ECOTOURISM IN SUSTAINABILITY OF A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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SUMMARY

Ecotourism as a type of tourism is becoming more and more widespread as greater and greater numbers of tourists seek this type of experience. Ecotourism is capable of generating large financial returns from both local and regional economies while at the same time stimulating both public and governmental commitment to the protection of environment. Environmentalists are both troubled and enthusiastic by the development of this type of tourism. Their concern is that the increase of ecotourism will actually destroy the qualities of experience that draw tourists in the first place. Because of this, this type of tourism requires a very delicate balance, it combines pleasure of discovering and experiencing untouched natural places, while at the same time is insuring that they remain that way. It is an approach that creates a variety of quality tourism products that are: environmentally/ecologically sustainable, economically viable, socially and psychologically acceptable. The result of these reflects: an integrated and holistic approach to product development, capacity building in host communities, a sense and uniqueness of place, commitment to the greening of the tourism industry. A final general principle to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism development on the part of destination areas, but perhaps the most vital, is to increase truly local involvement. It is essential that local communities are involved directly with ecotourism development. This involvement not only be in form of hand–outs or dole, or even the prevision of school, hospitals and social services financed from tourism revenues. If the traditionally means of economic livelihood is being removed from a community it must be replaced by an alternative. There are some sound reasons for local involvement other than a moral obligation to incorporate the people whom the project affect, in terms of conservation the natural and socio-cultural resource base, the time perspective of the local population is longer than of outside entrepreneurs concerned with early profits. They are also more likely to ensure that traditions and lifestyles will be respected. Such an involvement must also extent beyond economies survival, environmental conservation and socio–cultural integrity to allow appreciation by the community of their own.

REFERENCES