

Tour operators and their responsibility for tourism tourism essay



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Introduction:

Overseas travel has always held an element of risk. Risk represents a source of potential harm to an operator or a destination/community. The types of risk include financial, health, physical, crime, terrorism, social, psychological, and natural disaster. The terrorist attacks in the United States of America on 11 September 2001 changed forever our views of traveller safety and security (“Wilks J & Stephen J page 2003”).

This essay will critically discuss wherever the tourism industry should be the one that is responsible for the tourists' wellbeing or is it down to the tourist itself to ensure the safety on their holiday.

Tour Operators and their Responsibility:

A tourism industry may identify a potential risk based on experience and get prepared for it. Once the tourism risk has been identified and dealt with the chance of something undesirable occurring, the negative impact could be minimized (“Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann 2006”). Therefor most of the time tourism industry and tourist they are taking responsibility for risk management. Risk could be materializing despite the best efforts to prevent it from happening. A number of tourist industry organisations have focused their attention on tourist health and safety issues, especially the responsibilities of their members. It is important to keep in mind that tourism is world largest industry (world tourism organization 2002) and that health and safety issues are only on the industry agenda because of the current economic and business environment. Tourist health and safety is now a global theme associated with tourist travel as a wide range of threats, risk

and potential hazards affect travellers. The terrorist attack in the United States of America on 11 September 2001 has changed forever views of traveller safety and security. The role of threat of terrorism is now one of the top ten most important world tourism issues for both travellers and the tourism sector (Wicks and Page, 2003). It is travel operator responsibility to ensure the health and safety for the tourists because tour operators are well known with the place of destination where the tourists are unknown and unfamiliar with the place and the custom of the host destinations. Although the travel agent may be the most commonly consulted advice source (Cossar et al. 1990), there is concern about the availability and quality of that advice (Reid et al. 1986). It is no longer possible to see the tourist as a passive consumer. So it is the responsibilities to the tour operators to protect and take care of the tourist to ensure their goodwill and to continue their business for the long periods. The peace condition of the world can change at any time in this world. In any international crisis either it is man made (Libya) or natural disaster (Tsunami in Japan), it is tour operator who can help to guide the tourists in a safe place. There are lots of arguments and tour operators always hesitate that who are responsible for tourists in that situation. Is it tour operators or the host destination need to come forward to help the tourist?

Best practice strategies call for an acceptance that things may go wrong; that customers are sometimes injured; that in contact low promise about a holiday must be kept; and that regular staff training and operations monitoring are a necessary component of modern business. In the United Kingdom, recent research by the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)

estimated that around 5% of the 20 million annual package holiday taken overseas had customers who were fairly or very dissatisfied. Health, safety and security issues certainly feature as one element in the tourist dissatisfaction equation (Anonymous 2001).

Risk and host destination

(Walker and Page 2003) discussed issues, identifying a wide range of agencies and bodies who interact with tourists and who collectively have a responsibility for the tourist. (Lecture sheet) Before visiting the destination place, it is responsibility of tour operator to explain the visitor about the destination. The most cases traveller reported that they having most common disease problem such as diarrhoea and vomiting, alimentary, respiratory, accident and injuries problem. A dissatisfied visitor is the worst publicity for a destination or product as word of mouth dissemination of the experience can damage the credibility and image of the product and destination. In most cases traveller should be protected from the consequences of their own action. Travellers now have access to a vast knowledge base about travel issues and therefore they have fewer excuses for being uninformed or unprepared for travel. It is important travellers are advised about the vacations appropriate to their destination, it should be emphasised that immunisation and medication can, at best, only protect against about 5% of the health hazards to which travellers are exposed. (Cossar J 2003)

Tourists' perspectives:

Most travel health and safety problems occur at the level of individual travellers. The tourist health and safety is slowly changing as public liability insurance becomes more difficult to obtain and insurers are requiring operators to minimise their exposure to claims by adopting best practice risk management strategies (liability insurance Taskforce 2002). Insurance companies are becoming stricter and they are not covering all moves nowadays as a result of more claiming of consumers. Still a good cover of insurance and taking vaccination appropriate to the destination is a recommendation for the tourists. Tourists may involve in risk taking activities whilst they are on travel like binge drinking, unsafe sex contact, drug handling. Tourist road accidents (RTAs) in the destination are a common non-fatal but serious health and safety issue, after more personal health issues that can be avoided by careful precautions on the food and water which is consumed, often following advice: don't eat or drink it, if it has not been boiled, cooked or washed. In most cases tourists are unfamiliar with local road conditions and also they drive too fast. It is the tourist's responsibility to be aware about the place before they depart. Appropriate and deep knowledge about the place and risk, tourists can protect themselves from any unwanted happenings. On the other hand, laws are always tried to help any kind of consumers. If any accidents happen nobody wants to take responsibilities, neither tour operators nor the travel agents or host destinations. EU legislation protects consumers in that situation. They find out who is the responsible for that happens. Consumers are not litigious as Americans, but moving that way will help the tour operators and related organisations to be more careful about customers. Tourism behaviour, appropriate way,

respects the culture, environment, and most important things is to prevent accidents

Providing guidelines for tourist (private and governmental companies such as Lonely Planet, guide book), tourism boards, Ministry of Tourism etc. however it is the tourist responsibility to learn about the country he/she wants to visit, gain knowledge about what is the risk, to be aware of the risk. Although many people do think about the risk, they enjoy themselves and often put themselves in the risk situations because they do not think.

Adventure tourism

Deliberate seeking of risks and the uncertainty of the future is defined as a risk by Ewert (1998) (As cited by Ryan 2003). Tour operators are liable for the safety pursuant to contract, tort, workplace health and safety (Atherton, 2003). Unfamiliar adventure activities, such as scuba diving, account for a significant number of tourist hospital admissions each year (Wilks & Coory 2000; 2002), while pre-existing illness continues to be the main cause of fatalities (Wilks, Pendergast & Wood 2002). It is the tour operator who needs to employ reputable third parties to make ensure the safety regarding the instruments securities. They should make confirm that the tourists have good covers of insurance before they take part in adventure tourism. Tour operators take regular basis activities with the place of adventure travel so they have superior knowledge about that place. Fully advice and robust information can help tour operators to help tourist to stay out of dangers.

Conclusion:

In a brief discussion, it is discussed that the tour operators and the tourists itself are responsible for the risk associated with any kind of tour. While operators have a duty to warn customers of the things unexpected still it is individual travellers' duty to take responsibility to protect him from unwanted dangers and keep his action in some extent (Wilks and Page, 2003).