Tourism Conservation Models & Strategies

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Fotografía: SEE Tuttles
Overview of Tourism Conservation Models

• Focus on the relationship between communities and protected areas (yet often also involve NGOs and the private sector)
• Models identified through years of analysis of success and failures of applied approaches
• End goal: develop a publication that documents the various tourism conservation strategies, shares the process and lessons learned, and provides other practitioners a simple tool to use in project planning
Tourism as a Tool for Conservation

- Potential of sustainable tourism
  - 20% of global market
  - Developing countries represent 40% of all international tourism arrivals and 30% of global tourism receipts
  - Sustainable tourism = fastest growing sector

- Sustainable tourism and communities
  - Opportunity to develop economic alternatives dependent upon the preservation of natural resources…rather than their extraction
  - Opportunity to develop mutually beneficial relationships between communities and protected areas
Tourism as a Tool for Conservation

- Resources generated by tourism:
  - Money: from local beneficiaries of tourism as well as visitors
  - Time: from local beneficiaries of tourism as well as visitors
Tourism as a Tool for Conservation

Solimar’s approach to generating these resources for conservation:

- **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):** During the project development stage, specific agreements are outlined within MoUs that clarify stakeholder commitments.

- **Marketing Incentives:** Offer marketing support to enterprises (and the sales it generates) in exchange for their adoption of sustainability criteria or some other form of direct conservation support.

- **Profit Sharing Mechanism:** Within this approach, community members earn a higher percentage of year-end tourism profits in exchange for time and labor contributed to support conservation activities throughout the year.
It’s All About Sticks & Carrots

**Sustainable Tourism “Sticks”**
- Financial Support
- “In-Kind” Support
- Sustainability Criteria
- Quality Criteria
- No Strings Attached

**Sustainable Tourism “Carrots”**
- Green Branding
- Improved Marketing & Promotion
- Training & TA
- Improved Products
- Improved/Centralized Operations
- Improved Sales & Revenue

Local Partners
# Tourism Conservation Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Model Description</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Improving Tourism Operations and Guidelines</td>
<td>Developing and adopting sustainable operating principles and practices that lessen tourism's negative impact on species and their habitat</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Increasing Conservation Awareness and Constituencies</td>
<td>Increasing the conservation awareness of both local residents and visitors, as well as the number local residents financially benefitting from sustainable tourism activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Increasing Income Diversification</td>
<td>Creating sustainable tourism jobs for local community members that are inherently dependent upon natural resource protection</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Increasing Monitoring and Research</td>
<td>Increasing the monitoring and research presence of trained guides, visitors, and/or researchers in critical natural areas threatened by illegal and extractive activities</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Increasing Tourism-Generated Conservation Financing</td>
<td>Increasing the financial support for conservation that tourism profits and donations can provide</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Increasing Conservation Partnerships</td>
<td>Facilitating collaboration between protected areas, NGOs and/or community partners in an effort to improve biodiversity conservation</td>
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Conservation Threat Assessment

- Importance of assessing conservation threats in the design of these models
- Focus on target conditions (species and/or habitat), direct threats, and indirect threats – and identifying linkages between them (present graphic below and give sea turtle egg example)
- Importance of identifying anthropogenic threats and solutions
Example: Conservation Threat Assessment

- **Indirect Threat**: Lack of Conservation Awareness in Local Residents
- **Indirect Threat**: Lack of Sustainable Economic Alternatives
- **Indirect Threat**: Lack of Monitoring and Research
- **Direct Threat**: Resource Extraction (illegal hunting and logging)
- **Direct Threat**: Tourism Impacts (trail degradation, wildlife harassment)
- **Target Condition**: Biodiversity of Loma Isabel National Park
Example: Sustainability Plan
Conservation Threats Assessment

Project Objectives

- Substitute resource extractive behavior
- Assist in monitoring & enforcing
- Establish direct conservation financing
- Increase local conservation involvement

Indirect Threats

- Poverty
- Unenforced Park Regulations
- Lack of Local Participation in Conservation

Direct Threats

- Commercial Hunting
- Illegal Trade of Exotic Species
- Reduction of Faunal Populations

Project Activities

- Train small business managers
- Develop tourism infrastructure
- Develop tourism products
- Train local nature guides
- Create a Conservation Fund
- Form Local Conservation Corps

Target Condition

Biodiversity Protection of the Rio Plátano Biosphere Reserve
Summary
Developing and adopting sustainable operating principles and practices that lessen tourism’s negative impact on species and habitat.

Strategies
1. Improving & Disseminating Visitor Codes of Conduct
2. Improving and Disseminating Tourism Operations Guidelines
Strategy

1. Improving & Disseminating Visitor Codes of Conduct

- Targets visitors
- Best practices based on Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC)

- Codes of Conduct:
  - Visitor behavior
  - Group size

- Delivery Mechanisms
  - Signage
  - Guides
  - Promotional Materials
Tourism Conservation Model: Improve Tourism Operations & Guidelines

Strategy

2. Improving and Disseminating Tourism Operations Guidelines

- Targets the travel industry
- GSTC foundation
- Industry guidelines:
  - Adherence to existing laws and regulations
  - Staff training
  - Wildlife viewing
  - Waste, water, electricity management
  - Improved equipment & technology

Marketing Support
Training
Sustainability/Best Practices
Summary
Increasing the conservation awareness of both local residents and visitors, as well as their level of environmental activism

Strategies
1. Increasing Awareness and Conservation Support of Visitors
2. Increasing Awareness and Conservation Support of Local Residents
3. Linking Benefits of Sustainable Tourism to the Community as a Whole to Develop Conservation Constituencies
Tourism Conservation Model:
Increasing Environmental Awareness and Conservation Constituencies

Strategies

1. Increasing Awareness and Conservation Support of Visitors

- Traveler Advocacy
  - Facebook pages
  - Twitter feeds
  - Email newsletters
  - Websites
  - Special events

- Guides critical to process

Role of local guides in increasing visitor conservation awareness and support

- Increase visitor appreciation
- Introduce conservation threats
- Share conservation strategies
- Facilitate visitor conservation support
Tourism Conservation Model: Increasing Environmental Awareness and Conservation Constituencies

Strategies

2. Increasing Awareness and Conservation Support of Local Residents

• Importance of community stewardship...connecting the dots

• Guides as environmental educators in local schools

• Interpretive centers as an educational resource

• Festivals
Tourism Conservation Model: Increasing Environmental Awareness and Conservation Constituencies

Strategies

3. Linking Benefits of Sustainable Tourism to the Community as a Whole to Develop Conservation Constituencies

- Tourism is limited in its ability to create jobs/revenue
- Strategic investments can benefit entire communities
  - Health facilities
  - Education/scholarships
  - Water/sanitation
  - Soccer fields
Tourism Conservation Model: Increasing Income Diversification

Summary
Creating sustainable tourism jobs for local community members that are inherently dependent upon natural resource protection.

Strategies
1. Targeting Resource Extractors with Direct Employment in Sustainable Tourism
2. Developing Tourism Products that Directly Mitigate a Conservation Threat
Tourism Conservation Model: Increasing Income Diversification

Strategies

1. Targeting Resource Extractors with Direct Employment in Sustainable Tourism

- Hunters, fisherman, farmers have knowledge that position them to be guides
- Training needed to give them tools to translate that knowledge
- Higher salary from tourism = higher probability of shift away from extraction
Strategies

2. Developing Tourism Products that Directly Mitigate a Conservation Threat

• “Win-Win”
• Tourism product created, conservation threat addressed
• Examples...
Summary
Increasing the monitoring and research presence of trained guides, visitors, and/or researchers in critical natural areas threatened by illegal and extractive activities

Strategies
1. Increasing the Role of Local Residents in Monitoring and Research
2. Increasing the Role of Visitors in Monitoring and Research
Strategies

1. Increasing the Role of Local Residents in Monitoring and Research

- Parks = underfunded, understaffed
- Lack of monitoring & research common
- Presence alone can be a major deterrent to illegal activities
- Trained guides can play a critical role in:
  - Monitoring illegal activity and reporting to park managers
  - Conducting basic research
2. Increasing the Role of Visitors in Monitoring and Research

- Beyond observation...participation!
- SAVE tourism niche
- Experiential tourism trending
- Requires key partners (NGOs, parks for permits and expertise)
- Huge competitive advantage for communities/service providers who can offer it
Summary
Increasing the financial support for conservation that tourism profits and donations can provide

Strategies
1. Utilizing Tourism Profits to Support Conservation Activities
2. Developing travel philanthropy programs
3. Develop conservation-themed brands & merchandise
Tourism Conservation Model: 
Increasing Tourism-Generated Conservation Financing

Strategies

1. Utilizing Tourism Profits to Support Conservation Activities

Example Uses of Enterprise Year-End Profits

ENTERPRISE REINVESTMENT – 40%
✓ New equipment and infrastructure

COMMUNITY/SOCIAL FUND – 5%
✓ School scholarship program

OPERATING COSTS – 30%
✓ Staff salaries
✓ Promotion/marketing
✓ Rent and utilities
✓ Insurance and permits

PROFIT SHARING / CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES – 25%
✓ Enterprise member’s time:
  o Conducting beach patrols & monitoring egg nursery
  o Teaching environmental education classes
  o Supporting the enterprise in meetings, repairs
Strategies

3. Develop conservation-themed brands, crafts, and merchandise

- Excellent option to create additional jobs for those most in need (elderly, disabled)
- Viable option even if no tourism exists at site
- Conservation becomes part of the product’s value proposition
Summary
Facilitating collaboration between protected areas, NGOs, and/or local communities in an effort to improve biodiversity conservation

Strategies
1. Developing Partnerships Between Communities and Protected Areas Managers
Strategies

1. Developing Partnerships Between Communities and Protected Areas Managers

- Parks and people typically have a history of conflict rather than collaboration.
- **Managers of protected areas** often view communities as a nuisance, a group that needs policing.
- **Communities living in protected areas** often view its managers as those who make and enforce rules that impede the ability of families to survive. This is particularly troublesome with indigenous communities whose ancestral homelands have been converted into government-controlled lands.
Strategies

1. Developing Partnerships Between Communities and Protected Areas Managers

Protected Areas Provide:
- Tourism concessions or exclusivity agreements to community enterprises
- Training in monitoring
- Protection of ancestral rights/access
- Open lines of communications

Community-based tourism that supports protected area conservation

Communities Provide:
- Commitments to support protected area conservation
- Monitoring and research in remote and isolated locations
- Open lines of communications

Tourism Conservation Model: Increasing Conservation Partnerships
Questions?
Solimmar International’s Enterprise Development Program
Solimar Enterprise Development - Background

• 20 years: Latin America, the Caribbean, & S. Africa

• Mission: build the capacity of rural communities living in/around parks/protected areas to benefit from sustainable tourism.

• End Goal: Direct support of poverty alleviation & biodiversity support

• Award-winning ecotourism businesses have generated more than $5 million dollars for local economies
Site Assessment

• Supply-Side Analysis
  – Existing products
  – Community Profiles
  – Ecotourism inventory

• Demand-Side Analysis
  – Visitor profiles/key drivers/spending/willingness-to-pay
  – Industry Input

• Conservation Threats Analysis
  – Specific threats to biodiversity
  – Role of community within threats

• Community Participation Analysis

Result: Product Development Opportunities Identified
Business & Conservation Planning

- Business Planning
  - Products/Service
  - Target Markets
  - Marketing/Operations Plan
  - Staffing/Training Req’d
  - Financial Projections

- Conservation Strategies

Result: Business Plan (linked to conservation/community support)
Tourism Operations & Management

- Pre-trip procedures
- Post-trip procedures
- Financial procedures
- Policies & contracts
- Communications
- Financial planning
- Human resources
- Legal issues
- Enterprise management
- Metrics & reporting

Result: Local Management Capacity & Operations Manual
Product Development

Developing/packaging products AND training, training, training...

- Nature Guide Training
  - Interpretation/guiding skills, conversational English, first aid
- Nature trails development
- Infrastructure development
  - Lodging, dining facilities
- Food preparation training
- Lodging management training
- Transportation training

Diagram:

1. Site Assessment
2. Conservation & Business Planning
3. Training
4. Product Development
5. Sales & Marketing
“Day in the Life” of a Solimar Tourism Training Program
Marketing

- Sales Networks
- Branding
- Website Design & Development
- Print Collateral Design & Development
- Online Marketing & Social Media
- PR/Publications

Sales

- CRM
- Sales Tools/Systems
- Sales Partners
### Sample Project Timeline

#### Solimar Enterprise Development - Project Timeline

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Month 1</td>
<td>Month 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>SITE ASSESSMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct Site Assessment: Market Analysis and Conservation Threats Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUSINESS AND CONSERVATION PLANNING</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop Business Plan &amp; Conservation Strategies</td>
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<td>TRAINING</td>
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<td>Tourism Operations Training Program</td>
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<td>Nature Guide Training Program</td>
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<td>Tourism Service Training Program</td>
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<td>“Follow-up” and refresher training as required</td>
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<td>PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT</td>
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<td>Product/Infrastructure Development</td>
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<td>Guided Tours (e.g., epigam)</td>
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<td>SOFI Enterprise Launch</td>
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<td>SOII Enterprise Launch</td>
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<td>SALES &amp; MARKETING</td>
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<td>Develop enterprise brand</td>
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<td>Develop promotional content (copy, photos, videos)</td>
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<td>Website/Print/Branding/Marketing/Online/Website Development</td>
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<td>Distribute promotional materials</td>
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<td>METRICS</td>
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<td>Develop Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Plan</td>
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<td>Collect Baseline Data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Initiate Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Plan</td>
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<td>Final Project Reporting</td>
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La Ruta Moskitia
Ecotourism Alliance
Rio Plátano Biosphere Reserve, Honduras
La Ruta Moskitia
Ecotourism Alliance
Why Build the Alliance?

• Better Product – diverse locations and activities

• Better negotiating position with tour operators/clients

Elimination of community “price wars”

• Leverage promotional dollars
Capitalization

• UNDP Honduras (PPD) provided $189K to 5 communities - start up funding to build infrastructure (lodging, transportation) - $40K per Community

• Local communities donated more than one year of “in-kind” labor to construct the facilities

Infrastructure Development

• Architectural plans incorporated local building materials/cultural design elements

• Community members trained in construction of facilities
Training

- Small business managers
- Accountants
- Sales representative
- Operations manager
- Nature Guides
- Cooks/housekeepers
- Boat drivers
Yamari Savannah Cabanas
Raista Ecolodge
Belen Beach Cabanas
Results to Date - Economic

First 3 ½ years of operations:

- 100% of operations managed by local communities
- More than $400,000 in gross sales & over 1000 clients
- 40% profit margins on tours
- 80% of tour costs are local
- 250 jobs created & maintained
- 1500 family members supported
Results to Date – Conservation & Community Development

• 250 non-extractive jobs created & maintained, reducing pressure on Reserve’s natural resources

• $10K/year generated by 10% “conservation fund” tax on all tour sales

• Region’s first indigenous conservation NGO formed by LARUMO communities

• Conservation projects developed in each LARUMO community
LARUMO Awards/ Recognition

Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards 2007
Best in a Park or Protected Area
WINNER

TOURISM FOR TOMORROW Awards 2008
WINNER

Condé Nast Traveler Green List Honoree 2006

National Geographic Adventure
Thank you!

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