

The great barrier reef area tourism essay



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Based on the definition above, the Great Barrier Reef tourism industry is composed of a network of stakeholders, which include tourism businesses, nongovernmental organisations and government agencies who all work together to attract tourists to the area and to expand the industry. Most of the stakeholders are interconnected and they play an important role to achieve sustainability within the industry.

The table below lists the tourism industry stakeholders and their contribution in managing tourism sustainably.

Even though most of the stakeholders are aware of the issues of sustainability, not all of them bring a contribution to make tourism more sustainable.

? Stakeholder description and participation

½ The National Government, State Government and Local Government have a major role in setting policies, they are legally responsible and they provide funding. They not only influence the decisions but they have the major power in decision-making.

Environmental sustainable

The government agencies are responsible for producing and enforcing laws and policies.

Socio-cultural sustainable

Some of the policies set by the government force the other stakeholders to interact with the local community in order to make them benefit from the tourism industry.

Economic sustainable

The government invests in tourism development and expands the employment opportunities within the local economy.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is the body that manages the protection and development within the Park. If the other governmental bodies have only few departments dedicated to ensure protection of the Great Barrier Reef, GBRMPA is the main body that focuses all its activity to ensure that everything within the marine park is managed sustainably. There is a strong connection between all the government departments and GBRMPA in order to develop the tourism industry and to ensure that it is managed sustainably.

Environmental sustainable

Through this, GBRMPA's goal to provide protection, wise use, understanding and enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef is achieved.

Socio-cultural sustainable

GBRMPA is the stakeholder that links to all the other stakeholders, which collaborates not only with the other government bodies but also with the community, aboriginal people and tourism entrepreneurs.

For GBRMPA, community participation in decision-making is important.

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Economic sustainable

GBRMPA ensures that a tax is perceived for both: realising permits and entering the reef

½ Aboriginal people can be defined as a pressure group that has tourism as a marginal interest. According to the table aboriginal people are not economically or environmental sustainable, their main interest is only to protect their culture and not to support or take part of the tourism industry. Their relationship with other stakeholders has been characterised through time by a lack of trust and communication.

Later on, the report will highlight the lack of will of communication and explore some of the conflicts raised between the aborigines and the other stakeholders.

Environmental & socio-cultural sustainable

½ The Community organisations represent a key influence due to their interaction with tourists; they participate by advising the governmental organisations regarding sustainability issues but they do not have power in decision-making.

½ The tourism entrepreneurs are the direct beneficiaries of the tourism industry. They have a strong relationship with the governmental bodies but they do not cooperate with the community group and the aboriginal people. As the table shows, they are sustainable only economically and environmentally. The next chapter will explain why they are not social-

cultural sustainable and it will illustrate some of the issues raised between tourism operators and aborigines.

½ The tourists are not involved in decision-making but they have influence as they are the consumers and they can refuse the product. They are neither environmental nor social cultural sustainable but they bring hard currency to the country.

5. STRATEGY MATRIX

As it is shown in the matrix below, the stakeholders have a different impact on The Great Barrier Reef . Institutions such as: National Government, State Government, Local Government and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority have a low impact upon the reef while their potential in decision-making is high. On the other hand, the aborigines, community, tourism entrepreneurs and tourists have a significant influence upon the reef but they do not have any potential in decision-making.

6. Conflicts between Aboriginal people and other stakeholders

Even though there is strong evidence to support the partnership with the aboriginal community, there are still issues that are not solved and they are difficult to deal with. There are problems regarding the hunting and fishing, the protection of the aboriginal culture and the lack of will of communication between the aboriginal community and the other stakeholders.

There are places where efforts are made to build relationships between aborigines and other tourism stakeholders. For example, The Marine Park Authority collaborates with the aborigines by allowing hunting and fishing in

all areas of the Cairns Section except the Preservation Zones in order to help them conserve their culture. Still, not all the aboriginal people comply with the rules, therefore, there are conflicts raised between them and tourism operators.

For instance, reef tourism operators are in conflict with the aboriginals from Green Island hunting green turtles in front of the tourists in daytime. Furthermore, aborigines are selling the turtle's meat illegally to tourists at high prices. A possible solution to minimise this conflict would be by providing education to aborigines regarding the importance of conservation of species. Tourism operators should also come to an agreement to let aborigines hunt after a certain hour when visitors leave the island.

Another issue influencing the relationship between stakeholders is the state government initiative to promote aboriginal tourism that is seen offensive rather than beneficial by aborigines that are still traditional. The reason why most traditional aborigines do not agree to take part in the tourism industry is their belief that their customs are in danger as long as they are followed for commercial purposes. The continuous growth of demand of tourists to interact with the aboriginal culture pushed the tour operators to exploit and to misrepresent the aboriginal spirituality. Moreover, some Aboriginal enterprises try to integrate traditional Aboriginal principles for marketing purposes.

For instance, it is certainly believed that only aboriginal men can play the didgeridoo, however, it has been found through an informal survey that

some Aboriginal art galleries in Queensland allow tourist females to take part of this custom, which is totally against the aboriginal culture.

There are places where aborigines agreed to take part of the tourism industry just in special occasions such as the Queensland Centenary of Parks celebration day. Apart from this day, the aborigines do not agree to sell their dance for tourism purposes. Tour operators should come to an agreement with the aborigines and should assure the tribes that they will not allow any misrepresentation or exploitation of their culture.

7. Conclusions

To sum up, this report briefly outlines the importance and the impact of the stakeholders upon The Great Barrier Reef. This report also highlights the main issues that make some of the sustainability factors unachievable for some of the stakeholders.

One of the improvements that should be made refers to the relationship between aborigines and the other stakeholders, which would be more sustainable if the aboriginal community would benefit from an assurance that their culture will not be invaded and they will receive support in order to preserve it. Another step in building a healthy relationship between aborigines and the government is to initiate an educational program where aboriginal people would be helped to understand the benefits brought by the tourism industry and not only the negative part of it.