

Multinational corporations, co-evolution, and sustainable tourism in Africa

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Abstract

Co-evolution as an approach to tourism sustainability has been under-researched in the tourism literature, which has mainly focused on the more natural evolutionary principles. Relevant questions about the co-evolutionary process remain understudied, especially in the case of multinational companies (MNCs) involved in tourism that coevolve with local authorities in

developing African countries. This paper delves into the co-evolutionary process in order to identify the main challenges and key factors that condition the reciprocal interactions that give rise to co-evolution between local authorities and foreign MNCs in Africa. We apply a qualitative methodology based on a single and in-depth case study to examine the relationship between a Spanish hotel chain and local authorities in an African country. We find that a co-evolutionary approach based on cooperative interactions between tourism MNCs and local authorities may contribute towards guaranteeing sustainable tourism. Our findings also show how differences in negotiating methods can be one of the strongest challenges that co-evolution faces in Africa. Also, as co-evolution is a time-consuming and complex process in these countries, some qualities of the actors involved such as learning capabilities, patience and readiness to deal with unforeseen conditions are of high relevance for the successful culmination of the process.

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