



Environmental Regional Planning

Description

'Environmentally-Based Planning Model for Regional Tourism Development' (EBT) adopts a regional-scale sustainable development approach and is based on community well-being, tourist satisfaction, and economic integration. The model is concerned with developing environmentally compatible tourism through identifying features significant for tourism, critical areas and compatible activities.

The EBT planning model follows five key steps:

1. *Statement of objectives*: involves situational analysis, carried out through literature review, discussions with agencies, local managers, residents and tourists. Also includes brief review of the target area and regional issues, then lists specific areas of outstanding environmental significance, natural areas considered compatible with tourism activities, specific areas for intensive tourism etc.
2. *Survey and assessment*: The purpose of this step is to identify and describe significant environmental attributes and tourism resources in the region. The model uses scales of significance to develop maps of significant environmental attributes and significant tourism resources.
3. *Evaluation*: involves the overlaying of the tourism map over the environmental attributes map to find *spatial relationships*, e.g. areas that are solely environmentally significant, solely tourism significant, and 'critical areas' = where the two areas coincide. All areas are evaluated before being allocated a zoning class by using the 'environment-tourism' matrix = four divisions representing zones of EBT method. This step also identifies *compatible relationships*.
4. *Synthesis*: matches significant features, critical areas and compatible activities with various zones defined in previous phases. A map is produced which indicates allocation of regional environment units to each various zoning class.
5. *Proposals*: Finally a plan is prepared for consideration as part of the overall regional planning framework.

Zones are designed to protect conservation values while fostering tourism developments and activities. They are identified and described based on classifying a region's land and water areas according to their need for protection and compatibility with tourism: for example, Sanctuary Zones, Nature Conservation Zones, Outdoor Recreation Zones, Tourism Development Zones.


How and when it is used

The EBT Planning Model was trialled in Western Australia between 1989 and 1992 and used since then in some areas in Australia. It is not known to have been applied in New Zealand.

Since the inception of this model there has been much planning work carried out in Australia around the theme of Environmental Sustainable Development and thus elements of EBT have been incorporated into a number of regional tourism strategies developed in Australia. These strategies generally comprise 5 key elements:

- Environmental protection
- Product development
- Infrastructure development
- Marketing and promotion
- Industry involvement

Some of these strategies incorporate aspects of the EBT model.

The model incorporates land use [zoning](#) , and spatial relationships between environmentally significant areas and tourism areas. It is applicable to most kinds of natural areas. A subsequent 'Compatible Activities Matrix' includes water and air parameters as well as land. Because intrinsic values and the natural and social environment form the basis for any sustainable development including tourism development in a region, environmental protection and conservation of environmental values underpin the EBT approach in any regional application.



The model provides that maintaining and improving lifestyle of local residents and protecting a region's natural and cultural attributes is fundamental to any form of development. The local community should be involved because local communities should benefit from sustainable tourism occurring in their locality (financial benefits, employment, increased provision of services and facilities, better planning and management of tourism, protection of lifestyles, interaction with visitors, etc).

The EBT model attempts to provide an ongoing process that aims to enhance quality and diversity of tourism in a natural area, complementary to tourism product development. It is not primarily concerned with other land uses, carrying capacities, threshold analysis or pattern analysis. The approach focuses on the need for tourism to: identify resource settings; identify and fill product gaps; establish regional gateways, touring circuits and destination zones; establish links with other industries; and ensure that demand does not exceed resources available. These are the criteria of environmental and social acceptability of tourism products. However the measures of acceptability are not stated.

Application

Thus far the approach appears to have limited uptake, confined to Australia. It is compatible with other [visitor impact management](#) tools at specific sites. Individual sites within a region can be managed in different ways, using approaches from different points along the spectrum. It generally uses the approach of clustering visitors rather than dispersing them, the former seen as advantageous both in terms both of benefits to visitors and of reducing unacceptable impacts on the host community and environment.

Our evaluation

Little is known about this model in terms of its specific application in New Zealand. However, the approach could generally fit within [Resource Management Act framework](#) processes in New Zealand in terms of underlying sustainable management and community involvement philosophies. It may become increasingly relevant in a sustainable development context in New Zealand. It appears to be compatible with and would give coherence to other models used for [district and regional tourism plans](#). The model adopts a bottom up approach, with operation and control at a regional level. It would not generally be compatible with public conservation areas managed under the [Conservation Act framework](#) which has a presumption of protection.

Points of difference with this model compared with other tourism planning include:

- Environmental sustainability basis
- Incorporation of resident and tourist options early in the goal formation process
- Differentiation to achieve environment - tourism compatibility
- Emphasis on environmental education methods and fostering environment ethic.