

Human Resource Planning in Tourism

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Introduction

The survival of any tourism industry is reliant upon well-trained personnel who can provide a good quality service of the level expected by visitors and, as noted by Amaoh and Baum (1997), the interaction between visitors and tourism industry workers is an integral component of the overall tourist experience. Therefore, as a labour-intensive service industry, tourism will only be competitive and able to survive if there is a sufficient supply of people to deliver, operate and manage the tourist product to a high standard. However, despite this need, the HCTC (Hotel and Catering Training Company) (1995), report that the tourism and hospitality industries suffer from one of the highest levels of skill shortages (cited by Jameson, 2000), and Libya is no different in this respect.

Certainly, graduate education is needed by those in the first level managerial positions in order to be able to consider significant issues such as, changes in consumer behaviour, consumer influence on the industry, and to cope with the technical operational and complexity of hospitality operations (Knowles et al, 2003). And to reflect this, undergraduate course titles have gradually changed to shift their concentration from hotel and catering management to hospitality management, which opens up a wider conceptual framework

(Airey and Tribe, 2000), whilst preserving the vocational orientation, at the core of the curriculum (Cited by Knowles et al, 2003).

A survey to investigate the human resource issues association with tourism development in Heilongjiang Province, China, was conducted by Qiu and Lam (2004), using focus group methodology involving six categories of interested people, these being: "owners; senior executives; general managers and operative employees from hotels, travel agencies, air-lines, ski resorts, theme parks; car and coach companies, tour guides; educators; and government officials". As a result of identifying the conditions in the Province, they proposed a systematic training programme for human resources development (HRD), which incorporated a general strategic plan covering the next 20 years, and three specific plans, these being:

- On-the-job training. Because less than 30% of all tourism manpower needs can be provided by the educational institutions in the province, on-the-job training must be considered as the principal way to develop and train tourism personnel so that service standards are improved.
- Training the trainers. This is one of the main strategies for improving the industry's existing training capability. Once updated, well-prepared trainers can return to their cities or provinces to launch training programmes suited to local needs.
- Certifying educators and improving research skills. Teaching staff should become familiar with international standards of teaching and modern learning approaches, so they can appreciate the need for their own professional development, and the requirement to issue licences to allow university and vocational school teachers has been recommended. Moreover, research capabilities should be enhanced as this strategy

would underpin the improvement of teaching and learning among staff. As an incentive, and to help attain this objective, support and encouragement should be given to staff to participate in international exchange programmes and tourism/hotel-related international conferences.

Planning Infrastructure and Accommodation Needs

Most tourist facilities are operated by small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs – considered to employ less than 250 people), which consequently are extremely important to the international tourism effort, and through their provision of jobs, income and diversification on local and national scales, these businesses make a strong economic contribution. Indeed, Middleton (1998) makes the point that approximately 99% of all European tourism businesses are SMEs. Moutinho (1990), Wong (1991) and Buhalis and Main (1998) define SMEs as enterprises with fewer than 50 rooms, and employing below ten staff. Wood (2001) defines a small business as one with fewer than 50 employees, and a medium-sized operation as having more than 50 but less than 250. The EU defines, ‘small enterprises’ as those employing between ten and 49 people, ‘medium sized enterprises’ as those employing more than 50 but fewer than 250, (CEC, 1996). However, Ingram et al (2000), use a different classification, referring to a small hotel as one with up to 50 rooms, a medium-sized hotel with 51-100 rooms and a large hotel as having over 100 rooms (Cited by Avcikurt, 2003).

For the reasons already noted, SMEs in the tourism industry assume an important role in regional development, and when compared with

larger operations, they make a much more significant contribution to sustainable development. Avcikurt (2003) observes that "their characteristics include flexibility, direct control of service delivery, personalised and tailor made service, entrepreneurial activity, strong local character, willingness to cater for special interest groups, employment of family members, flexible timetables and multi-skilled personnel" (Buhalis, 1994). Essentially, the argument is that customers' individual needs are better served by small hotels than larger ones.

In many developing countries where infrastructure is not advanced, many tourism market segments cannot be targeted, and in the early stages it is necessary to concentrate on using the revenue generated from a specific market segment to invest in tourism-related services to target more market segments gradually. This demands the active involvement of the construction industry and other related sectors.

A country like Libya which entered the international tourist market only recently should invest heavily in improving infrastructure and other tourism facilities in order to prepare to meet the market requirements, and tourism investment legislation should be treated as a special case in order to attract more private investment from both local and foreign companies. This is especially necessary because as overseas investors are aware, investment in fixed assets cannot be removed from the country. For example, as cited by Eccles (1995), tourism in southern Italy has been used as a development tool to improve public infrastructure rather than manufacturing (Barucci and Becheri, 1990).

In the Libyan case, the foreign investment policy that operates in respect for oil revenues, can be used for tourism development. Indeed, several contracts were signed with foreign companies to invest in the tourism sector after the removal of UN sanctions. One such arrangement was made in February 2005, with the Italian Norman group, to develop a world tourist resort in Farwa-island.

In tourism planning for a destination area, accommodation is considered to be one of the important needs, and hotels of both a certain size in particular locations are vital. For a country like Libya, aiming to develop tourism in areas where suitable resources exist, the requirements and habits of potential visitors should be determined so that accommodation and other facilities can be planned around those habits and needs. In other words, these facilities will be marketing-oriented, with the basic goals of the local community nevertheless kept in mind.

According to Coltman (1989), for a community as a whole the following equation can be used to determine the total accommodation needs, assuming 100% occupancy of that accommodation and a year-round tourist season:

$$\frac{\text{Number of tourists} * \text{percentage staying in hotels} * \text{Average length of stay} * 365}{*}$$

Average number of persons per room

Calculating the number of rooms is a critical initial step because other tourist supply items such as restaurants, shops, attractions, and utility supplies are usually based on the number of visitors expected at any

one time, and a tourist destination with an existing tourist base, has to make new calculations when it proposes to expand.

An Approach to Tourism Planning: The Planning Process

In developing countries, continued emphasis on master plans, which are often made by external consultants from developed countries, is evident. Such external consultants often do not undertake such tasks in their places of origin. In fact, such master plans are designed to attract external investors by ensuring potential developers that there is a broad vision for the destination area and that their investments are desired and secure (Wall, 2005).

Implementation is a third related activity to planning and policy making, which sets out the process of objectives and actions required to achieve the plans, and involves mobilising, organising and managing resources such as, finance, facilities development, manpower and equipment. A plan which cannot be implemented is useless and a waste

of resources as Jenkins et al (1991:204) argue. They note that whilst "much of the effort and funding given to tourism development" planning has resulted in the preparation of technically excellent master plans, often detailed as physical development plans, too little attention has been given to the implementation of these plans and particularly to post-plan audits".

The planning process is a link between policy-making, planning and implementation to ensure final success, while monitoring the plan performance to enable judgements about whether the objectives of

tourism development are being achieved. In this respect, Goeldner et al (2000) argue that, although "policy formulation and destination planning are different types of process, they must nevertheless be seen as integrated components of an ongoing process of destination management".

They also state that tourism policy formulation and tourism planning depend on one another, and have the following similarities:

- They both play an important role in the future development of a tourism destination;
- Although planning deals with tactical issues, they both emphasise the strategic dimensions of managerial action.

The differences are:

- Policy formulation is more comprehensive than planning;
- Policy formulation is a creative, intellectual process, in contrast to planning, which is a more constrained exercise;
- Policy formulation is characterised by a very long-term strategic emphasis, while planning is characterised by its limited horizon;
- Policy formulation takes into consideration invisible future circumstances and technologies, whilst planning deals only with current conditions and technologies;
- Policy formulation deals with long-term tourism development, while planning deals with the method of how the destination goals can be achieved.

All planning models for tourism must reflect local conditions, and flexibility to modify the existing theoretical models should be present in order for a plan to become appropriate for a particular geographical

area. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation of tourism projects is essential for sustainability.

For effective planning to be achieved, the improvement of existing planning mechanisms through better tourism statistics, investment incentives policy, market-oriented research and better tourism infrastructure, are needed. Trained management and qualified professionals, which a tourist destination as Libya lacks are also essential to achieve positive results through planning.

In respect of the need for sustainability, an objective that has been one of the major worries debated recently, it can be seen that problems begin to occur when there is rushed progress and insufficient attention paid to the environment. In fact, for tourism planning to be of any value, the involvement of the host community is essential. Interaction between tourists and residents plays an important part in the conservation of the local environment. This could be attained by developing tourism products that make the visitor care about and feel for the local environment (Haley and Haley, 1997).

Models For Tourism Planning

All planning models should assist policy-making and its subsequent planning to develop sustainable projects and achieve socio-cultural and environmental benefits that conserve and prolong a country's resources. To achieve this outcome, various things need to be done, such as improving existing planning mechanisms through better tourism statistics, better tourism infrastructure, market oriented.

research and attractive investment incentives, which are all needed to encourage both local and foreign investment.

As cited by Gunn (2002), Baud-Bovy (1982) published his approach, to planning outdoor recreation and tourism development called PASOLP (Products Analysis Sequence Recreation for Outdoor Leisure Planning) as shown in (Appendix 1). He elaborated on his earlier experiences of applying some of his concepts and principles of tourism planning in several countries such as Niger, stressing the fact that tourism planning varies from the traditional technical planner's approach in that it must be integrated with other sectors' plans. Furthermore, such integration should be in harmony with national policies, the physical environment, the related sectors of the economy, the public budget, the international tourism market, and with structure of the tourist industry. Baud-Bovy conceived a continuous four-phase planning process as follows:

1) Scientific investigation and analysis

- Principal tourism flows (existing and potential) are compared with attractions and resources
- The nation's structures, politics and priorities are analysed.

2) Identification of development objectives

- Each market segment is examined.
- Existing tourism products are compared to market segments.
- Destination attractions are examined.
- Feasibility, as well as socio-economic and environmental impacts of new development is examined. Priority development is identified.

3) Creation of a physical plan

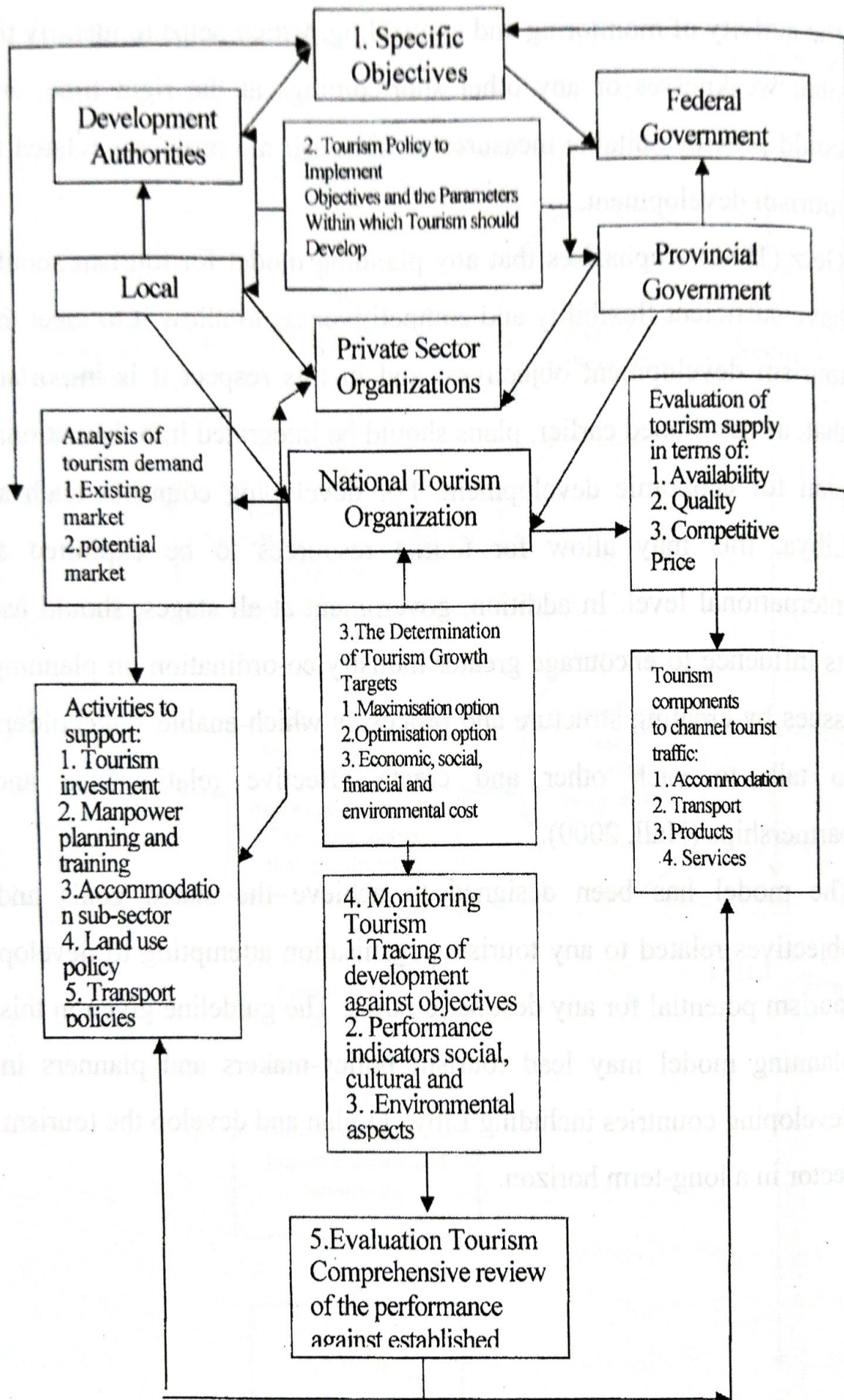
- Three preliminary studies are made: required new facilities, estimated impact on sites, and preferred destinations.
- Based on the results of phase 2, conclusions and recommendations for required planning are stated.

4) Impacts

- Socio-economic and environmental impacts of the proposed development are assessed.

Another model proposed by Jenkins (1991) and illustrated in Figure (1), offers another important theoretical perspective for a country like Libya, which has a central planning approach. An understanding of this model may enable policy-makers and planners to develop suitable projects, which will sustain the economy through tourism development and also achieve socio-cultural and environment improvements that will preserve the country's resources. Public and private organisations both play a vital role in analysing supply and demand components, and subsequently assisting the achievement of tourism objectives.

Figure 1: Proposed Stages of Tourism Planning



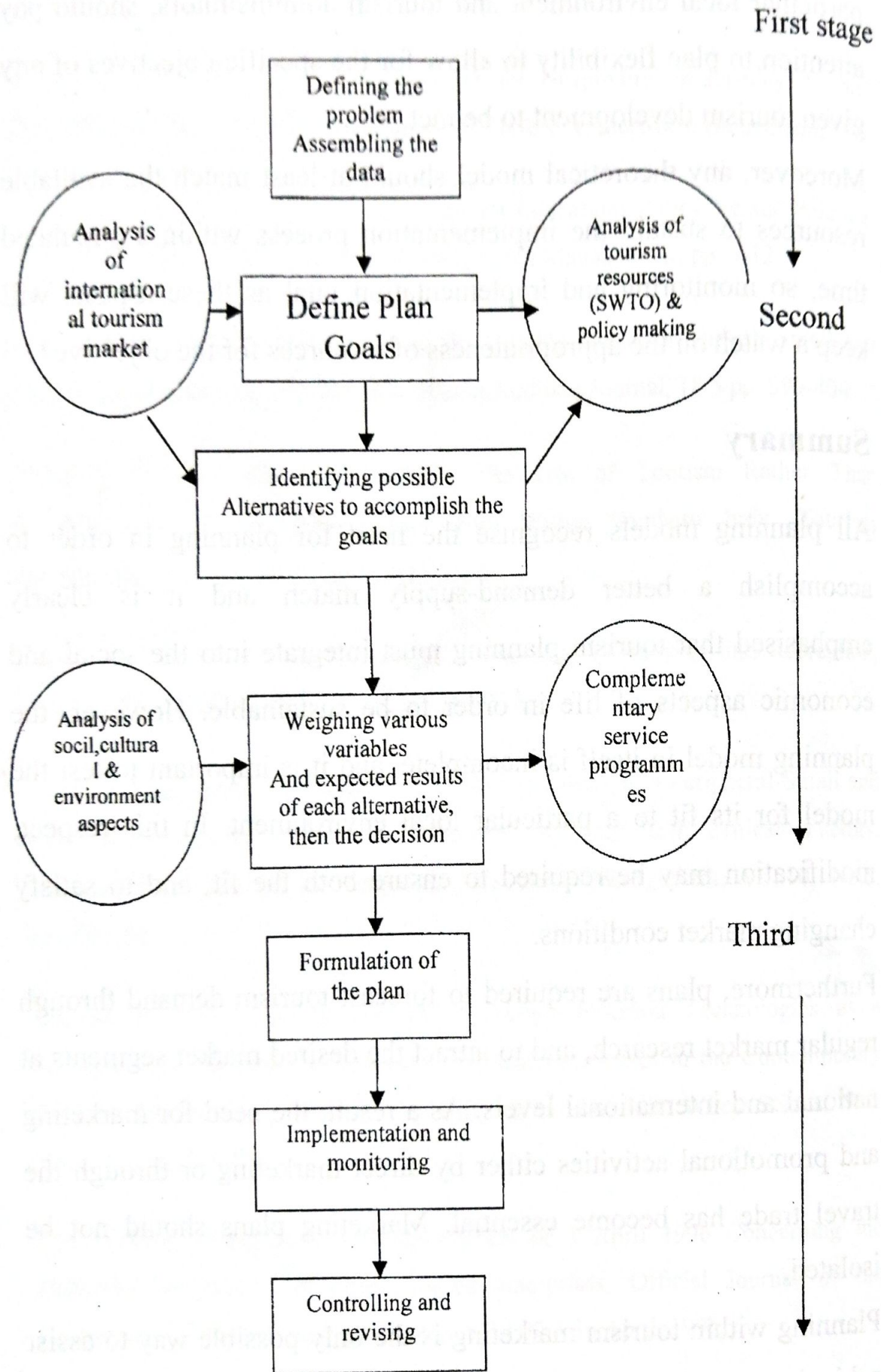
Source: (Jenkins, 1991)

The final step in the planning process is, as argued by Wahab (1975), the activity of monitoring and controlling, which helps to identify the plan weaknesses or any other shortcomings at the right time, and could provide suitable measures to diminish the problems related to tourism development.

Getz (1986) emphasises that any planning model for tourism should have sufficient flexibility and competitiveness to allow it to meet the tourism development objectives, and in this respect it is important that, as mentioned earlier, plans should be integrated into the national plan for economic development. For developing countries such as Libya, this may allow for tourist resources to be exploited at international level. In addition, government at all stages, should use its influence to encourage greater industry co-ordination on planning issues by creating structure and processes which enable stakeholders to talk to each other and create effective relationships and partnerships (Hall, 2000).

The model has been designed to achieve the stated goals and objectives related to any tourism organisation attempting to develop tourism potential for any destination area. The guideline given in this planning model may lead tourism policy-makers and planners in developing countries including Libya to plan and develop the tourism sector in a long-term horizon.

Figure (3): Tourism Development Planning Stages Model



Source :Prepared by the author

Any planning model should be tested to make sure that it fits to a particular local environment and tourism administrators, should pay attention to plan flexibility to allow for the specific objectives of any given tourism development to be met.

Moreover, any theoretical model should at least match the available resources to sustain the implementation process within a stipulated time, so monitoring and implementation vital as these aspects will keep a watch on the appropriateness of resources for the objectives

Summary

All planning models recognise the need for planning in order to accomplish a better demand-supply match and it is clearly emphasised that tourism planning must integrate into the social and economic aspects of life in order to be sustainable. However, the planning model in itself is incomplete, and it is important to test the model for its fit to a particular local environment. In this respect, modification may be required to ensure both the fit, and to satisfy changing market conditions.

Furthermore, plans are required to forecast tourism demand through regular market research, and to attract the desired market segments at national and international levels. As a result, the need for marketing and promotional activities either by direct marketing or through the travel trade has become essential. Marketing plans should not be isolated.

Planning within tourism marketing is the only possible way to assist achieving organisational objectives and growth as well as to improve performance in a fast and ongoing changing market.

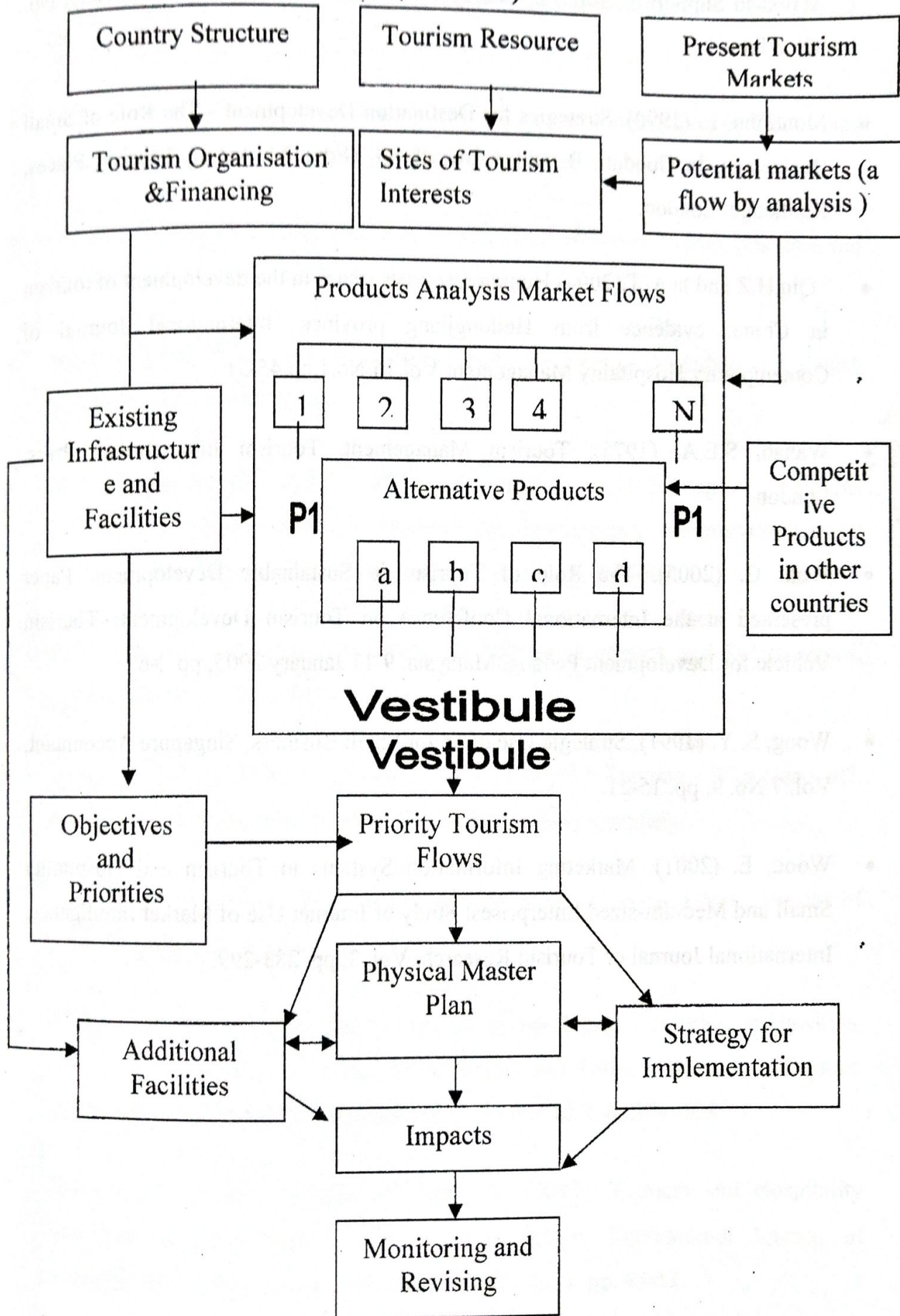
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Appendix 1: Product Analysis Sequence Outdoor Leisure Model (PASOLP)



Source :Baud-Bovy (1982) . (Edt) . Gunn, 2002
 Product Analysis Sequence Outdoor Leisure Model (PASOLP)