship. Possibly because visitors did not give him satisfactory amount of
money in the donation box placed just outside the temple, he demanded that each
visitor gives him the money directly even though he is not supposed to touch money.
By so doing, did I receive a diluted Jain temple experience? Or worse, did money
and tourism corrupt the priest?

It is generally accepted that certain things are not for sale, and they should not be
priced. Another example is voting in a democratic system; votes are not supposed to
be for sale. In tourism, tourists are sometimes reminded that they do not have the
right to visit a destination; it is a privilege to be able to visit. For instance, because
of over tourism, super popular destinations around the world face strong backlashes

(Burgen, 2018). In the island of Crete, before the early 2020s COVID-19 pandemic, many residents were fed up with tourists. Activists and artists vandalized walls by stating that they welcome refugees but not tourists (Fig. 10.1). This is an assertion and a reminder that money cannot buy everything.

There are many other activities and places that tourists are not welcomed. For instance, how much should a Chinese family charge tourists to join in their annual traditional reunion family dinner on the eve of the lunar new year? Is it appropriate to bring visitors to observe private weddings or to observe grieving families at funeral parlours in Malaysia? Should we shrug off the lucrative child-sex exploitation tourist business in Cambodia? The market is able to price all services, experiences and products but some face strong social and moral resistance. Repugnant tourist activities and transactions are not supported by many in the community, and are not sustainable.

Similarly, pricing the priceless may transform and denigrate the product, service and experience. For example, "buying authenticity" is an oxymoron. MacCannell (1992) describes that as "staged authenticity", and has become a prevalent practice in cultural and heritage tourism. In the context of sustainable tourism, host cultures and societies are touristified as communities are transformed by what tourists want and willing to pay (Ooi, 2019b). A new social and economic hierarchy emerges in the host community. This is problematic as the society aims to please the constant flows of temporary visitors rather than the residents who live there, especially residents are infinitely more socially, culturally, politically and emotionally vested in the place than fleeting visitors. Moral limit 1 of the market points to how economic exchange transforms products, services and experiences in ways that denigrate and even destroy the intrinsic values of what are being bought.

Fig. 10.1 REFUGEES WELCOME TOURISTS GO HOME, a political graffiti in Rethymno, Greece. (Source: Image by Tomisti, 2020. This image is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license)

10.2.2 Moral Limit 2: Accessibility to and Distribution of Benefits

In 2017, I was at a wedding dinner in Australia. I told an elderly lady sitting next to me that I was from Singapore. She started telling me of her two visits to the island-state. She was disappointed in her most recent trip because she could not re-experience old Singapore. When she was first there in the 1970s, Singapore River was polluted but full of life. She remembered the many sweaty coolies working along the banks, boats carrying goods, and derelict shophouses lining the river (Fig. 10.2). In her recent trip, she saw a sanitized and gentrified Singapore River. Today, the river is clean, the only boats there ferry tourists on cruises, and the shops have become fancy eating and drinking places. She reminisced and complained about the more modern Singapore. I told her that I used to live in a derelict shophouse in Singapore. My childhood experience was not at all romantic. Proper sanitation, good lighting and other modern comforts in the public housing flat I later lived in are appreciated by my family and I.

Slum tourism is a relatively new phenomenon but consuming poverty is not (Steinbrink, 2012). There are many slums in Asia and tourists can go on slum tours (Dyson, 2012; Tzanelli, 2018). Dyson (2012) finds that visitors who visited Dharavi, Mumbai, developed more sympathetic and positive attitudes towards the slum. Slum tourism is considered authentic, and offers a local experience. It commodifies poverty (Freire-Medeiros, 2009). Slum tourism however does not help the many residents living in horrid conditions who face adverse poverty. There is a market for such tourist experiences but the market benefits do not go to the slum dwellers. In a

Fig. 10.2 Singapore River (around 1980) was polluted, filled with *tongkangs* or tugboats and staffed by manual dock workers: Exotic and promoted to tourists then. (Source: Singapore Tourist Promotion Board Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

perverse manner, improving the conditions in these places may make it less desirable for visitors. The market does not necessarily distribute profits to the people who need them most. This goes against the social equity tenet of sustainable tourism.

It was mentioned earlier that the market is to enhance the welfare of society by providing the mechanisms for the effective and efficient exchange of goods and services. People would have access to things that they would not otherwise have. However the market does not necessarily distribute the benefits or profits from the market to many. The market may enrich a small group of businesses while the wider society and the environment suffer. For example, many places of worship, cultural institutions and nature parks attract visitors but they may not get the tourist dollars because visitor fees are not collected. In economic terms, there is market failure when the disadvantages are not priced into the product or service.

And related to how benefits and costs are distributed through the market, accessibility to goods and services is largely based on people's ability to pay in the market exchange, rather than based on a person's needs. For instance, a wealthy person can spend and buy many houses, while a poor person may have to be homeless. Criticisms of how tourists have driven rental prices up in popular destinations alludes to this moral shortcoming of the market (Wachsmuth & Weisler, 2018). Residents are pushed to the sidelines even though they live in their cities, and many poorer residents could not afford to reside in neighborhoods that are closed to their workplaces. Displacing the local community through tourist market forces is morally reprehensible, and does not contribute to supporting the community. Moral limit 2 of the market points to how the market fails to distribute benefits of market exchange equitably, and to those who need them more.

10.3   Four Approaches Towards Sustainable Tourism

The market offers many advantages and play an important role in society. Market activities are not necessarily immoral. The market is a way of enhancing the welfare of society by distributing wealth and benefits to many. The market mechanisms however have also generated limits to how that can be done. To reiterate, moral limit 1 points to how economic exchanges transform many products, services and/or experiences in ways that denigrate and even destroy their intrinsic values. Moral limit 2 refers to how the market distribute the benefits of market exchange in inequitable ways. Accessibility to goods and services is based on people's ability to pay rather than their needs, and thus the benefits of the market do not necessarily always go to deserving parties.

Popular sustainable tourism practices, as will be elaborated in this section, will show that these approaches address and try to mitigate the moral limits of the market. Different countries have different social, cultural, political and economic structures, and their sustainable tourism strategies will reflect this. However, can the lessons from Asia be used in other places to bring about better results?

There are at least four broad and interrelated sustainable tourism models or approaches. The first - the Triple Bottom Line - has been adopted by many tourism businesses, as they aim to be more sustainable. Their strategy is based on stakeholder theory and operated by measuring three bottom lines – profits, people and planet. The second model is often initiated by public authorities. They are responsible for providing public goods and services, such as building infrastructure, supporting cultural institutions and maintaining wilderness. These authorities look after the welfare of the community and the environment but their expertise may fall short or they have limited resources. Public-private partnerships are one way out. These partnerships involve the public and private sectors in bringing about a more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable model of community and economic development. The third sustainable tourism approach deals with the regulation and redesigning of tourism product markets. Industry structures can be reorganized, and differentiated pricing can be introduced to bring about more equitable results. And finally, tourism development would be more sustainable if the local perspective is given primacy because locals understand their environment and community more than anyone else; tourism businesses and planners should let the community drive development. Such tourism developments will be community-led, and they involve tapping into the expertise of residents who have the local knowledge and who are vested in ensuring the success of the projects.

10.3.1 Stakeholder Theory and the Triple Bottom Line

Freeman's stakeholder framework is the bedrock of sustainable development and sustainable tourism (Budeanu et al., 2016). It advocates a holistic understanding of how different aspects of society work together, and that different stakeholders – industry, workers, residents, civil society, the environment – are intertwined. Their diverse needs and interests must be served, albeit through negotiation and collaboration (Angelo & Maria, 2010; Ooi, 2013). The focus on diverse stakeholders addresses the previous dearth of concern by many businesses for the environment and community. The lack of engagement with the local community is irresponsible and these businesses will be resisted and rejected. Hotels and airlines will have uncomfortable customers if residents protest and tourists told to "Keep Out," such as in Barcelona and Venice before the COVID-19 pandemic. Front line workers must be treated well if these businesses are to provide quality services. From the stakeholder perspective, it is necessary to take into consideration the needs and agendas of different constituents in society. This is easier said than done. There are many scholars who have identified the challenges and difficulties in communication, cooperation, collaboration and support (Garcia & Cater, 2020; Ooi, 2020). Tourism businesses must be responsible, and engage in social and environmental responsibility; they need to integrate the myriad of stakeholder perspectives and needs in their planning, implementation and evaluation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities (Budeanu, 2009; Font & Lynes, 2018).

However the stakeholder framework offers a set of principles with limited guidance on the operationalization of stakeholder needs and interests. While people can agree that everyone's interests is important and must be respected, how would that actually translate into feasible practice? And for sustainable business activities to be considered effective, it is essential that results can be documented and not just speculated. One popular way of operationalizing the stakeholder framework is through an accounting framework of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) – profits, people and planet (Ringham & Miles, 2018). In a balance sheet, the economic bottom line is the easiest to quantify as that is an original purpose of the accounting framework. But from the sustainability perspective, it is also important to measure the firm's contribution to the community and to the environment. There are now TBL mechanisms to do so. For example since 2013, Singapore Airlines releases an annual sustainability report. The airlines stopped using plastic straw on flights from September 2019, and in that same year, its staff canteen has become eco-friendlier by eliminating polystyrene foam and installing a machine to convert food and canteen waste into refuse-derived fuel (Singapore Airlines, 2020). And during the COVID-19 pandemic, it redeployed cabin crew to support the Singaporean community, taking up roles in healthcare, transport and social service sectors (Singapore Airlines, 2020). TBL focuses the minds of management, albeit selectively on specific economic, social and environmental tasks, issues and/or causes.

Each community has its own set of contexts and circumstances that TBL can be adapted into. The social and environmental causes that firms adopt in their three bottom lines should reflect the local situation and those relevant to the community. A hotel in Cambodia may present their TBL differently from one in Japan. The TBL approach has allowed firms to choose the most relevant, and their favorite causes to support.

Tacitly, the stakeholder framework and the TBL address the moral limits of the market by focusing on bringing about and distributing community and environmental "profits" more equitably, and also to avoid repugnant transactions. Through consultation and collaboration, the industry would be more sensitive to presenting and commercializing culture, heritage and the environment. They may not be allowed to commodify certain aspects of society. With support for and from residents and civil society, these tourism businesses should be more welcomed. The triple bottom lines help mitigate negative impacts and address the two moral limits of the market.

Challenges however remain when TBL is localized or "Asianized". Many tourism companies promote a more sustainable form of tourism but commerce, environment and community interests do not necessarily overlap. The balance between the different stakeholders is often influenced by those with more resources to push for their agendas (Liu, 2003; Ooi, 2013). A more localized practice of TPL will reflect or even perpetuate existing social hierarchies in society. Being respectful of the local situation and circumstance is central, and any Asian TBL practices that are effective and efficient or less effective and inefficient reflect the local context that may not be transferable. More generally, localized TBL practices are more likely to bring about more sustainable tourism practices if the principles and goals are

conscientiously pursued with a strong business and political will, and not be side-tracked by other irrelevant agendas.

10.3.2 Public-Private Partnerships

Complementing the stakeholder approach and TPL, is the idea of public-private partnerships or PPP. The state has the responsibility to ensure the well-being of the population and the environment. There are many public goods, such as infrastructure and natural parks that are important to both residents and visitors. Developing these public goods is expensive, and the public service may not have the expertise to build, operate or maintain them. Public authorities may even hinder sustainable tourism development because of power struggles, the lack of competence and failure to do proper local consultation (Ruhanen, 2013). Collaborating with the private sector may help. For instance, environmental activists are experts and are good at protecting a wilderness parks; a business on the other hand may have the resources and have experiences in managing the financials and in management. The government may develop a wilderness conservation project that engages the private sector and in consultation with environmental groups, to bring about a public-private partnership that benefits all. In forming a partnership with the private sector in general, common public goods, such as in social services, nature conservation, education and cultural services will benefit from the strengths of different complementing groups (Wong et al., 2012).

PPP has become popular in tourism development (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Mariani & Kylänen, 2014; Vernon et al., 2005). Such an approach focuses minds on the complementary expertise of various stakeholders and on their common goals and objectives. Ideally, by cooperating and collaborating, joint benefits for industry, community and the environment can be realized. Many tourist attractions are public goods (e.g. parks, places of worship, beaches, cultural institutions). With the commercial expertise of businesses and the competences of the public sector in serving the people, local solutions can be found to provide public tourism services that are effective, efficient and even profitable. Progress can be measured and managed, such as through TPL (Andersson & Getz, 2009; Castellani & Sala, 2010; Zapata & Hall, 2012). For example, Haw Par Villa, a public heritage sculpture park in Singapore, is operated by a private company. The private company has promised that admission to the park stays free. Special events, sale of souvenirs, hosting flea markets, providing guided tours and operating food outlets should make the park commercially viable even without an entrance fee (Lin, 2015). Similarly the Singapore Tourism Board, a statutory board, has been corporatized and is run like a business. They set regulations, provide public resources to direct business development, and support tourism operators, and at the same time, engages with local cultural institutions, grassroot organizations and the mass media (Ooi, 2018). While keeping the local Asian context intact, this approach breaks walls and silos, promoting a whole-of-destination approach to tourism development that removes red-tapes

and providing supporting regulations on new projects, shares business risks among different parties, and jointly brings about social, environmental and economic viability. Singapore is not unique. State-owned tourism enterprises in other Asian countries, like China, use the same set of principles to bring about societal and environmental welfare through enhanced coordinated efforts across sectors, through good management, and through the mobilization of financial and business resources (Cheng et al., 2018).

Relations embedded in PPP may however be unequal. In Asia, like in many other continents, influential businesses and/or authoritarian political partners may dictate PPP projects. Local social and environmental causes are appropriated by businesses and politicians to further their own selfish goals (Iossa & Martimort, 2016; Lai & Ooi, 2015). Nepotism, corruption and dictatorships in many Asian countries make a mockery of such partnerships, as social and environmental interests are acknowledged only in name. This may aggravate the second moral limit of the market – only a small group of people benefit from the PPP. These considerations should not detract us from the principles of engaging stakeholders with complementary skills. Singapore is a good Asian example because of its strong formal institutions. As a reminder, PPP can be adopted to various local Asian contexts, and good Asian practices are universally accepted ones – sensitive to local needs, and respect for transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

10.3.3 Redesigning the Market

While capitalism and the free market have been severely criticized for the propagation of social economic inequalities in modern society, the market can also be the solution to these challenges. Markets can be designed for specific purposes. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that tourism is an economic driver that can be curtailed. Public health and saving lives are more important than travels. And many governments provided economic support for businesses and workers in tourism and hospitality. There are many lessons from the pandemic, and one of them is that the state still plays an important role in the market. The market can be managed, regulated and even destroyed. It is thus possible to also manage the moral limits of the market through new market designs.

Following moral limit 1, there are things that cannot be priced but can still be bartered through a well-designed market mechanism. The kidney exchange is the classic example of how many countries allow for the organ to be exchanged but not sold (Roth, 2015). A kidney is a donation even though economic resources are needed for an exchange to take place. To ensure that there is a sufficient amount of kidneys in the exchange, loved ones of potential organ recipients would donate one of their kidneys to the system. And the exchange will be matched with other potential donors and recipients. This is a sophisticated bartering system. In tourism, Couch Surfing (www.couchsurfing.com) is designed as a market for bartering couch spaces between strangers (and potential new friends) (Germann Molz, 2013).

Similarly, Willing Workers on Organic Farms or WWOOF uses the bartering market to attract tourist-workers to further the organic farming movement (Deville et al., 2016). WWOOF is a work exchange network, and participants spend their so-called holidays helping out in organic farming work in exchange for board and lodging. Tourist-workers and farm work providers engage and create non-commercial tourism experiences that are considered deeper and more engaging.

Markets can also be regulated and modified to manage market failures. For example, the carbon emission market attempts to slow and then reverse climate change (Narassimhan et al., 2018; Nordhaus, 2019; Randalls, 2017). But regulating the market and correcting prices may be insufficient. For instance, carbon pricing is supposed to reduce aviation travel; it has unfortunately not (Markham et al., 2018). Regardless providing incentives and disincentives, and disallowing certain market activities, are mechanisms through which markets can be redesigned.

Complementing designed market mechanisms, taxing profits is a common strategy to address the moral limit of the market 2. Taxes can be levied and increased for highly profitable businesses, and then spent on community initiatives. The revenue distribution aspects of taxes address market failures. More broadly the universal basic income and negative income tax concepts embrace the same income redistribution aim (Tondani, 2009). For the visitor economy, a visitor tax option would serve the same purpose of spreading the economic benefits to more people (Arguea & Hawkins, 2015; Burns, 2010; Nepal & Nepal, 2019). Asian countries like Japan, India and Malaysia are already collecting some form of taxes from visitors. Bhutan is (in)famous for its high tourist tax, and has successfully controlled the number of visitors to the mountain kingdom and promote its brand of ecotourism (Gurung & Seeland, 2008).

To reiterate, the market economically segregates who can buy from the exchange, the market also shapes who benefit from the selling. The market system has created a class of entrepreneurs, marketing and salespersons who can frame and package culture and nature into profitable products. They - fortunately or unfortunately - also know how to work around any redesigned market system. Businesses have appropriated social and environmental responsibility cause into their profit-motive. In a study on greener hotels in Malaysia for example, Noor and Kumar (2014) find that it is necessary to engage greener guests in environmentally friendly activities to enhance the green experience. It has to be a "product". But the desire to commodify environmentalism has created artificial products, with the paradoxical goal of producing green experiences, alluding to moral limit 1 of the market.

The market does not readily distribute the economic benefits of tourism fairly to the wider community. But markets can be twitched, regulated and redesigned to prohibit repugnant transactions, and to distribute market benefits more widely. Is there an Asian way of redesigning the market? Most Asian (or otherwise) destinations are already doing so in their own ways. Tourism is acknowledged as an integral part of the social and environment development of society. Many Asian destinations have tweaked their tourism market to ensure that visitor revenues go to their host society. Each state has to regulate the market and to distribute the benefits. The role of an Asian state in the market and how welfare is distributed reflect the

local practices, circumstances and situation. Unfortunately a redesigned market does not ensure a more transparent and more equitable manner for the benefits to be distributed. Local politics matter. Redesigned markets may still face many of the same moral limits as the more laissez faire ones.

10.3.4   Community-Led Tourism: Learning from the Local

Respecting different stakeholders is central in sustainable tourism practices, and TBL forces businesses to pay attention to the community and the environment. PPP taps into the complementary resources and expertise of businesses and the public sector to bring about public benefits to residents, the environment, visitors and also businesses. The visitor economy is regulated, and its market can be redesigned to bring about desired visitor and business behavior. As already pointed out earlier, these three approaches have been adopted by many Asian tourism businesses and Asian authorities. Their strategies entail some forms of interpretation and adaptation to local conditions and circumstance (Puriri & McIntosh, 2019). There is no research on whether Asian societies are better at implementing these strategies. TBL, PPP and redesigned markets are good frameworks but can be easily subverted by local (and foreign) business and political interests. Attempts at adapting and localizing these models may be ineffective or inefficient. And these internationally-recognized and accepted methods of doing sustainable tourism can also be considered another form of colonization and an imposition of global ideas from the West onto the rest (Tarulevicz & Ooi, 2019; Timothy, 2019). The prevalence of these methods has not reduced the serious social challenges in the current economic and market system, including the concentration of wealth in a small number of people, and that our consumption has become the driver of growth that resulted in the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources (Cave & Dredge, 2020).

Following stakeholder theory, another approach to sustainable tourism is to take local stakeholders even more seriously than the above-mentioned approaches. Sustainable tourism strategies should be developed from the ground-up and be community-driven (Muganda et al., 2013; Sofield, 1993). Local communities know their culture, heritage and environment, and have created opportunities for themselves to thrive, and have found solutions to the challenges they face. The community should be consulted extensively, and should lead the development (Okazaki, 2008). A more ground-up approach offers alternative ways of doing local economic, social and environmental activities. Cave and Dredge (2020) suggest that lessons be learned from the Global South and indigenous communities. Local practices are not commodified for tourist consumption but instead residents find their own local ways to do tourism. Consequently there will be less economic leakage, more local control and thus enhance socio-economic equity (Nyaupane et al., 2006). For example, Sin and Minca (2014) examine an Elephant Camp in Thailand, and how traditional ways of life are passed from generation to generation, and how visitors volunteer

and engage with a simpler way of life and caring for the elephants over a week or so. Such an approach is community-specific and community-led.

Furthering this line of argument, more researchers and practitioners are advocating regenerative tourism (Ateljevic, 2020; Cave & Dredge, 2020; Pollock, 2019). This view advocates that tourism should be first a resource for community and environmental development (Pollock, 2019). It turns tourism's primary focus on a set of economic activities to being a means for developing the community and to give back to the environment. Traditional and tested local practices often treat the environment respectfully and establish a sustainable future for the community. For instance, in the village of Sirubari, Nepal, residents lead their tourism development with the support of the government (Thapa, 2010). The participation and sense of ownership of the project are seen as necessary for this village-driven tourism project to succeed. The village's Tourism Development and Management Committee assign visitors to hosts on a rotational basis. Members operate and manage their tourism services and facilities, and receive direct economic benefits from tourists (Thapa, 2010). Residents are in the best position to decide on the destination's capacity and capability, as well as, are also sensitive to and responsible to local social, political and cultural norms and practices. The considerations embedded in TPL and PPP are inevitably incapsulated in such community-led tourism development.

So if there is such a thing as sustainable tourism from an Asian perspective, it is most likely to be found in such a community-driven approach. After studying 10 Asian case studies, Nair and Hamzah (2015) propose a nine-step process to developing a community-based tourism project. It starts with assessing the community needs and readiness for tourism, educating and preparing the community for tourism and establishing local champions and supporters. This systematic approach points to the importance of local context, circumstance and support in devising a community-led initiative. But this also suggests that any specific Asian experience may not be transferable to other Asian and non-Asian context. Village experiences may also not be suitable for scaling up elsewhere.

Translating the good principles and values of sustainable tourism is challenging. In moving away from any romanticized view of the local, there are dangers and challenges that homegrown practices are entangled in local politics, struggles and challenges. Any community-driven sustainable tourism strategies can be exploited to perpetuate local inequalities, exploitations and autocracy (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ooi, 2019a). In the earlier mentioned Elephant Camp in Thailand, traditions are staged and corruption and self-interest are infused into the business (Sin & Minca, 2014). There may also be a local warped sense of sustainability. When conservationist Jane Goodall visited Singapore, she was stunned by a suggestion that wildlife in the city-state should be sent to and be conserved in the local zoo (Wong, 2019).

Views on sustainability differ across countries and cultures. Many domestic Asian visitors may not appreciate sustainable tourism activities and facilities in the same way as visitors from Europe and America (Le, 2012). In this context, community-driven tourism has its merits but the reality and the practice are more nuanced and complex. Local ways of doing tourism may actually aggravate the

moral limits of the market. Sustainable tourism entails values, and "universal" values may clash with local ones. We have seen that value-driven visitors have ganged up to boycott certain destinations or tourist products. Such attempts starve certain places or products from the benefits of the tourist market. For instance, in 2019 Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei passed Islamic criminal laws that allow for the stoning of offenders to death for gay sex and adultery in his country (Holson & Rueb, 2019). Celebrities such as Elton John, Ellen DeGeneres and George Clooney and big global companies rallied behind the boycott of nine luxurious hotels owned by the Sultan, one of the richest men in the world. It remains unclear if there is any economic impact on the Sultan. So, if we are to consume, we might as well bring about some good too but are we being ethnocentric (Ooi, 2021)?

10.4   Limits to Local Alternatives That Bring About a More Sustainable Form of Tourism?

The Table 10.1 compares the different sustainable tourism approaches, and summarises the discussion. The tourism industry has been resilient in responding to changing consumer demands. The desire for tourism to be more responsible and sustainable has created changes in travel and the visitor economy. Stakeholder theory is used as a guide to introduce TBL to tourism businesses. PPP is developed to engage the private sector in providing more efficient, effective and sustainable public tourism services and products. Markets are redesigned and regulated to ensure that the benefits of the industry are better distributed, and that repugnant transactions are avoided. Respect for and initiatives from the grassroots and community are encouraged and promoted in sustainable and community-driven tourism projects. All these mitigate the potential moral limits of the market.

Tourism is not sustainable if it is not sensitive to aspects of culture and nature that are put up for tourist consumption. As in the first moral limit of the market, local practices and behaviour may change when their culture and nature are priced. Tourism is also not sustainable when many local stakeholders and the environment do not benefit from the industry, and instead are inconvenienced or even destroyed. This is the second limit of the market. Are there Asian approaches to addressing these moral limits, and thus offer lessons for other parts of the world in sustainable tourism?

The direct answer is that many of these sustainable tourism practices are context- and circumstance-specific. Tourism is a global phenomenon, and any society that engages with it needs to largely embrace internationally-accepted institutions, structures, regulations, technologies, practices and norms, such as border control, health and safety standards, currency exchange facilities and means of communication. As alluded to in this chapter, the decentralization of economic control and the celebration of the local often ignore the importance of outside or global influences in communities. Common sustainable tourism approaches – TBL, PPP, redesigned

Table 10.1 Comparing the four sustainable tourism approaches

	Triple bottom lines	Public-private partnerships	Market designs	Community-led development
Principle and approach	Companies account for and measure their profits, and their social and environmental impacts.	Bring private and public sectors together so as to serve the needs of industry, community and environment.	Redesigned market mechanisms to shape business, visitor and resident behavior.	Community-led tourism initiatives and activities that respect the local situation and environment.
Who takes initiatives and the main mechanisms	Businesses and organizations devise an expanded accounting framework that incorporates their contributions to the environment and the community.	Policy makers and regulators devise schemes that require or encourage private sector involvement in delivering public services and goods. The partnerships ensure that the interests and agendas of different stakeholders are included and aligned.	Regulators and policy makers redesign markets to influence business, visitor and resident behavior. Market mechanisms aim to reduce market failures and to distribute the benefits from the market more equitably.	Members of the community lead or work with businesses and regulators. Local community goals and agendas should shape tourism development strategies.
Addressing moral limit 1	Repugnant transactions should be avoided.	Repugnant transactions should be avoided. Businesses and the community can generate new acceptable economic, social and environmental values.	Repugnant commercial transactions are prohibited. Transactions of sacred and priceless services can be bartered or non-commercially transacted.	Communities will decide from their own sentiments, practices and norms to allow what can and cannot be offered to visitors.
Addressing moral limit 2	Benefits are measured and distributed to the community and environment, albeit only selectively.	Because of aligned interests of the public and private partners, the benefits from the market are broadly distributed to the business, community, environment.	Markets are redesigned through regulations and taxes, ensuring that market benefits are shared more widely.	Local communities have established ways to support themselves and distribute welfare to their members. Tourism benefits will be distributed in a similar manner.

(continued)

Table 10.1 (continued)

	Triple bottom lines	Public-private partnerships	Market designs	Community-led development
Main limitations of approach	Selective issues, and social and environmental causes are appropriated solely for marketing and public relations purposes. Getting stakeholder cooperation is challenging and may not be forthcoming.	Partnerships may not be equal, and the PPP project may be appropriated by a more powerful partner.	A perfectly redesigned market remains a dream. The redesigned market may not be appropriate for all tourism activities, and the redesigned market may not eliminate inequity and injustices.	Local politics and entrenched local corruption may drive the community-led initiatives.
Asian context	TPL is used across the world, and the Asian context is reflected in the selected social and environmental causes in the people and planet bottom lines.	Policy makers have adopted PPP within their economic, political and social circumstances. There is no single Asian way of doing partnerships, and any partnership reflect or emerge from local circumstances.	The role of the state in the market is debated globally. Any redesigned market reflects the ideological position of the country, as whether the economy should be more regulated or more freewheeling.	Any community-led tourism strategy will reflect the community's social and cultural embeddedness. That can be a boon or a bane.

markets and community-led initiatives – account for both the global and local, and aim to make an international industry more responsible to local concerns and issues.

There are many celebrated sustainable tourism examples, and their successes should not be discounted. This chapter however does not take a romantic view of the community. Local practices and way of doing things may not be the best way forward even if they have been around for a long time. Shifting economic control from multinationals to corrupt local chiefs, for instance, does not entail a more sustainable economy that will protect the environment and the community. Economic exchanges based on social hierarchies and personal relations may work under a small -scale context, and they may just merely perpetuate the inequality and inequity of the system. So-called global standards – such as transparency, accountability and the rule of law – as assumed in various sustainable tourism approaches matter. While we do not want to be ethnocentric, being culturally relativistic has its own perils (Ooi, 2019a, b).

So can Asia offer alternatives to doing better sustainable tourism? The challenges of tourism are often found globally but the impact and the solutions are local. The

Asian sustainable tourism solutions straddle between global issues and local solutions, like in all places. These solutions entail respecting specific situations to find local answers, and the process must be transparent, accountable and respectful of the rule of law, so as to bring about better equity and a wider sharing of benefits from tourism. These solutions must aim to mitigate the moral limits of the market, not aggravate them.

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