Sustaining a Quality Tourism Product—Applying the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

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Tourism Impact Data

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
Contribution of Travel and Tourism

- **Global GDP** is expected to rise from 9.4% (US$5,474 bn) in 2009 to 9.5% (US$10,478 bn) by 2019.

- T&T economy to **total employment** is expected to rise from 219 million jobs in 2009, to 275 million jobs by 2019.

- **Export earnings** from international visitors and tourism goods are expected to generate 10.9% of total exports (US$1,980 bn) in 2009, growing (in nominal terms) to US$4,132 bn (9.8% of the total) in 2019.

Source: WTTC, 2009
Today, investments in the tourism sector represent almost 10% of total investment value worldwide. In developing countries, such as in the Caribbean region, this figure could be as high as 50%.

Tourism is a growing focus as a generator of foreign direct investment in developing countries.

Tourism has been identified as the number one priority and focus of Investment Promotion Agencies in developing countries (UNCTAD).
Two Faces of Tourism
Conventional Tourism

Courtesy of David Krantz, Center for Responsible Travel
Beach erosion, Gambia
Photo Credit: Dr. Kathleen Baker, Senior Lecturer, King’s College, London

Conventional Tourism
Conventional Tourism

Malta
Photo by UNWTO
‘An Alternative’ Form of Tourism
‘An Alternative’ Form of Tourism

Colonia de Sacramento, Uruguay
Photo by Esteban Ericksen
‘An Alternative’ Form of Tourism

Panama
Photo by Esteban Ericksen
‘An Alternative’ Form of Tourism

Photo courtesy of the SF Convention & Visitors Bureau
‘An Alternative’ Form of Tourism
Challenges
Many definitions
Many designations: *Responsible tourism*, *green tourism*
Many sectors: *Ecotourism*, *adventure tourism*, *community tourism*
Proliferation of labels and certifications
THIS LEADS TO:

- Supplier confusion
- Consumer confusion
- Green washing
- Lack of international credibility

SOLUTION:

COMMON GLOBAL LANGUAGE
FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
Why should you care?

• **Increased consumer awareness** – 84% of Expedia customers are interested in sustainable hotels and willing to pay 5% more; and in a recent Travelocity survey, 59% of respondents stated a “green” rating would have at least some influence in their hotel selection in 2009.

• **Changing lifestyles** – A study conducted by IPK International in 2010 found that travelers prefer authentic destinations, products and experiences.

• **Industry** – Tourism companies are seeking advice on identifying internationally recognized sustainable tourism criteria.

• **Media** – Increased attention to issues of sustainability and tourism.
Increasingly travel agents and tour operators are promoting and differentiating more sustainable product
Why do we need a common language

- Governmental agencies need support to create or review national/regional certification systems
- Tourism companies are seeking advice on identifying internationally recognized sustainable tourism criteria
- Consumers are becoming more and more conscious and need to be assured that sustainability statements by the industry are credible
- Voluntary sustainable tourism initiatives need credible references to developing their own programs
- Mutual recognition and reciprocity among programs is needed in order to mainstream sustainability
- Media need guidance to recognize sustainable tourism providers and sustainable tourism certification schemes
Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council & Partnership for the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria
Two initiatives with a common mission

- To come up with a common language to define sustainable tourism globally

- To build confidence in the marketplace by providing supplier and consumers

- To unlock tourism’s potential for conservation and poverty alleviation
What are the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC)

A set of 37 criteria intended to frame the main components of sustainable tourism

The criteria are organized around the four pillars of sustainable tourism:

- effective sustainability planning
- maximizing social and economic benefits to the local community
- reduction of negative impacts to cultural heritage
- reduction of negative impacts to environmental heritage
Example criteria:

A. Demonstrate effective sustainable management

A.6. Design and construction of buildings and infrastructure:

A.7. Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage is provided to customers, as well as explaining appropriate behavior while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites.
Example criteria:

B. Maximize social and economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative impacts

B.1. The company actively supports initiatives for social and infrastructure community development including, among others, education, health, and sanitation.
Example criteria:

C. Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts

C.3. The business contributes to the protection of local historical, archeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, and does not impede access to them by local residents.
The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

Example criteria:

D. Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts.

D.2. Reducing pollution

D.2.1. Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the business are measured, and procedures are implemented to reduce and offset them as a way to achieve climate neutrality.
GSTC Today: Hotels

WILLARD InterContinental
WASHINGTON D.C.

2008 Sustainability Report

Some Adventures are Naturally more Exciting

Sharing a passion for the planet

Customer success stories (CSR) is an ongoing initiative. Guest surveys are conducted on a regular basis. We are committed to continuously improving our environmental performance.

IT'S EASY BEING GREEN ON THE ROAD
As hotels are environmental stewards of our iconic hotels, we are always looking for ways to reduce our environmental impact. By using green practices, we are not only helping to protect our planet, but also enhancing the guest experience.

Top 5 Tools:
1. Carbon Offset Tool: As a measure of our environmental impact, we offer a carbon offset tool to guests. By purchasing carbon offsets, guests can help reduce the carbon footprint of their stay.
2. Energy Star: We are committed to using energy-efficient equipment to reduce our energy consumption. By choosing Energy Star-rated products, we are helping to reduce our carbon footprint.
3. Water Conservation: We are committed to conserving water by using low-flow fixtures and water-efficient appliances.
4. Paperless Guest Experience: We offer digital check-in and check-out to reduce paper waste.
5. Local Sourcing: We source locally grown and produced products to support local businesses and reduce our carbon footprint.
GSTC Today: Travel Distributors

www.travelocity.com/greentravel

www.expedia.com/gogreen
GSTC Today: Governments

Photo courtesy of the SF Convention & Visitors Bureau

Figure credit: Helena Rey de Assis in UNEP & MEEDDM (2009). A Three-Year Journey for Sustainable Tourism. p. 19
E. The project will minimize its negative impacts on the tourism destination, for example:

Projected increase in rooms from this project will not cause total room numbers in the destination to exceed limits established by local, regional, or national authorities in physical development plans, master plans, and tourism zoning regulations.

- The number of rooms to be built will not exceed approved planning limits for the destination, taking into account all other existing or approved projects.
- Projected number of rooms, combined with all others in the destination, will exceed approved limits.
- N/A: No applicable limits on number of rooms have been established.
Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council
What is STSC? A proposed umbrella organization to accredit those certification programs that meet a universal minimum standard (the GSTC).

How it was initiated? Informed by regional certification networks in existence as early as 2003 (Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas; VISIT in Europe; Sustainable Tourism Network in Southern Africa).

Leadership: Rainforest Alliance provided technical and administrative leadership for the effort since 2001.
Tourism Sustainability Council
Vision

To facilitate the process of tourism serving as a tool for conservation, preservation of destinations and socioeconomic benefits for all stakeholders.

Mission

To promote sustainability in tourism by fostering the increased knowledge, understanding, adoption and demand for sustainable tourism practices.
Strategy

Creating Demand and Educating the consumer

Businesses using GSTC

Businesses

Businesses Verified

Businesses Accredited

Working with Certification Programs

Providing tools for businesses
Objectives

Foster increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices.

• Raising awareness
• Knowledge-sharing, communications and educational tools
• Help identify self-assessment, verification and certification

Build demand for sustainable travel.

• Fostering business-to-business solutions
• Promote sustainable businesses to industry and consumers

Facilitate the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles.

• Baseline criteria and performance indicators
• Accreditation
TSC–Status

- Formalizing the organization’s legal registration and membership process.
- Establishing the accreditation program.
- Developing market access tools for sustainable tourism products and businesses certified by TSC accredited programs.
- Developing education and training curricula for Universities (Undergraduate/ Graduate Level)
- Raising awareness on sustainable tourism through media outreach.
How can you get involved?

- Help lead the process of adopting universal sustainable tourism principles and criteria by becoming part of the TSC.
- Align your own tools with the global sustainable tourism criteria.
- Engage in the consultation process for developing baseline criteria and accreditation mechanism.
- Encourage your certification programs to adopt the global sustainable tourism criteria and pursue accreditation.
- Consider funding the TSC in its implementation phase.
Tourism Sustainability Council– TSC
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