

exclusively would threaten the few undisturbed places left in the world, so a better solution is to develop mass tourism according to the triple bottom line of sustainability, and allow for ecotourism and other forms of alternative tourism as a supplement.⁴⁸

One area of opportunity within sustainable tourism is “lifestyle entrepreneurship.” Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with fewer than 250 employees make up a considerable portion of the economic production and employment within the tourism industry. SMEs tend to be deeply rooted to the local landscape and culture and their size enables them to make deeper connections with their guests. Tour companies, outdoor recreation guides, bed and breakfasts, and food trucks are all examples of tourism business that could be operated successfully as an SME. Some owners of these SMEs are considered lifestyle entrepreneurs because of a conscious choice to build and maintain a small and flexible business so that they can pursue a satisfying lifestyle rather than profit optimization.⁴⁹

Now, think back to Chapter 1 and our discussion of the many different definitions and approaches that have been taken to describe the tourism industry. Do you remember how difficult it has been for industry participants to agree on a singular focus? It seems to be just as difficult to describe sustainable tourism. Yet, as difficult as it may be to define, sustainability is critical to the industry as “tourism contains the seeds of its own destruction; tourism can kill tourism, destroying the very environmental attractions which visitors come to a location to experience” (p. 27).⁵⁰ At its root, “sustainable tourism” is an oxymoron because tourism inevitably will have negative impacts on the destination and “true” sustainable tourism development is unachievable.⁵¹ However, if we assume that people will continue to want to travel, the philosophy of sustainability will help minimize the negative impacts and maximize the ability of future generations to see the world.

Summary

The tourism industry has exploded in recent decades as the number of travelers continues to grow. Quicker, cheaper, and safer transportation to almost every corner of the globe and an increase in the number of people who now have the leisure time and money to travel have made this possible. Many of the gains that have been realized from this increased level of travel have been economic, but there have often been costs to the environment and the people in visited areas. In response to these impacts, many initiatives based on the concepts of sustainable tourism can be taken and have been taken.

The seed of ecotourism was planted with the environmental movement and continues to explode. The term *ecotourism* was originally used to label a form or philosophy of tourism that emphasized the need to develop tourism in a manner that minimizes environmental impact and ensures that host communities gain the greatest economic and cultural benefits possible.

Now, ecotourism involves travel to sensitive natural and cultural environments to observe and learn about very different cultures and environments and participate in low-impact sporting activities.

On a broader scale, members of the tourism industry are attempting to ensure the long-term survival and prosperity of travel-related activities by embracing sustainable practices. As the use of terms such as *ecotourism* and *sustainability* has grown in popularity, many industry groups have begun to establish guidelines and standards to define and set apart these terms. There seems to be a great deal of confusion about the definitions and usage of both of these terms, as well as of other related terms that have found their way into the tourism vocabulary. It seems as though everyone finds marketing appeal in describing its service offerings as green, sustainable, or ecologically friendly. However, creating ecologically friendly or sustainable operations is more than just words; it requires actions and commitments.

You Decide

The chief executive officer of Xanadeaux Hotels and Resorts had been studying the marketing and economic benefits of adopting sustainable practices and decided it was time to act. Failure to adopt sustainable practices at the company’s properties would not only put it at a competitive disadvantage; it

would also result in lost profits. Therefore, to begin this process, he asked the director of marketing to survey the sustainability actions the company was currently taking and then develop a marketing plan that could be used to highlight the company’s best practices and leadership in these efforts.