Ethics in Tourism

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Abstract
This article tries to study the role of ethics in the development of tourism industry. It deals in summary with such issues as sustainable tourism, global ethics and some principles of WTO Global Code of Ethics for tourism. According to the WTO and the magic pentagon of tourism development, it is recommended for the tourism stakeholders and professionals especially in developing countries in general to follow the ethical principles in order to reach the sustainable development in tourism industry.

Keywords: Tourism, tourism industry, ethics, sustainable tourism

Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the largest industries in the world, and despite recent events that have made its operating environment more complex, the industry continues to grow (Theobald, 2005). It has the potential to bring major benefits to destinations, but can also be damaging to the people living there and to their environment. Other industries have already understood this ambivalent nature of trade and have adopted the triple bottom line of social, environmental and economic responsibility. It is now time for the tourism industry to rise to this challenge – the challenge of ethical tourism.

Ethical tourism is in the best interests of all involved. It offers tour operators a competitive advantage and safeguards the future of the industry by ensuring the long-term sustainability of a destination. It offers the tourists a richer experience, as holidays will draw on the distinctive features of a destination. It is also in the interests of those living there and those working for development, as it can help to combat poverty and contribute to sustainable development.

The tourism industry is highly competitive and tour operators are under increasing pressure to differentiate their products. Research suggests that once the main criteria for a holiday are satisfied (location/facilities, cost and availability), clients will make choices based on ethical considerations such as working conditions, the environment and charitable giving. Clients are also looking for increased quality and experience in their holiday. In this climate, companies would do well to differentiate their products according to consumer demand i.e. based on ethical criteria[1].

In this respect, especially in recent years a new issue is under discussion called "ethics in tourism" and it calls all the people involved in tourism industry to follow its codes and help the sustainable development of this industry.

This research is concerned with the issue of the ethics in tourism industry and it focuses on the Global Code of Ethics for tourism set by the Worlds Tourism Organization.

Sustainable Tourism

Taking into account the swift and continued growth, both past and foreseeable, of the tourism activity, whether for leisure, business, culture, religious or health purposes, and its powerful effects, both

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[1]   http://tilz.tearfund.org/webdocs/Website/Campaigning/Policy%20and%20research/Policy%20-
      %20Tourism%20putting%20ethics%20into%20practice%20policy%20report.pdf

positive and negative, on the environment, the economy and the society of both generating and receiving countries, on local communities and indigenous peoples, as well as on international relations and trade, Aiming to promote responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism in the framework of right of all persons to use their free time for leisure pursuits or travel with respect for the choices of society of all peoples, But convinced that the world tourism industry as a whole has much to gain by operating in an environment that favors the market economy, private enterprise and free trade and that serves to optimize its beneficial effects on the creation of wealth and employment.
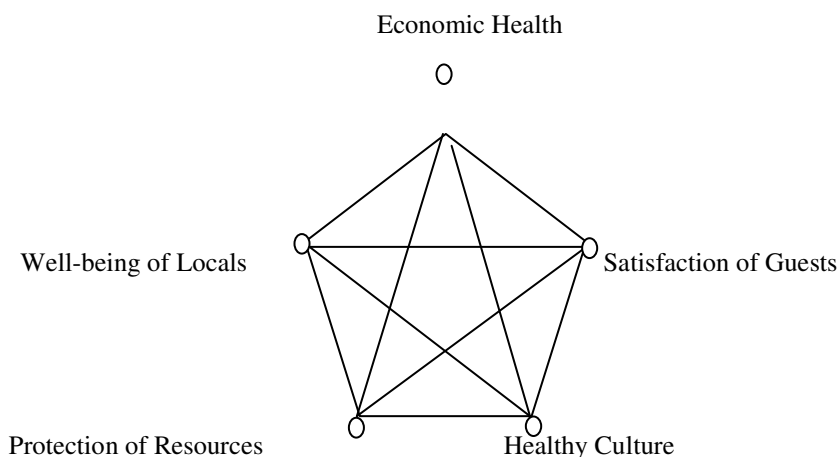
Also firmly convinced that, provided a number of principles and a certain number of rules are observed, responsible and sustainable tourism is by no means incompatible with the growing liberalization of the conditions governing trade in services and under whose aegis the enterprises of this sector operate and that it is possible to reconcile in this sector economy and ecology, environment and development, openness to international trade and protection of social and cultural identities.

Considering that, with such an approach, all the stakeholders in tourism development – national, regional and local administrations, enterprises, business associations, workers in the sector, non-governmental organizations and bodies of all kinds belonging to the tourism industry, as well as host communities, the media and the tourists themselves, have different albeit interdependent responsibilities in the individual and societal development of tourism and that the formulation of their individual rights and duties will contribute to meeting this aim[2].

Today, some new concepts as "sustainable tourism", "tourism morality", "ethics in tourism", "visiting nature", "green tourism", "responsible tourism", "people-oriented tourism" and "parallel tourism have emerged in tourism industry. Emergence and development of the tourism thought which could adapt itself in terms of social affairs with all ecological features of the touristic regions is the outcome of such discussions.

Figure 1 shows the most important traits of touristic products known as the "Magic Pentagon of the tourism development".

Figure 1: The Magic Pentagon of Sustainable Tourism[3]

As shown in the figure 1, based on recent strategies implemented, the desired development is the one that all its affecting and affected factors develop in the same level i.e. this magic pentagon

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seeks to establish the highest balance between tourism and social-ecological features of the touristic regions.

Global Ethics

The international community regularly calls for global action to provide more decent lives for more of earth's inhabitants, while securing the future for everyone. Those common calls to action invoke a set of global moral practices – practices like economic development, public health, human rights regulation, and environmental protection[4].

Most countries rely on their local legal and ethical systems to try to solve global problems. In order to achieve the leadership which is needed, we need to cooperate globally. This cooperation, using respectful dialogue to search for common spirituality, will enable us to go beyond national leadership and achieve global ethics for business. (O'Brien R, 2009).

Organizations whether they want to or not provide a cultural setting within which their individual members work. This setting may or may not be conducive to ethical decision making and ethical actions. In some organizations, people are clearly important and valued; while at the others they seem less valued. The environmental impact of one company's work processes is addressed with attention and a sense of responsibility, while other companies invest in obfuscation and evasion.

What are the requisites for an ethical culture? How can an organization's members incorporate the language of ethics into their day-to-day work? What conversations must be encouraged and what processes utilized to build community within the organization? To address these questions, the Institute embarked this year on a new field of exploration, which we are currently calling *Cultures of Integrity*. The steps taken this year led us to a series of interviews—initially with business leaders—that illustrate and exemplify current practices that encourage and promote sound ethical judgment. Some of these organizations have firmly established their culture and reputation over decades; others are more cutting-edge entrepreneurs. As we deepen our understanding around how *cultures of integrity* are established, grow, and thrive, a bank of new knowledge will accrue to the Institute. Books, conferences, and other marketable products will follow with broad application in both of our key sectors—business and education (Institute for Global Ethics, 2006).

"We live in a time when the products of our private and governmental organizations have become so technologically powerful that they can have almost instantaneous national or global effects. The size of these organizations and the reach of these technologies mean that ethical failures can have worldwide consequences. That's why an understanding of organizational ethics and culture is so crucial now." (Ingbar J, 2004)

Ethics and Tourism

The substantial growth of tourism activity clearly marks tourism as one of the most remarkable economic and social phenomena of the past century. The number of international arrivals shows an evolution from a mere 25 million international arrivals in 1950 to over 700 million in 2002, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 6.6% (World Tourism Organization, 2005). In addition to the numerical growth of tourism, there has been an increasing geographic spread of tourism to encompass almost all the reaches of the globe.

Simultaneously, there has been a diversification of the tourism product from the traditional sun, sea and sand offering to a product that can be potentially more intrusive or more beneficial for those living in the tourism destination.

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[4]   http://www.yale.edu/divinity/adm/syllabus_ethics_dev.pdf

Tourism's expansion has meant the industry now represents the leading source of foreign exchange in at least 38% of countries, and ranks in the top five industries for exports in 83% of countries (WTO, 2005).

However, in addition to the cited economic indicators displaying the dominance of the tourism industry, there has been a commensurate and almost equally well-publicized rise and recognition of the potentially negative impacts of the burgeoning tourism industry (Archer et al., 2005).

Researchers have been critical of the pernicious social and environmental impacts the industry can have from reinforcing western domination over developing countries through the 'host/guest' relationship (Smith and Brent, 2001) to the visual scars on the landscape caused by ski resorts or golf courses (Hudson, 2000). This has led to calls for the industry to exercise greater responsibility and ''professionalism' in order to protect the ''golden goose'' and mirrors the arguments for greater corporate and social responsibility in other industries.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a specific application of the notion of environmental and social auditing to business practice. The technique is strongly promoted by Fair Trade in Tourism (2002) which suggests that the technique of CSR emerged in the late 1990s out of NGO efforts to create a more equitable international trade system. According to Mowforth and Munt (2003) the tourism industry is well behind other industries in terms of CSR, and the absence of ethical leadership in the tourism industry has been 'astounding'[5].

However, in the last few decades, responsible tourism has emerged as a significant trend in the western world, as wider consumer market trends towards lifestyle marketing and ethical consumption have spread to tourism (Goodwin and Francis, 2003).

Tourism organizations are beginning to realize that promoting their ethical stance can be good business as it potentially enhances a company's profits, management effectiveness, public image and employee relations (Fleckenstein and Huebsch, 1999; Hudson and Miller, 2005). Yet, although more attention is now being paid to ethics in tourism (Holden, 2003; Kalisch, 2002) there is a very weak foundation of research into tourism ethics studies to date (Fennell, 1999). The consequence is that the arguments presented for and against CSR in tourism are often simplistic and largely without any practical evidence[6].

Some Principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism Stakeholders and Professionals

(1)   The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism; stakeholders in tourism development and tourists themselves should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples and to recognize their worth;

(2)   Tourism activities should be conducted in harmony with the attributes and traditions of the host regions and countries and in respect for their laws, practices and customs;

(3)   The host communities, on the one hand, and local professionals, on the other, should acquaint themselves with and respect the tourists who visit them and find out about their lifestyles, tastes and expectations; the education and training imparted to professionals contribute to a hospitable welcome;

(4)   It is the task of the public authorities to provide protection for tourists and visitors and their belongings; they must pay particular attention to the safety of foreign tourists owing to the particular vulnerability they may have; they should facilitate the introduction of specific means

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5   http://www.mnmk.ro/documents/2007/2007-20.pdf
6   http://www.mnmk.ro/documents/2007/2007-20.pdf

of information, prevention, security, insurance and assistance consistent with their needs; any attacks, assaults, kidnappings or threats against tourists or workers in the tourism industry, as well as the willful destruction of tourism facilities or of elements of cultural or natural heritage should be severely condemned and punished in accordance with their respective national laws;

(5) When travelling, tourists and visitors should not commit any criminal act or any act considered criminal by the laws of the country visited and abstain from any conduct felt to be offensive or injurious by the local populations, or likely to damage the local environment; they should refrain from all trafficking in illicit drugs, arms, antiques, protected species and products and substances that are dangerous or prohibited by national regulations;

(6) Tourists and visitors have the responsibility to acquaint themselves, even before their departure, with the characteristics of the countries they are preparing to visit; they must be aware of the health and security risks inherent in any travel outside their usual environment and behave in such a way as to minimize those risks;

(7) All the stakeholders in tourism development should safeguard the natural environment with a view to achieving sound, continuous and sustainable economic growth geared to satisfying equitably the needs and aspirations of present and future generations;

(8) All forms of tourism development that are conducive to saving rare and precious resources, in particular water and energy, as well as avoiding so far as possible waste production, should be given priority and encouraged by national, regional and local public authorities;

(9) The staggering in time and space of tourist and visitor flows, particularly those resulting from paid leave and school holidays, and a more even distribution of holidays should be sought so as to reduce the pressure of tourism activity on the environment and enhance its beneficial impact on the tourism industry and the local economy;

(10) Tourism infrastructure should be designed and tourism activities programmed in such a way as to protect the natural heritage composed of ecosystems and biodiversity and to preserve endangered species of wildlife; the stakeholders in tourism development, and especially professionals, should agree to the imposition of limitations or constraints on their activities when these are exercised in particularly sensitive areas: desert, polar or high mountain regions, coastal areas, tropical forests or wetlands, propitious to the creation of nature reserves or protected areas;

(11) Nature tourism and ecotourism are recognized as being particularly conducive to enriching and enhancing the standing of tourism, provided they respect the natural heritage and local populations and are in keeping with the carrying capacity of the sites;

(12) Tourism professionals have an obligation to provide tourists with objective and honest information on their places of destination and on the conditions of travel, hospitality and stays; they should ensure that the contractual clauses proposed to their customers are readily understandable as to the nature, price and quality of the services they commit themselves to providing and the financial compensation payable by them in the event of a unilateral breach of contract on their part;

(13) Tourism professionals, insofar as it depends on them, should show concern, in cooperation with the public authorities, for the security and safety, accident prevention, health protection and food safety of those who seek their services; likewise, they should ensure the existence of suitable systems of insurance and assistance; they should accept the reporting obligations prescribed by national regulations and pay fair compensation in the event of failure to observe their contractual obligations;

(14) Tourism professionals, so far as this depends on them, should contribute to the cultural and spiritual fulfillment of tourists and allow them, during their travels, to practice their religions;

(15) The public authorities of the generating States and the host countries, in cooperation with the professionals concerned and their associations, should ensure that the necessary mechanisms

are in place for the repatriation of tourists in the event of the bankruptcy of the enterprise that organized their travel;

(16) Governments have the right – and the duty - especially in a crisis, to inform their nationals of the difficult circumstances, or even the dangers they may encounter during their travels abroad; it is their responsibility however to issue such information without prejudicing in an unjustified or exaggerated manner the tourism industry of the host countries and the interests of their own operators; the contents of travel advisories should therefore be discussed beforehand with the authorities of the host countries and the professionals concerned; recommendations formulated should be strictly proportionate to the gravity of the situations encountered and confined to the geographical areas where the insecurity has arisen; such advisories should be qualified or cancelled as soon as a return to normality permits;

(17) The press, and particularly the specialized travel press and the other media, including modern means of electronic communication, should issue honest and balanced information on events and situations that could influence the flow of tourists; they should also provide accurate and reliable information to the consumers of tourism services; the new communication and electronic commerce technologies should also be developed and used for this purpose; as is the case for the media, they should not in any way promote sex tourism; [7]

Consumers of Tourism Products (Tourists)

Research on marketing of tourism products in the recent years has showed that consumers of such products tend to pay much more for products in which ethical values are considered.

Based on numerous researches in this field, commitment of tourist agencies to ethical principles has had a significant and positive effect on the marketing of their products.

Holders of Tours

Attention of holders of ensemble tours to ethical issues would definitely affect the increase in the quality and added value of tourism products. Agents of such institutes, especially in marketing field, even for achieving their commercial goals and competing with other institutes can rely on this approach, as the behavioral manner of the responsible agents of such institutes often based on the "work ethics" can lead to higher benefits in their business.

Providing the Natives with Necessary Information about Their Neighborhood to Enhance Their Contribution in Tourism Activities

Of the important affecting factors in the success of tourism in a region is to try to encourage the natives of the region to contribute in tourism activities and this will lead in sustainable development of tourism industry.

It is thus strongly recommended to employ natives of a developing touristic region in the agencies rather than non-natives and inform them with the tourism advantages and potentials and train them to cooperate in such activities.

The Staff of the Tourism Agencies

Tourism is one of the biggest industries in the world which offers the biggest number of employed people in the world. More than just an industry, tourism is a cultural activity able to change the world in which we live in. It's exactly this cultural dynamic which makes tourism interesting and even more

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[7]   http://www.unep.org/bpsp/Tourism/WTO%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf

important. Tourism agencies serve as a connecting bridge between tourism and products of travel which are offered. To have an economy with high standards, the development of tourism must be planned, controlled and "sold" to tourists in the best way possible. Tourism agency is the business which sells travel packages to destinations around the world which are connected to the products and services, especially the airline, hotel, travel company etc. A lot of travel agents have a special department which deals with reservations; meanwhile tourism agencies are specialized for business trips[8].

Productivity and output of tourism agencies has a close relationship with the work quality of the individual workers in tourism industry. Involving non-experienced human resource in these agencies will be a negative factor impeding the development of this industry.

Conclusion

Considering the growth and development of tourism industry in recent years and its positive consequences in developing countries in terms of the increase in currency resource, diminution of unemployment rate, increase in foreign investment and public welfare and income of the residents and finally in terms of the sustainable development of this industry, following the ethical terms made by the WTO seems necessary.

These ethical terms are summarized as follows according to principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism:

(1) The public and private stakeholders in tourism development should cooperate in the implementation of these principles and monitor their effective application;

(2) The stakeholders in tourism development should recognize the role of international institutions, among which the World Tourism Organization ranks first, and nongovernmental organizations with competence in the field of tourism promotion and development, the protection of human rights, the environment or health, with due respect for the general principles of international law;

(3) The same stakeholders should demonstrate their intention to refer any disputes concerning the application or interpretation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism for conciliation to an impartial third body known as the World Committee on Tourism Ethics.

(4) States Members or non-members of WTO, without being obliged to do so, should accept expressly the principles embodied in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and to use them as a basis when establishing their national laws and regulations and to inform accordingly the World Committee on Tourism Ethics.

(5) Tourism enterprises and bodies, whether WTO Affiliate Members or not, and their associations should include the relevant provisions of the Code in their contractual instruments or to make specific reference to them in their own codes of conduct or professional rules and to report on them to the World Committee on Tourism Ethics[9].

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8 http://www.harryfultz.edu.al/college/programbiznes/menaxhimturizm.html
9 http://www.unep.org/bpsp/Tourism/WTO%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf

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[1]   http://www.yale.edu/divinity/adm/syllabus_ethics_dev.pdf

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[6]   http://www.harryfultz.edu.al/college/programbiznes/menaxhimturizm.html

[7]   http://books.google.com/books?id=KeQnmp5qX_8C&pg=PA43&lpg=PA43&dq=The+Magic+Pentagon+of+Tourism+Development&source=bl&ots=FMJI328B3H&sig=ag4odqRJMhF1MBus6Cy-8dqFoI4&hl=en&ei=-z63TNW_Io2N4AaoxpncCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CEAQ6AEwCA#v=onepage&q=The%20Magic%20Pentagon%20of%20Tourism%20Development&f=false.