Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development: A Strategic For Revenue Generation in Local Communities

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Abstract: Tourism is a booming industry. With many travellers flocking to different destinations around the globe, tourism is becoming one of the most viable business markets in the world. However, air travel, car travel and other aspects of tourism are adding to the planet's pollution crisis and this is becoming a problem. Travel operators and hospitality corporates realised that some action needed to be taken, and Eco-tourism was created as a solution to this problem. Eco-tourism is now one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry. Eco-tourism involves the conservation of biological and cultural diversity through education of locals and tourists alike. By protecting ecosystems it has had a positive effect on the local communities and their livelihoods through their participation in projects and lessening the impact on the environment.

Keyword: Eco-tourism; Cultural Tourism; Investment; Local Communities; Environment;

Introduction

In countries around the world, the importance of travel and tourism for national economies is evident from the contributions the sector makes. Taken as a whole, this industry employs over 100 million people directly and a similar number in related jobs, contributing a whopping 9 percent of global GDP, or $6 trillion. A closer look at the statistics from institutions such as the World Economic Forum also reveals that 10 percent of all jobs globally are in this sector, and there are logical explanations why certain countries have succeeded.

Analysis reveals that Europe is in the lead in travel and tourism, and all the top ten countries are from the region. Switzerland leads the pack for a number of reasons. Firstly, its infrastructure is second to none and facilities related to the sector are top notch, including staff. Secondly, the country has a reputation as having the best hotel management schools in the world. Thirdly, Switzerland's environmental policies are of a very high standard, heavy emphasis being placed on sustainability. This forward thinking has been emulated by countries such as Germany, Austria, Spain, France, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Investment in the travel and tourism sector cannot be overemphasized, and in Africa, this is clearly evident in a number of countries. The ratio of investment in the industry to GDP in Seychelles is the second highest in the world, and in Kenya, high government spending on destination marketing has seen the industry grow to be the top foreign exchange earner. This continued investment suggests that the industry continues to develop and has not reached stagnation. In essence, this is an immensely important industry and any country that wants to boost its economy must seriously consider high investment in the sector, particularly since even in times of recession, job
growth is seen to be on the rise and can be an attractive argument to increase investment.

Many aspects of a country can set it apart, making travel and tourism a very viable option; the lifestyle of the people, their traditions and customs, culinary culture, wildlife, landmarks, and more that can be said to be truly unique. After all, traveling is all about new experiences, and as long as mankind thirsts for these new experiences, this industry will continue to grow, and no doubt countries should take advantage of the huge and enormous potential within their shores that is unlimited in every respect.

Discussion

Sustainable Cultural Tourism and Global Economic Demands

Societies around the globe have diverse cultures that give residents a sense of place and belonging. The colorful and splendid displays of cultural and artistic practices that are passed on from one generation to the other have been a unique cementing material that unites society members. Many residents take great pride in the traditional practices handed down to them by their proud forebears. The elders in communities, especially local regions, endeavor to honor their ancestors by ensuring that these important practices and iconic events are observed and commemorated.

Some societies have extravagant cultural festivals that they celebrate annually or once in every two years to recall the archetypal roles that their great predecessors played in the development of their societies. Some of these cultural festivals are held to enlighten and teach the younger generation the valor and selflessness of their forebears in ensuring the progression of the society. For instance, the Asante ethnic society of Ghana holds special festivals known as Akwasidae to remember the great achievements of their past Asantehenes (Kings of the Asante Kingdom). Likewise, the people of Kumawu in the Ashanti region of Ghana hold the Papa Nantwi (Great Cow) festival to figure out the courageous and warlike persons in the society who can be relied on in times of war. These cultural festivals can be well planned to generate revenue for the host local communities.

Many tourists are fascinated about these cultural festivals and practices and as such patronize their commemoration. Also, many residents in a country who do not hail from a particular area may want to know more about the culture of the ethnic societies in those parts of the country. Thus, organizers can produce paraphernalia of the cultural observance in the form of T-shirts, brochures, pens, hats and other items that would help attendees immerse themselves in the occasion while generating revenue for the host communities.

Moreover, many societies have interesting cultural infrastructures which can equally be developed into tourist sites to generate revenue for communities. This includes sacred groves specially demarcated by the forebears of particular societies as
an area whose biodiversity resources are not to be exploited. It may be the grounds where their ancestors died and as such is declared as sacred. Such is the case of the Bomfobiri Wildlife Sanctuary in Kumawu in the Ashanti region of Ghana believed to be the spot where most of their early forebears died from a plague struck on them by the Dente deity as a result of their lack of hospitality. Annually, rites are held in the area to remember them and instruct the younger generation the essence of hospitality. These sacred groves and forests are potential tourist sites for communities. Recreational activities serving as a side attraction could be coupled with the celebration to make it worth remembering.

**Eco-tourism: Responsible and Sustainable Tourism**

Responsible tourism means all tourism directly dependent on the use of natural life e.g. wildlife and landscape. Nature based tourism include eco-tourism and mass tourism. Uncontrolled mass tourism continues to contribute to the degradation of natural & cultural significance (commercialization of Culture) thus leading or causing loss of biological and cultural biodiversity, and important sources of income. Nature based tourism offers a way of financing unique ecosystems preservation. This provides opportunity for the community living near the protected areas to benefit economically e.g. employment opportunity. But Nature based tourism & travel while sustaining ecosystem also degrades them. Much nature based tourism falls short of social responsibility to the local community.

Sustainable tourism is developed and managed in such a way that all tourism activities will focus on a heritage resource, natural and cultural which can be continued imminently and every effort is made to maintain the resource to perpetuity. According to hector Ceballos-Lascurian (1983) ecotourism means "the tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural area with the object of admiring, studying and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as cultural features found there."

*Eco-tourism embraces four basic elements:*

- The natural environment as the primary attraction and the cultural environment playing a secondary role
- The sustainable use of the ecological and cultural environment.
- Focus on education and the interpretation of the resource
- Provision of the benefit to the host community Tourism is about people and places where one group of people leave, visit and pass through places, the people who make the trip possible and the people encountered in the tour, it involves travellers, host communities and governments.
In tourism industry the destination is perhaps one of the most important elements. The destination region represents the raison d'être for tourism and the tourist attraction at the destination generates the visit. Tourism product is consumed where it is produced (destination). Hence the destination comes under considerable pressure from high levels of demand focused both in time and at specific sites for example the warm East Africa, Indian Ocean coastal beaches during the northern hemisphere winter.

Tourist pressures can lead to alteration of the tourism resource and as tourist demand continues to raise so have many destinations around the world succumbed to environmental degradation. The impact that some form of tourism development has on the environment has raised concern among environmentalist and other constituents. Therefore professional management and planning of destination are critical if tourism is to contribute to their conservation and to be perceived as an acceptable industry in a world whose survival is threatened.

Tourism demand unspoilt environment in which to operate. It is essential that tour operation should be developed and managed in such a way that as to protect the natural assets. We subscribe to the fact that the extent to which tourism is developed, planned and controlled in an orderly and coordinated manner will affect the long-term quality of the tourism product and subsequently the success of the hospitality Industry. While tourism can be a catalyst for development, it is important for the government agencies plan and develop tourism carefully so that the benefit can be optimized without creating social and environmental problems

Low impact forms of tourism counteracts the effects of mass tourism that poses a number of challenges on the resource base i.e. environment, society, and economy. Low impact forms of tourism create a balance between environment quality and resource utilization. This is mainly aimed at empowering local communities in managing their natural resources that is creating an incentive to conserve the biological resource in the environment by allowing the beneficial effects from tourism filter down to the individual families and households.

Alternative tourism is seen as forms of tourism that are consistent with natural social and community values and which allows both the host and the guest to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experience it is also known variously as ecotourism, nature tourism sustainable tourism environmentally friendly, environmentally sensitive, ecological compatible ecologically sound or Green and eco-tour such as Walking tours, Birds Safari, Camel safaris Guided nature walks, horse riding safaris, bicycle tours, home and farm stays, youth tourism.

Many destinations marketed as responsible tourism does not consider the local community development, economical, social welfare and human rights. Indeed majority of them care less about the resource as long as it brings the "green bill ". There must be concern with staff and tourist education i.e. the expected visitors' behaviour. Thus in this, nature based tourism is formulated as sustainable development. The concept of set
principles, Ties 1991 defined it as responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and sustains the well being of the local people.

It is now fashionable to look at tourism development in the context of "sustainability" "alternative tourism" "green tourism" all of which have a particular meaning to different people but majority of this are just eco-labels or marketing and PR slongs. Sustainable tourism is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Problems with Fake Eco-Tourism

"Green washing" is a term used to describe the occurrence of a tourism operator claiming to offer eco-friendly holidays when they are in fact, environmentally destructive. This practice involves the commercialisation of tourism involving nature and some ecological projects as eco-tourism. Many people flock to these tourism operators and end up doing more damage to the environment than if they had not used a 'green' operator. They are destructive towards the environment, are insensitive towards cultural needs and exploit the tourism economy. They are also misleading to tourists as they appeal to the desire to help the environment which tourists have, yet destroy the environment, not giving the tourists what they have asked for.

Despite some operators meeting the guidelines, there may still be a negative impact on the environment and local communities. Eco-tourism operators need to have a thoroughly positive impact on the environment with few, if not no negative impacts. If there is a negative impact, this should be counter acted by some kind of compensatory action such as planting trees and so forth.

South Africa is currently reaping many economic benefits from eco-tourism but there are still problems with displacement of people, violations of constitutional rights and negative impact on the environment from tourism activities.

An eco-tourism operator should be involved in investing in the local ecosystems and conservation. Rejuvenation of the natural resources and the education of locals in living in harmony with these ecosystems is paramount to eco-tourism. Education of tourists, assisting the livelihoods of locals in supporting themselves without negative environmental impact and the conservation of biological and cultural diversity should be not only endorsed but achieved through eco-tourism. Money generated from eco-tourism should also be invested in furthering conservation efforts.

Tourism Courses For Managerial Roles

As a signal of how important tourism is to the world’s economy, there are 234 million people estimated to be working in the sector around the world. This accounts for around 8.7 percent of the workforce. By extension, there are many more people who depend on this income - and many related industries that are supported by it in some
way. With this in mind, it is little wonder that so many tourism courses have developed to meet this demand.

There are a great many jobs in tourism, but many of them are considered by many to be unskilled. In order to land the bigger, more well-paid jobs, it is important to do one of the various tourism courses available. Even a short course can help you land a better job - where a few months spent learning and training will pay of serious dividends when you start working. This article will look at tourism courses that focus on the managerial aspect of the industry, where executives and professionals need certain qualities in their training in order to be effective in the workplace.

Managerial roles in tourism require a similar degree of business acumen to domestic business in order that they are carried out correctly. Most related tourism courses do indeed cover these, and along with going over tourism principles and practice, will also cover business strategy, managing organisations and research methods.

One important aspect of these tourism courses is to instil a desire to network. With so many personalities in an industry that requires such good communication skills, being good with people is essential in order to make these contacts happen. With most managerial roles, it is important to like being with people and to embrace cultures and languages from across the world - after all, this is what you are essentially selling. Tourism courses that give a good sense of this importance, are ones that are likely to serve an individual's career very well.

Within the UK, there has been a significant expansion of the tourism industry and related businesses, with the forthcoming London Olympics being a large catalyst. Opportunities in all areas of tourism have therefore increased a great deal, and many of these are managerial roles. Choosing a reputable tourism courses as a route to learning the required skills is crucial in order to be ready for the various demands that such jobs place upon you. While it is undeniably an exciting way to earn a living, preparation is everything.

**Benefits of Eco-Tourism**

Eco-tourism defines the purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the culture and history of the environment, ensuring that the integrity of the ecosystem is not altered. It has greatly benefited many nations and people globally. It is estimated that over 600 million people travel internationally each year. Hundreds of millions more journey within their home country, doing so for both work and pleasure. The tourism industry which includes hotels, resorts, airlines, travel agencies, parks and forest reserve services, and other business that cater for the needs of travelers, has become a major employer of labour.
Today, tourism is important to the economy of over 125 countries. Globally, tourism generates about four trillion dollars every year. A big one you would agree with me. It is therefore a strong factor in global financial issues. Since it involves the movement of people, eco-tourism is also a strong social and cultural integration. It fosters better understanding between people of different tribes and ethnic groups. This makes eco-tourism a potential tool for world peace if well harnessed. It can raise environmental cultural and social awareness. In many countries, this sector has developed over the years into the largest foreign exchange earner. Countries such as Kenya and Tanzania make great fortunes from eco-tourism. In Kenya, a lion is worth about $7,000 per year in income from tourist and a herd of elephant is valued at over $610,000. Hawaii's coral reefs generate about $300million each year from nature-based tourism.

Another benefit is the fact that has greatly increased environmental awareness and therefore has contributed to nature conservation. In order to sustain the financial and other benefits of eco-tourism, governments implement conservation programs and policies to protect the plants and animals. This has greatly reduced human threats to the continuous existence of many flora and fauna species.

**Eco tourism and Local Communities**

Adventure holidays in developing countries, offer wonderful opportunities to visit some of the most beautiful and unspoiled areas of the planet, experiencing the local cultures and seeing the environment preserved and relatively unspoiled. The travel and tourist industry, the worlds largest employer, has great potential for alleviating poverty in some of the poorest countries. However the NGO Tourism Concern explains that the industry can often contribute to the unsustainable depletion of resources at the expense of the local communities and environments.

Their report on Water Equity in Tourism (WET report, 2012) highlighted many areas of concern within the tourist industry in a selection of the worlds poorest countries, providing evidence that communities are being actively depleted of water in the name of increasing tourist numbers.

One striking statistic showed that despite annual tourist numbers increasing to the Island of Zanzibar from 19,368 in 1995 to a massive 220,000 in 2011, half of the population of Zanzibar still do not have access to a clean water source (DFID 2011). Safe drinking water is the foundation of good health and disease prevention with many diseases, such as Cholera, Typhoid and Hepatitis A being spread through contaminated water sources.

More children die from lack of access to clean water and sanitation than die from HIV, Malaria, and Measles combined (UNGA,2010), with an estimated 2 million people, most of them children - dying from diarrhoea related diseases. In addition to the
depletion of resources people working within the tourist industry are vulnerable to exploitation. Inadequate provisions and emergency services for mountain porters, results in many avoidable deaths annually, mainly secondary to altitude sickness and hypothermia. Long term chronic disabilities are caused by inadequate equipment, overloading and inappropriately treated illness and injuries, often rendering the porters unemployable.

Through the positive action by organisations such as the International Porter Protection Group (IPPJ) and the Kilimanjaro Porters Assistance Project, reports of porters requiring emergency treatment and being left to descend from high altitude alone are becoming less frequent. However the demand on these services is ever increasing and it is a continuing problem which requires greater awareness and further management. There are still no government initiated laws to protect the rights porters and their working conditions in many countries.

Conclusion

Many companies are aware of the potentially adverse effects their activities are having on the local communities and environments and have incorporated development work into their youth expeditions, such as those run by Raleigh International. Building long-term projects and partnerships with local communities to be able to not only provide employment to local people but to actively improve the environments we love exploring so much is essential if it is to be sustainable. So next time you book a trip of a lifetime, take a little time to think about the company you use and if it gives information about how they function, usually if they are supporting ethical and sustainable practices they are keen to tell you about it.

There are a number of resources which promote the great organisations helping to improve the health of people in developing countries who work in difficult conditions to provide us with a trip of a lifetime. Of course, businesses in the local communities boom in sales during the commemoration of cultural events and this auger well for the local economies. Food vendors, drivers of commercial vehicles, restaurants and hotels and other goods and service providers maximize their gains strengthening the economic capital of these communities. Palaces and birthplace of great kings, battlegrounds of ancestors, and other significant cultural sites can be developed into tourist sites to generate revenue.

Indeed, many communities in the world have well sustained cultural traditions and infrastructure that have not been fully explored but are strategic tools for elevating their economies. The traditional council or the governing team in these communities must liaise with developing partners like the tourism ministry of their governments, Non-governmental organizations and private enterprises to upgrade these places of cultural heritage as tourist sites for revenue generation. This step can lead to the alleviation of
poverty in the numerous local communities globally who, despite the fact that they have
great cultural wealth, are poor economically.

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