

***SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:
A NEW PARADIGM FOR GLOBAL
TOURISM***

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***Sustainable Development:
A New Paradigm For Global Tourism***

As we examine the tremendous progress that this century has witnessed, we will see that much of it has been positive. Our technology has produced improved communication and transportation systems that have helped to unite the world while tourism has grown by leaps and bounds to become a major force in our international economies, lifestyles and understanding of cultural diversity. With global interdependence on the rise, it seems that the hospitality industry as a whole is destined to continue to flourish; yet the current state of our planet presents many challenges that directly impact the future state of our affairs. Crumbling economic foundations, political turmoil, critical environmental issues and moral and ethical dilemmas are now inescapable realities. The legacies of shortsighted business strategies and sacrifices to the pressures of immediate returns on investment and fiscal greed have contributed to the chemical and toxic pollution of our world, the erosion of corporate ethics and values, the Greenhouse effect and even the failure of our banking and financial institutions.

International tourism, travel and the hospitality industry can be empowered to act as dynamic waves in the tide of global consciousness towards worldwide peace, and differences in the management of a total guest experience. As such, stockholders, executives and employees are all encouraged to honor the diversity that inherently exists within the international hospitality industry.

Hoteliers enjoy a unique opportunity to not only build cross-cultural bridges, but in designing innovative management systems and training programs that enhance intercultural effectiveness. It is this values-based management philosophy that supports the individual through wellness programs that further empower the organization to navigate the treacherous channels of international diplomacy. Intrinsic, hard-core value will ultimately manifest in communal and environmental consciousness and financial viability will be ensured as international tourism increases and travelers seek those specula places of the world whose environs and experiences have been preserved and restored by sustainability.

The sustainable development we speak of will sustain our communities, cultures, resources, and environments. The paradigm shift will further renew our commitment to genuinely care about ourselves and our guests, about the locations of our hotels and the ways in which they impact their communities and environs. Living today in a post-industrial society dominated by individualism, competition and non-ecological lifestyles, we may find it difficult to envision a rekindling of the spirit of interconnectedness among the world's people and their environments. The historical fact that such traditions and scientific methodologies exist may guide us in reformulating an approach to sustainable development. Yet we must consider that ancient civilizations lived in relative isolation and enjoyed essentially similar experiences while our modern world is comprised primarily of pluralistic societies.

Chichen Itza was the result of geomantic thinking. So, too, were the pueblos and cliff houses of the southwestern United States, the Gothic cathedrals of Europe and the Imperial Palace of Beijing. It was indeed the Native Americans who formalized this concept over time, looking at everything in terms of its impact upon seven future generations. Now we too must think in terms of longevity, of harmony with nature and the community, of sustainability.

The international developer and hotelier of the new millennium must choose to dedicate himself to life in balance and the creation of a total guest experience in an atmosphere of continued conservation, renewal and growth. In today's urban settings, we spend the majority of our time in tightly sealed structures built of chemically based substances, breathe recycled air and absorb artificial light. The new paradigm must move away from buildings that promote illness to those buildings that promote health.

When properly used, advanced technology permits us to build structures that heal, comfort, and inspire with great ease. The developer's integral planning process will consider landscape, air quality, lighting, sound, color and interior design. These elements will be incorporated into appropriate architecture that

creates a timeless sense of place and enforces well-being. Restaurants within hospitality establishments will cater to guest preferences and compliment their lifestyles by serving organic foods and free-range game and fish that are indigenous to the region.

As international hotels and resorts are microcosms of the world community, they naturally exist as living patterns of relationships between individuals, families, friends, institutions and governmental agencies in response to their environs. When this environment has been holistically developed and nurtured, guests become aware of their own global connectedness and learn to recognize themselves as world citizens. On a larger scale, these special places communicate in a dialogue that has the capacity to transform political and social disparities into interest, concern and ultimately understanding.

The new paradigm must be explored at the organizational level to inspire more effective management. The paradigm will focus on an expanded sense of personal identity and an awareness of the relations between the individual and their organizational cultures. Designing a hotel's organizational, managerial and operational systems must therefore be given the same consideration as architectural planning and be incorporated into the development process at the project's conception. Rather than orchestrating the design of service systems as a singular event that follows the completion of the structure, a whole-systems approach must be thoughtfully integrated to ensure sustainability.

Service is a social experience within a cultural context, as laden with promise as it is fraught with pitfalls. The levels we seek will therefore be achieved in redefining hospitality and developing or restoring service to reflect our definitions. We can begin this process by resurrecting the customs, traditions, rituals and mythologies of individual cultures to co-create the right livelihood. These elements will then be integrated into the design of a system that recognizes guests as valued friends and continuously emphasizes attention to detail. Managers should learn to address the synthesis of individual and corporate values to create organizations capable of effectively responding to the cultural similarities and differences in the management of a total guest experience. As such, stockholders, executives and employees are all encouraged to honor the diversity that inherently exists within the international hospitality industry.

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The sustainable development we speak of will sustain our communities, cultures, resources, and environments. The paradigm shift will further renew our commitment to genuinely care about our guests, about the locations of our hotels and the ways in which they impact their communities and environs and ourselves. Living today in a post-industrial society dominated by individualism, competition and non-ecological lifestyles, we may find it difficult to envision a rekindling of the spirit of interconnectedness among the world's people and their environments. The historical fact that such traditions and scientific methodologies did exist may guide us in reformulating an approach to sustainable development.

Yet we must also consider that ancient civilizations lived in relative isolations and enjoyed essentially similar experiences while our modern world is comprised primarily of pluralistic societies. These societies are largely forced into cohabitation and often collide with one another. The resulting pressures and tensions generate ill will among ethnically diverse groups and lead to ineffective interaction.

We can choose to double, triple, quintuple the pace of development but we compromise our sense of well-being, environmental balance, and long term financial viability in the process. It is the ultimate goal of sustainable development to establish order out of chaos so that we are able to pass on a legacy of harmony and accord between all of the peoples of the world and their environments to future generations. Tourism, travel and the hospitality industry have the potential to significantly impact the realization of responsible, heedful development and sustainability. International developers and hoteliers should therefore be urged to assume the principles of land stewardship and cultural integration in their work to create lasting institutions of continued economic profitability. Sustainable development thus offers the promise of bridging world peace and honoring cultural diversity if only we can learn to respect the nourishing strength of the earth and her finite resources.