

TMI Conference 2016

Sustainable Tourism Destinations: A Human Resource Perspective

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Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- Considering 'Sustainable'
- A question
- Summary & Conclusion

Introduction – Tourism Employment

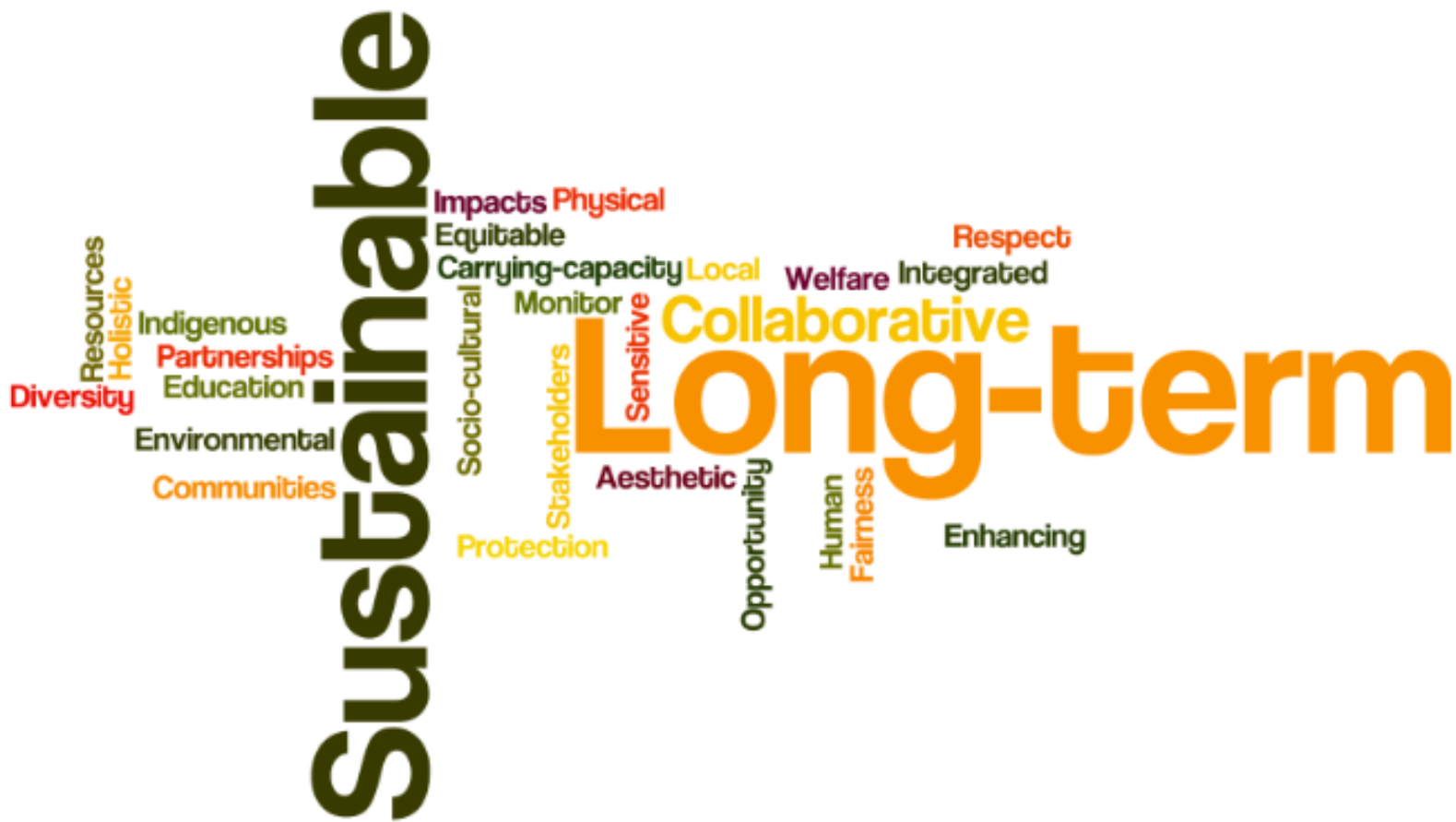
- Employment generation is widely considered to be the most direct and beneficial impact of tourism to the host population
- The global tourism industry directly provides around three percent of global employment, or 251.6 million jobs which is one in every 11 formal sector jobs. International Labor Organisation (2012)
- 2013 People 1st Employer Survey - More than a third of sector businesses (hospitality) expected their workforce to increase in the next 2-5 years

Introduction – People focussed

“The story of successful tourism enterprises is one that is largely about people – how they are recruited, how they are managed, how they are trained and educated, how they are valued and rewarded, and how they are supported through a process of continuous learning and career development” **Failte Ireland (2005:8)**

“The way that people who work in tourism perform their jobs and relate to visitors makes a huge difference to the quality of the visitor experience” **UNWTO (2013)**

Introduction



The tourist destination..... imagine.....

- A destination with everything except no human resources.....

The question

- What are the human resource issues to consider in order to contribute towards a sustainable tourism destination?
- 5 aspects:

1. Holistic Perspective

Opportunities for
all

2. Decent Work

- **The International Labour Organization (ILO)** Founded in 1919 to pursue a vision based on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon ***decent treatment of working people***

“Concern about working conditions and employee welfare must be seen as a fundamental principle of sustainable tourism in its own right.” (UNWTO, 2013)



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Decent Work Agenda (ILO)

- Decent work covers the following dimensions:
- Employment opportunities
- Adequate earnings and productive work
- Decent hours
- Combining work, family and personal life
- Work that should be abolished
- Stability and security of work
- Equal opportunities and treatment in employment
- Safe work environment
- Social security
- Social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation

3. Attracting, retaining & developing people

“The availability of labour with sufficient aptitude and skills is a key requirement of successful tourism businesses”

(UNWTO, 2013)

Problems of attraction..

- Often criticised for:

- Long/unsociable hours
- Low pay
- Low skilled
- Part time
- Seasonal
- Monotonous

- Poor image of the sector

- Stress of customer facing and emotional labour
- Poor work/life balance
- Routine yet unpredictable
- Lack of career prospects

Retaining (or not)

- High labour turnover
 - Appeal to the next generation?
 - Place to learn soft skills?
 - Employee Engagement - attempts to engage staff to improve issues such as retention, productivity and business performance. Benefits for the company and their own well being
 - *Encouraging commitment... “providing opportunities for learning and development and career advancement” (De Grosbois, 2012:902)*

Developing people...education & training

- Respond to the needs of the labour market
- Provide a range of education/training institutions and opportunities
- Recognising the need and importance of continuous training/Executive development programmes
- Value of work based learning
- Work with educational providers

4. Employee Wellbeing

- In the UK, the public health national agenda is concerned with prioritising wellbeing within a work environment. The policy agenda has been supported by extensive research showing that promoting health and wellbeing in the workplace improves the working environment and is beneficial for employers and employees alike

(Kuhn & Van der Auwera 2013, Department of Work and Pensions 2012, Black 2008).



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Employees are likely to have worse health if:

- Employment is insecure
- Work is monotonous and repetitive no development opportunities are offered
- Workers have little or no autonomy, control and task discretion
- There are few supportive social networks
- There is an absence of procedural justice i.e. workers cannot be confident that they will be treated fairly
- There is an imbalance between effort and reward so that workers feel exploited (this is wider than just the pay packet)

These negative factors will then impact on the quality of service offered by staff.....

Workplace wellbeing – benefits

- Reduced sickness absence
- Reduced staff turnover
- Reduced accidents and injuries
- Reduced spending on
all the above
- A higher company profile
- Increased employee satisfaction
- **Higher productivity.....**

What can organisations/employers do?

Focus on:

- Organisational factors, **culture, leadership and communication** (where the evidence tells us the majority of the influence on employee wellbeing lies)
- Environmental aspect: the physical factors at and nearby the workplace that help protect and enhance employee health and safety
- Health-related policies: including health benefits, formal or informal written statements, or packages that are designed to protect or promote employee health

5. Focus on the unique

Unique or all the same?

- Destination uniqueness and image – who is the ‘face’ of tourism?

To summarise...

A human resource perspective on a sustainable destination encourages us to.....

first consider human resources from a holistic perspective (include all), **second** be mindful of policy and guidelines that facilitate the decent treatment of people at work. **Third** to be sustainable, destinations have to consider how to attract, retain and develop the human resource capacity, and **fourth** to take care of those employees by considering wellbeing at work. This helps to facilitate attraction and retention, and profitability.

Finally, sustainable tourism destinations might consider what is unique about their people – and can this be turned into something that can give competitive advantage in an increasingly uniform globalised world?.....

- People (human resources) are an integral part of the tourism offering
- Human resources should be an integral to policy and tourism destination development plan
- Destinations need to understand their labour markets



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