

Ecotourism Societies and Ecotourism Banding: Prospects and Challenges

Presented by

Judith A Kepher-Gona

Ecotourism Kenya

E-mail: judy@ecotourismkenya.org

At the

Global Ecotourism Conference 2007

May 14-16, Holmenkollen Park Hotel Rica, Oslo Norway

Key Questions

- Is there a link between ecotourism societies and ecotourism branding?
 - What is the link?
 - Is the link effective?
 - What more can be done?
-

Some common activities/characteristics of ecotourism societies

- Membership based organizations
 - Certification & Standards
 - Education
 - Training/ capacity building
 - Promotion / Marketing products/services/activities
 - Lobbying
 - Research
-

Objectives of Ecotourism Societies

- To educate and influence industry to change how they do business-become responsible.
 - To educate and influence travelers to be responsible.
 - To educate policy makers on the importance of responsible/sustainable tourism.
 - Support and encourage indigenous/local community to venture into tourism
 - Create awareness on products and services related to ecotourism
-

Strategies for achieving objectives

- Develop programs/tools that will support tourism industry to change practices towards sustainable practices e.g certification, guidelines, codes of conduct, standards.
 - Promote alternative products/services
 - Lobbying & Advocacy
 - Networking
 - Research
 - Education
-

Ecotourism Branding-Do we have a brand?

- Our members and a growing number of travelers already have a perception of what ecotourism means- we just need to communicate more effectively. Why
- We are in a crowded market place.
- Our points of difference from other forms of tourism are clear yet thin!
- We are in a fast moving sector and we need to assure consumers.

Brand Values

- Conserving the environment-low impact.
- Respects local/indigenous cultures
- Promotes equity
- Experience vs leisure
- Promotes global peace
- Interactive
- Philanthropic



Brand Values- Continued

- Unparalleled service
- Personal attention given to clients.
- Close interaction with nature and local people
- Flexible programs- many alternatives
- Sustainable practices



Challenges of Branding Ecotourism

- Criteria- what are we offering our clientele
- Varied clientele
- Who is leading the process-championing the brand



Challenges Cont.

- Inconsistent brand values.
- Building the team
- Evolving demand



Is this an ecotourism product?



Opportunities/Prospects for creating the Brand

- TIES
 - Growing number of ecotourism societies
 - Growing number of responsible businesses and travelers.
 - Numerous certification schemes
 - Increased media interest in ecotourism
 - UN- WTO
-

Way Forward

- Re-engineering of TIES to champion the brand.
 - Targeted media campaign.
 - Equip societies to promote ecotourism at national and regional levels.
 - Basic global criteria for ecotourism
 - Participate in key tourism fairs under an ecotourism banner.
-

ASANTE SANA



www.ecotourismkenya.org