



Escape2

Module 7 Environmental Sustainability

5 Reasons Implementation is Important for European Tourism SMEs

Extra Bonus Content

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5 Reasons Environmentally Sustainable Development is Important for European Rural Tourism SMEs

'Take only memories, leave only footprints'

Chief Seattle

European Tourism SMEs Need to Be Environmentally Sustainable

The negative environmental impacts of tourism from visitors, communities, and businesses is already substantial. They deplete local natural resources as well as cause significant pollution and waste problems.

The tourism industry and businesses are already putting growing pressure on natural resources through over-consumption, stress on local land use leading to soil erosion, increased pollution, natural habitat loss and endangered species.

Additionally, this often happens in places where resources are already scarce. These negative impact effects can gradually destroy the environmental resources on which tourism depends therefore destroying the industry.

Consider Why Environmentally Sustainable Tourism Is Important

Starting the Main Reasons People Travel?

Travellers essentially want to taste, see and do something different so they can truly escape and immerse from their stressful, chaotic lives. Their main reasons for travel are often directly related to the rural location, nature, culture and heritage unique to their chosen destination. They want to;

- ❖ **Learn about modern and ancient history**, diving into the stories that helped shape civilisations and the rural environments
- ❖ **Wander through impeccable natural and ancient landscapes** that can't be seen anywhere else. Be constantly inspired by getting up close and personal with nature and wildlife that is the beauty of this world
- ❖ **Interact with foreign cultures** so they can widen their horizons to understand the diverse nature of humanity and the different environments they inhabit, foods they eat, their customs, how they live their lives, their dances and entertainment...

Whatever the reasons, whether is a combination of all of the above, or purely for the sake of rest and recuperation in gorgeous environments, travelling is one of the greatest experiences people can ever have!

Reason 1

The Environment is the Very Thing the Tourism Industry Relies On!



About a fifth of the global tourism and travel industry, worth around a trillion euros a year, depends heavily on outdoor natural environments. Many tourist activities need natural environments such as beaches, national parks, snow capped mountains for skiing, marinas for boating, lakes and rivers for water sports, country side and forest trails for cycling...and more. ([Annual Reviews](#))

Reason 1

The Environment is the Very Thing the Tourism Industry Relies On!



Sustainable tourism is the concept of visiting somewhere as a tourist and trying to make a positive impact on the environment, society, and economy.

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- There are over 1.4 billion tourists arriving at their destination every year. That's 45 arrivals every single second (United Nations)
- Tourism Often Leads to Overuse of Water
- An average golf course in a tropical country, for example, uses as much water as 60,000 rural villagers. It also uses 1500 kilos of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides per year.

Reason 1

Unmanaged Environmental Tourism is Already Causing Major Tourism Challenges

If environmentally sustainable measures aren't implemented soon the future expected rapid growth and high demand for rural, nature based, cultural and heritage tourism will lead to major tourism challenges to businesses, destinations, visitors and communities. If environmental sustainability is implemented soon and correctly it can help the already existing and future negative impacts such as overcrowding, destroyed natural environments, unmanageable waste and pollution, visitation decline, damaged infrastructure, bad reputation and ultimate less tourism demand, economic downturn, increased crime, and decreased wellbeing.



Reason 1

Unmanaged Tourism Causes Over-Consumption and Damages Resources

Tourism often puts pressure on these natural resources through over-consumption and often in places where resources are already scarce. These negative environmental impacts of tourism can be substantial. They not only deplete local natural resources, natural habitat and puts pressure on endangered species it can also can cause congestion, land erosion, antisocial behaviours, pollution and waste problems. These effects can gradually destroy the environmental resources on which tourism SMEs themselves depend on. Here are some statistics on how tourism is currently impacting its industry and natural resources



Reason 2

Tourists are Increasingly Environmentally Savvy Seeking Green Holiday Options



Environmentally sustainable tourism has been popular for years but has recently become an expectation in tourist decision making. Tourists are environmentally savvy seeking out green holidays not only because of the benefits to the environment and businesses that make a proactive effort to address critical issues such as carbon emissions, biodiversity conservation, waste management, and water supply.

A **2005 survey** by the United Kingdom's Devon County Council found that **54 percent of respondents consider environmental issues when booking a trip** and **82 percent are willing to pay more for green services and products**. As a bonus, some 72 percent of respondents think a green business is more likely to be quality conscious.

Reason 2

Tourists Habits Have Changed Considerably as Consumers

Accenture Survey stated that **'More than half of consumers said they would pay more for sustainable products designed to be reused or recycled'**

They also found that while consumers remain primarily focused on quality and price, **83% believe** it's important or extremely important for companies to **design products that are meant to be reused or recycled.**

Nearly **three-quarters (72%)** of respondents said they're currently **buying more environmentally friendly** products than they were five years ago, and 81% said they expect to buy more over the next five years.



Reason 3

It's a Win-Win for Everyone!



Environmental sustainability benefits the tourism business, the visitors, its environment, its local community, Europe and the world. It's a Win-Win For All! It is important to remember that not only visitors, communities gain but businesses can gain huge benefits pursuing environmentally sustainable tourism objectives. Businesses are not only protecting the very resource they rely on by minimising, managing, protecting and conserving they are protecting it for future generations. To remain competitive and sustainable tourism providers and destinations must look at how their actions affect the people involved. This creates a win-win for everyone benefiting guests and locals

Reason 3

Everyone Benefits, Even The Environment

- **Local communities** will grow, prosper and live in a positive way thus stimulating social, economic and environmental economies
- **Livelihood improves.** It helps to protect the environment where people visit, live, work and play. People are better off all round gaining the benefits of nature and the outdoors – the physical and mental health for both locals and visitors – reducing stress, weight management and increased wellbeing
- **Connects everyone better** to how they communicate, share and interact creating a deeper understanding of each other and their visitors
- **Visitors** understand and respect and want to leave the places they visit in a better position than when they arrived
- **Environment and wildlife is valued.** Managing and conserving the environment, wildlife culture and heritage is a key component for its attractiveness because it creates a positive effect on the real value of our environments and destinations

Reason 3

When You Show Value for Your Environment it Attracts the Right Kind of Tourist

Valuing, conserving and protecting your local tourism environment can sustain fragile areas, regenerate rural areas, diversify businesses and create unique cultural experiences for visitors. These experiences usually attract environmentally conscious tourists who respect and appreciate the rural, local, natural and cultural heritage.

They seek these places in search for high quality unspoiled scenery, peace, quiet and learning. Simple measure can be put in place e.g.,

- Use electric bikes instead of cars can make stunning places now accessible to all levels of fitness
- Farm Stays are becoming more and more popular for farms diversifying . They attract visitors who want to experience authentic cultural and heritage experiences. They want to stay an authentic local farm and home, eat the homemade food at the kitchen table, visit the farm animals and learn how to milk a cow, take a pottery lesson from the local craft person. (see Case Studies)

Educating Tourists and Communities Contribute to Green and Economic Health



Education Preserves and Protects Rural, Environmental, Culture and Heritage Resources. Educating tourists and locals gives them a better understanding and appreciation of their impacts and shows them how they can improve their personal attitude, reduce environmental impacts and actually enhance your offering. They can help ensure your environment is unspoilt, untouched and maintained. Don't forget to communicate their contribution also helps the economic health of the destination by helping to create, maintain and keep locals employed. Locals in the community become educated and are happier, therefore want to stay and conserve local customs, traditions and culture.



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Sustainable tourism is defined as “... a positive approach intended to reduce tensions and frictions created by complex interactions between the tourism industry, tourists, the natural environment and local communities that host tourists”.

(Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 1993).

Reason 4

Tourism SME Competitiveness Depends on Sustainability



The quality of the environment, both natural and man-made, is essential to tourism SMEs across Europe. However, tourism's relationship with the environment is complex and many activities can have adverse environmental effects if careful tourism planning and management is not undertaken.



UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) recognise that competitiveness is based on high quality unique experiences. The goal is to promote sustainable development based on heritage values and create added tourist value for the sites. [UNESCO](#)

Smart energy management is at the heart of any sustainable business model. An investment in energy efficiency – however small – will help drive increased competitiveness and build resilience to the headwinds of market uncertainty and energy price volatility. In the process, a reduced environmental footprint will appeal to an increasingly environmentally conscious consumer. [Sven Spollen-Behrens, SFA Director](#)

Reason 4

Tourism SME Competitiveness Depends on Sustainability

Nature based tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors and many public lands and protected areas have become important tourist destinations that need to be protected to remain sustainable

Natural, cultural, heritage and nature based activities are becoming more popular. They typically reside and depend on natural destinations.

Collectively, protected areas receive 8 billion visits annually, resulting in \$600 billion in visitor spending (UNEP)

Rural, cultural and heritage tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing global tourism markets. Rural characteristics, culture and creative industries are increasingly being used to promote destinations and enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness.

(The Impact of Culture on Tourism OECD)

Reason 5

It is a Good Business Investment.
It Saves Money.



It Saves You Money Long Term and You Become More Efficient in Your Operations!

Becoming environmentally friendly will not only benefit the very resource you rely on, it can save you money in the long run and gain you a new target market (the green conscious traveller). Using environmentally friendly practices and a Leaner Approach such as avoiding, reducing, reusing, recycling and sourcing locally can lower your costs. Here are a few simple changes you can be cost effective, environmentally friendly and save money:

Reason 5

Being Environmentally Friendly Can Save Money

- 1. Avoid using materials and resources unnecessarily.** Incorporate a Lean Approach by including lighting sensors, tap water that automatically turns off, automated toilet flushing and start composting natural waste. **Don't leave appliances on standby – they'll still be using up to 85% of running energy**
- 2. Get staff and guests** involved (e.g., reduce your paper needs by asking staff to print double-sided and they can use scrap paper for message taking instead of purchasing message pads. Provide guest with digital links and provide info via screen information displays instead of printing leaflets). LEDs can save hundreds or even thousands of euros (and a lot of energy) over the lifespan of these bulbs—which can be as long as 10 years!
- 3. Reduce your usage on natural resources** such as water by investing in rainwater tanks, solar hot water systems
- 4. Use products that are second hand or made from recycled material** (e.g. furniture made from recycled plastic, recycled paper)

5. **Source local produce and products from local businesses.** When it comes to food, not only do your visitors get try some new and different, consider the economic gain and employment for your destination of short supply chains. Importing food can be a huge cost and often sourced locally it tastes better and fresher. Your guests are willing to pay extra for something that is locally authentic. You will also save the environment on unnecessary emissions.
6. Look at your **business infrastructure and activities** to see if you can do anything differently (e.g. assess if your insulation is keeping heat/cool air in, you are using public transport as much as possible, you are using LED lights, your windows are well sealed)

Sustainability isn't just about the environment, it is about doing business better. The benefits are clear: saving money, reducing business risk, increasing profitability and accessing an increasing market of customers who have an interest in authentic experiences. It's also not something you should be shy about communicating. Your achievements add another string to your bow and can set you apart from your competitors. (Visit Britain)



Benefits of Sustainable Tourism .
Saving Money Being Sustainable
40 Ways to Save Money Going Green

Conclusions



Rural, nature based, culture and heritage tourism **SMEs are in a great position to become champions of sustainable growth in Europe.**

It is in **tourism businesses best interests** to protect implement environmentally sustainable business practices so they can protect the resource they rely on and prevent future challenges e.g. climate change, water scarcity, societal problems, rising temperatures, depleted natural resources, extinct habitats etc.

The more tourism stakeholders embrace implement necessary environmental sustainable activities and approaches the **more savings and opportunities will be presented** e.g., reap the benefits of a competitive, environmental friendly industry and attract the environmentally conscious traveller



Businesses should aim to achieve an appropriate pace and rhythm of development. Make sure to **start with 'low hanging fruit'** and what will be cost efficient and benefit their businesses.

Plan for the long term. Appoint someone responsible implementing green practices so that long term planning can take place and you can implement and sustain actions over time. Come up with a long term 2 and 5 year Action List to guide and support your business.

Undertake **continuous monitoring** for future improvements e.g., gather complaints, surveys, enquiries etc. so you can understand existing and potential impacts and can implement the necessary changes and improvements when necessary

Finally, in order to achieve successful progress **communicate and involve locals, visitors, stakeholders, communities and tourists** so they can also contribute and play their role.



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**Module 7 Complete
Well Done!**

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*Digitalisation and Being
Commercially Available Online*



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