

CSR4 TOURISM

**NEW BASICS
THAT THE
INDUSTRY
NEEDS**

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2. New basics that the industry needs - CSR

What is sustainable tourism?

In order to understand this research paper, we will have to establish a mutual understanding of the term “sustainable tourism” and what we expect of it. Sustainable tourism is defined formally by the UN

Environment Programme and the UN World Tourism Organisation as,

“Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry and host communities”.

Sustainability in tourism is strongly connected to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, as a call to action to promote global prosperity while protecting the planet. Tourism is recognised as a key sector in the challenge to meet the 17 SDGs. What that means is that sustainable tourism is concerned with all the activities that are conducted by and in the tourism industry. It is about understanding and acknowledging that tourism has both negative and positive impacts on the planet, the natural environment, people and places, and taking the appropriate action to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts.”¹

3. Clear Guidance

The aspect of sustainability in the touristic sector is difficult to work with because there are so many different angles to take into consideration. Sustainability has not been an aspect in the tourist sector for many years, but in the last decade or so the focus on sustainable holidays has grown concurrently with the focus of sustainability in general. The tourist sector has also naturally grown, and went from 200 million tourists in the 1970's to 1.6 billion in 2019. They say that there are three overall themes of sustainable tourism and what consumers can do to make a difference:²

- **Environmental sustainability**

Rethink the mode of travel or goods delivery. Your personal or material carbon footprint can be reduced a lot if you ride your bike to the local market or take the train on holiday instead of flying by aeroplane.

Think about waste management. Pick up a few pieces of garbage every time you go to the beach and remember not to litter - at home or when you're on holiday!

Social and economic sustainability are closely linked and often if you are being economically sustainable, you are also being socially sustainable, perhaps without even thinking about it.

- **Social sustainability**

Think about supporting locally - on markets, restaurants, tourist trips, etc.

Be critical if you for example see a bad working environment at a hotel, or if you are unsure if your tip is going to the right person at the restaurant.

Respect the customs in the country and the way that the locals live. Learn about the culture through experiences such as food, festivals and other cultural events.

- **Economic sustainability**

Find local accommodation instead of staying at big international chain hotels.

Eat locally - this is good for the country's economy and for your carbon footprint, since the commodities are most likely locally sourced and haven't been transported far by train, ship etc.

In general the best advice for tourists when travelling is:

“Leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but photos, kill nothing but time.”

Here's what companies can do within the same three main principles:

- **Environmental sustainability**

Rethink the mode of goods delivery. The carbon footprint can be reduced a lot if you ride your bike to the local market or ask your suppliers to think about how they deliver the goods.

Think about waste management! As a company, it is crucial that you reuse or recycle waste. Think about what goes into the bin and why. Can the kitchen reuse some ingredients from last night's menu instead of throwing them out?

As mentioned earlier, social and economic sustainability are closely linked to each other.

- **Social sustainability**

Consider every aspect of staff and suppliers. Make sure that you employ local people and make use of their unique knowledge and resources. Treat them well and make sure that you pay them a fair wage in comparison to the country's customs and cost of living.

Avoid exploitation of nature and animals in order to attract tourists. Lots of companies use animals for things such as elephant rides, dancing bears and inappropriate handling of wild animals.

- **Economic sustainability**

Try to use as many locally produced products as possible. It is an important part of the country's circular economy.

One out of ten jobs globally are in tourism and tourism contributes 10% of the global GDP, which means that a lot of people are dependent on the source of income that comes from tourism. Giving jobs to the locals

improves the country's economy which also improves the company's long term chances of survival.

There is a figure made by "Acorn Tourism Consulting" that shows the eight elements of a sustainable tourism business that companies should take into consideration when thinking about sustainable tourism. It is a very large topic, that can't be included in this rapport, because the topic is simply too big, however, more information can be found here:

<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/how-be-sustainable-tourism-business> or on <https://acorntourism.co.uk/> where you can find a free e-book on a structured approach to sustainable tourism.



Many tourist companies can benefit from being certified as a sustainable tourism provider. It sends a strong message to the customers that your

company understands the importance of sustainability and that your company does what it can to make sure that the conditions are as good as they can be for the region or country that you operate in. One of the well-known international organisations is the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, better known as GSTC. They manage the global standards for sustainable tourism and act as the international accreditation body for sustainable tourism certification. They are four main themes that they look into if a company wishes to be certified:

1. Effective sustainability planning
2. Maximising social and economic benefits for the local community
3. Enhancing cultural heritage
4. Reducing negative impacts on the environment³

This leads us on to the next topic, eco certificates.



4. Eco certificates

In the last decade we have seen more and more tourist companies showing interest in sustainability and the environment. There has been a demand for tourist specific eco labels and eco certificates - both for the

stake of the companies, but also for the consumer. Eco labels can benefit both parties and environmental friendly holidays are becoming more and more popular as the trend of sustainability is growing rapidly. The eco labels are a crucial part for companies, hotels, tourists attractions etc. for being able to differentiate themselves in a very competitive sector where sustainability hasn't always been the focus.

Globally and in the EU there are tons of different eco certificates and eco labels that make it easier for the consumer to choose environmentally friendly products. For example, in the Nordic countries, there is a very well known ecolabel "The Nordic Swan" which has very strict requirements for products which have The Nordic Swan ecolabel.

Here is a list of a few of the topics The Nordic Swan looks into:

- Sets strict environmental requirements in all relevant phases of a product's life cycle
- Sets strict requirements for chemicals used in eco labelled products
- Tightens requirements for goods and services continuously to create sustainable development
- Certifies and verifies that all requirements are met before a product is approved.⁴

However, The Nordic Swan and many other ecolables are restricted to clothing, food, commodities, detergents and cleaning products, etc.

Therefore, many countries and even local associations have started their own ecolabels for tourism for the benefit of the consumer.

There is a very good example seen in Australia, where the government has taken initiative to make a national ecolabel called “Eco certified tourism” which is an ecolabel made exclusively for tourism - both for tourist companies, but also for the consumers. It was the first of its kind in the world. Now there are over 1,700 certified experiences in Australia.



The following statement is taken from their webpage, which describes the use and purpose of the ecolabel:

“The ECO Certification program certifies tourism products (tours, accommodations, attractions) with a primary focus on nature.

It assures travellers that certified products are backed by a strong, well managed commitment to sustainable practices and provides high-quality nature-based tourism experiences.

The ECO Certification program is a world first and it has been developed to address the need to identify genuine nature and ecotourism operators.

ECO Certification is product-specific— this means that you will need to answer the criteria as it applies specifically to each of your products. This also means that you are able to apply for ECO Certification even if not all of your products are nature-based.

The ECO Certification Program is divided into three levels:

- Nature Tourism
- Ecotourism
- Advanced Ecotourism”⁵

Since then, more and more countries and associations have followed Australia's lead and now there are hundreds of different ecolabels that are specifically made for the touristic sector. In the European Union there is an overall ecolabel called “The EU Ecolabel” or in Danish it has the nickname, “EU Blomsten” which is translated to “The EU Flower”. The EU Ecolabel is not only targeted towards the touristic sector but is an umbrella ecolabel for many different sectors. In order for tourism accommodations to be certified with the EU Ecolabel, they must adhere to 22 specific criteria. These criteria range from the use of environmentally friendly cleaning products, waste management, carbon emissions and so on.⁶



5. Sustainability principles

“The World Economic Forum” (WEF) is an international organisation that creates projects and initiatives that work towards a more sustainable world. The WEF has created a project that has developed ten principles for sustainable destinations, that are aligned with the United Nations SDG’s, that operate as a guide for businesses in the tourism sector. Below you can see the 10 principles that have been produced.



The project aims to guide both businesses, governments, tourists, and residents on how to travel sustainable and become a sustainable attraction.

The WEF state in the paper: “Each principle showcases best-in-class innovations and resources, sharing valuable examples where cities, regions or countries have already adopted practices that preserve the local heritage and natural resources, incentivize responsible behaviours from businesses and travellers, foster equitable local economic development, monitor progress and impact scientifically, and calibrate services and governance practices to ensure the resilience and longevity of the people, places and processes that will preserve these destinations for decades to come.”

The whole paper is available for everyone and can be accessed here:
https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Ten_Principles_for_Sustainable_Destinations_2022.pdf

6. Networking strategies

There are a number of different networking groups where companies can seek good advice, share experiences and achievements with each other. There is great value in having a network where knowledge-sharing is a central part and where participants are able to learn from each other.

There are endless benefits of knowledge sharing and many experts have researched these benefits. Some of them are:

- Collaborate and build collective knowledge
- Find better ways of doing things
- Build a community and learning culture
- Create better customer experiences
- Retain knowledge
- Connect remote employees to knowledge
- The feel-good factor⁷

Specifically in the EU there is a network called “The EDEN Network.” The following quote is found on the official webpage for EU, and describes what the EDEN network actually is:

“The network is a platform for exchanging good practice in sustainable tourism on a European level and for promoting contact between award-winning destinations. The network aims to encourage other destinations to adopt sustainable tourism development models.”⁸

There are also many global networks that focus on sustainable tourism, such as the “Global Ecotourism Network” or the GEN. As the name implies, they are a global organisation that wishes to encourage tourism businesses to a more sustainable and eco-friendly way of life. They state on their webpage:

“We are a global group of ecotourism pioneers and practitioners, who want to share our many years of experience in ecotourism and sustainable tourism practices and also our wide contact network to help others. We love nature, innovation and sustainable design, different cultures, great guides and know how important sustainability is for sharing a livable planet.”⁹

In other words, it is always a good idea to be a part of a networking group where you can share knowledge and experiences. There is much to learn from others, and perhaps it will get you thinking about alternative ways to work towards a sustainable world and tourism sector.

8. References

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