

ECOACCREDITATION: WIN-WIN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS?

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The ongoing importance of the tourism and hospitality small business sector to the economic wellbeing of a country has been widely acknowledged internationally. Such businesses are important contributors to the environmental, social and cultural sustainability of their regions. There is growing pressure for such businesses to pursue sustainable development principles, commonly perceived by the owners to elevate costs and reduce competitiveness. In this review paper we consider the benefits for small businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry to gain ecoaccreditation. We conclude that, despite a large number of such schemes, market awareness is typically low but has potential to provide a competitive edge. Small business operators who choose to lead in ecoaccreditation would, however, be wise to ensure that they clearly articulate their scheme to potential customers, and target consumers from countries where interest in such schemes is highest.

Keywords: *tourism sector, hospitality business, ecotourism, environmental performance, consumer behaviour, environmental concern, tourist*

I. STATUS OF SMALL BUSINESS IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009) classifies private sector non-agricultural businesses into three categories based on the number of full-time equivalent employees (<20, small; 20-200, medium; >200, large). Agricultural businesses are classified separately on the basis of revenue. In 2001 there were 1.2 million (97%) of non-agricultural private sector businesses in Australia classified as 'small'. These businesses employed 3.6 million, 49% of all private sector employment. From 1983-1984 the total number of these small businesses grew at an annual average of 3.5% (employment growth; annual average of 3.0%). This was comparable to non-small business growth (3.3%; employment growth 2.5%). However, growth of small businesses subsequently slowed between 1997-98 and 2000-01 (e.g. 2.7%, while employment growth varied between 1.4% [<5 employees] and 4.7% [5-19 employees]; Trewin, 2002). No more recent comparable data were identified (e.g. ABS, 2010 combines agriculture/non-agricultural entities).

Tourism is an important industry in Australia and contributed (directly and indirectly) a total of A\$62.9 billion (6.05%) in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the national economy in 2007-08, with direct contribution to GVA and employment increasing by 10.8% and 7.9% respectively between 2003-04 and 2007-08. Direct tourism employment was highest in 'retail trade', with 'accommodation' and 'cafés and restaurants' second and third (Pambudi et al., 2009). Within the tourism sector, small companies have historically made an important contribution, both

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in terms of the number of businesses and people employed. For example, in 2002 Trewin reported that Australia's 34,000 small business accommodation providers (e.g. boutique hotels/lodges, bed and breakfast establishments, holiday cabin rentals) and food outlets (e.g. cafés, restaurants) represented around 3% of all small businesses and employ 192,600 people (5.9%). In parallel with the small business sector overall, this sector grew at an annual average of 3.4% from 1983-84 but subsequently slowed to an average of 2.8% between 1997-98 and 2000-01. Another 39,800 (3.5%) small businesses involved in 'cultural and recreational services', employing 87,100 people (2.7%), typically in enterprises such as art and craft galleries, souvenir shops, fishing trips, cruise boat hire, whale/dolphin watching, general sightseeing and adventure recreation tours. The pattern of previously rapid growth in the small business sector, followed by a slowing that was displayed by other small business sectors also occurred in this sector (i.e. growth from 1983-84 onwards of 3.3% with subsequent slowing to an average of 1.4% between 1997-98 and 2000-01; Trewin, 2002). There has therefore been a recent slowdown in the growth of small business in Australia overall that is also reflected in the tourism and hospitality sector. These trends suggest considerable challenges to small businesses seeking to maintain commercial viability.

The ongoing importance of the tourism and hospitality industry, and its small business sector in particular, to the economic wellbeing of a country has been widely acknowledged. In recent years, such importance has been reflected in the tourism investment policy of the European Union, whose focus has shifted away from large organisations and towards small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Such enterprises are perceived to offer greater scope for entrepreneurship and employment generation, particularly in rural or peripheral regions (Wanhill, 2000). Small, destination-based tourism and hospitality businesses are especially popular with policymakers because they tend to be labour intensive, with limited opportunity for automation and consequently, directly and indirectly, create employment. Because such employment is geographically specific, the economic benefits are localised and are not susceptible to being outsourced or exported (Burgin and Hardiman, in review). They also have a reputation of being locally owned and are hence considered to contribute to the environmental, social and cultural sustainability of their region (Roberts and Tribe, 2008).

Although achieving the dual aim of environmental and economic development goals is often difficult, governments frequently perceive tourism (including recreation) as a self-financing mechanism to overcome environmental issues (McNamara and Gibson, 2008). Since small businesses are an important sector of the tourism and hospitality industry, the expectation of environmental sustainability is presumably considered to be the purview of these business owners. One response to increasing pressures to be more sustainable (economically and environmentally) is to become ecoaccredited. In this review paper we investigate the competitive edge that ecoaccreditation may provide for small businesses within the tourism and hospitality industry.

II. CHANGING CONDITIONS LIKELY TO IMPACT SMALL TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES

In recent years, a strong, common trend has emerged in the social, technological, economic and political pressures under which businesses operate, driving them to consider more carefully the environmental consequences of their operations. Changes in practices and/or processes aimed at environmentally sustainable outcomes may be legislated and thus

companies are faced with implementation of changes that are often perceived as elevating costs and reducing competitiveness (Revell and Blackburn, 2007). In parallel, growing public concern for environmental impacts has increased pressure on organisations to pursue sustainable development principles (Banerjee, 2008). Among economically developed nations (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom [UK]), evidence suggests that such concern is substantial and will lead to long-term market change. In the tourism small business sector, trends include greater competition from alternative service providers; a propensity for consumers to spend disposable income on tangible, durable products (e.g. electronic home equipment) or entertainment services offering immediate gratification (e.g. cinema, dining out) at the expense of tourism. Changing consumer demographics are also showing increasingly diverse needs and/or reduced interest in domestic travel, together with an increasing focus on, and sophistication in, the use of online media in tourism decision making. Although these changes offer 'new' opportunities they also present challenges for small tourism and hospitality operators due, in part, to limited resources (especially financial). There has also been a shift among many consumers from traditional, passive sightseeing to a greater demand for 'experience-based ecotourism' (TRA, 2007, 2008).

The term 'ecotourism' was first defined in 1983. The definition has since been modified (and ultimately adopted) by The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy, study and appreciate nature [and any accompanying cultural features – both past and present], that promotes conservation, has low negative impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of the local population' (Ceballos-Lascuráin, undated, pp. 1). Although perceptions and definitions may differ, ecotourism is acknowledged to be a large and growing segment of the overall tourism market. It was estimated to account for approximately 20% of the total tourism revenue globally a decade ago and was growing by 10-25% annually with expectations of increasing market share (Hassan, 2000; WTO, 1998). For example, there has been growth in mountaineering (Beedie and Hudson, 2003), farm-based (Sharpley and Vass, 2006), destination mountain biking (Hardiman and Burgin, in review), and Antarctic (Eijgelaar et al., 2010) tourism. Although such activities do not always meet the sustainability-based definition of Ceballos-Lascuráin (undated), we expect that as awareness grows of tourism's potential ecological impacts, consumers will become more interested in seeking to satisfy their interests in ways they perceive are environmentally responsible and sustainable, and so an increasing number will become true ecotourists.

In addition to the need for small businesses to consider the non-consumptive direct impacts of their operation (e.g. littering, water pollution, wildlife disturbance), there will be increasing pressure from governments and customers to consider the indirect consequences of tourism and hospitality (e.g. water use, energy use, local produce consumption, reduced CO₂ emissions). Small tourism and hospitality business providers will therefore need to be motivated to address such environmental issues in response to compulsory requirements to meet emerging national and/or international legislation; a voluntary desire to reduce resource (and associated cost) consumption (e.g. water, energy, labour); and to attract consumers willing to buy more and/or pay higher prices for 'ecofriendly' products via 'green marketing' (Banerjee, 2008). Since leisure is presently the single largest driver of anthropogenic global carbon dioxide emissions, measured by end user need (The Carbon Trust 2006), there are potential opportunities for operators who can demonstrate environmentally responsible and sustainable business practices to have a commercial advantage over their competitors.

III. CAPITALISING ON IMPROVED ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

Increasing pressure on businesses, especially legislative, to change their processes and become more environmentally sustainable in their operations, is often seen to be an additional burden by unwilling companies, who perceive such changes as forcing up costs and reducing competitiveness. However, such a view that all factors except environmental regulations are held static, ignores the realities of changes in technology, competitors, and customers that potentially drive change in attitudes and may, in turn, reduce costs and/or increase competitive advantage. Many companies and industries have recognised such potential advantages and sought innovations that offer the potential to achieve greater sustainability and lower costs. For example, the Dutch flower industry successfully reduced costs and soil pollution by introducing a closed-loop, hydroponic growing process that simultaneously improved product quality and reduced handling and fertiliser costs (Porter and van der Linde, 1995). The British company, Walkers Snackfoods (a division of PepsiCo), also found that the introduction of environmental initiatives may actually lower costs. Counterproductive processes in their end-to-end supply chain enabled a reduction of CO₂ emissions by 9,200 tonnes and simultaneously saved £1.2 million per annum (The Carbon Trust, 2006).

In the Asian tourism industry, as other regions, there has been a move towards increased environmental consciousness, at least in part, as a means to reduce operational costs. For example, using air-to-water heat pumps for heating swimming pools, instead of the conventional electric and condensing/non-condensing boiler systems, has been shown to be more energy efficient and therefore reduce costs and increase environmentally sustainable performance. Energy cost of one Hong Kong Hotel was reduced by approximately 50% compared to conventional heating systems, and noxious greenhouse gas emissions were cut by 12,000 kg annually. It was assumed that such savings would be equivalent in other locations with equivalent climatic regimes (Chan and Lam, 2003). In areas that required heating for a greater proportion of the year, the savings would presumably be higher.

IV. ECOACCREDITATION

One tactic that companies have used to capitalise on the need to improve performance in environmental sustainability and potentially make themselves more attractive to consumers is to gain accreditation under an ecocertification scheme. Such schemes are well-established among small businesses in some industries. For example, the coffee growing industry has introduced equivalent accreditation for growers to identify that they are 'organic-', 'fair trade-' or 'shade-' certified. Shade certification has been shown to benefit biodiversity generally, and forest species in particular (e.g. Philpott et al., 2007). However, although other studies (e.g. Bacon, 2005) have shown that organic- and fair-trade certification may provide financial benefits to producers by guaranteeing minimum prices and/or supporting price premiums to reduce farmers' vulnerability to market fluctuations, the documented ecological benefits are often not reconciled (e.g. see Stichnothe et al., 2008). Producers of fast moving consumable goods (e.g. detergents, personal care products) are also placing increasing emphasis on recyclable/refillable packaging and/or biodegradable ingredients.

Efforts to adopt environmentally sustainable practices are also increasingly evident within the tourism and hospitality industry, particularly in economically developed nations and the sector

of the industry focused on ecotourism. With a limited promotional budget, the concept of ecoaccreditation as a tactic for small businesses to gain a competitive edge may be attractive if the program has substantial market awareness. However, while the intention of such schemes is to promote greater environmental sustainability, considerable debate has ensued over their effectiveness and the ability of small businesses to afford to reach the proposed standards, especially in developing countries (Medina, 2005). They may possibly be more effective for medium to large business enterprises than for small businesses. For example, Egyptian Red Sea hotel marketing managers found that in targeting Western tourists, association with an international hotel chain and the marketers' own demographic were the best predictors of proactive green marketing policies. In contrast, small, locally owned hotels that targeted Egyptian consumers were less likely to adopt environmentally friendly initiatives unless it could be demonstrated that such actions correlated with improved profitability (El Dief and Font, 2010).

V. WEAKNESSES OF ECOACCREDITATION

In addition to initiatives taken by individual firms (e.g. see El Dief and Font, 2010), industry-wide initiatives include a confusing plethora of associations, alliances, awards, ecolabels, and ecoaccreditation/certification schemes (Buckley, 2002). Internationally, there are more than 100 such schemes (Font, 2002; e.g. see sample in Table 1). Most have been introduced in the last 15 years, are country specific, and are typically marketed by non-profit organisations with limited marketing resources (e.g. tourism departments of government ministries). Although individual schemes differ, most rely to some extent on self assessment by the tour/accommodation providers. There is typically no independent auditing and no penalties for non-compliance (Buckley, 2002). Despite initiatives such as the Mohonk Agreement of 2000, and the 2008 Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC Partnership, 2009; Medina, 2005) that were designed to harmonise certification criteria, schemes such as those listed in Table 1 still pursue a wide range of non-standard criteria.

The longest-established, multi-country, government-backed schemes tend to be European. This reflects the European Union standards-based tradition, together with the willingness of many Western European governments to collaborate in environmental initiatives, in contrast to many other countries (e.g. El Dief and Font, 2010; Fairweather et al., 2005; Hjalager, 1999). However, reliable data on accredited membership of all schemes are lacking. This makes assessment and/or comparison of their market awareness and penetration and, therefore, potential benefits for small tourism and hospitality businesses problematic.

VI. IMPACT OF ECOACCREDITATION SCHEMES ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Despite considerable interest in 'green marketing' and associated accreditation among academics and suppliers in recent years, there is still limited empirical evidence of the outcomes, especially for small businesses marketing tourism and associated services. This includes a lack of information on the impact on marketing strategies, and the financial performance of firms that pursue such accreditation. While many consumers claim to consider environmental issues and/or state a preference to buy from environmentally responsible suppliers when choosing products or services, there is limited data on the translation of

intentions into actual purchase of 'green' products, especially in times of economic downturn (Andereck, 2009; Wearing et al., 2002).

Studies suggest that visitors from wealthier, economically developed countries, especially in Europe, are more likely to influence/be influenced by corporate environmental behaviour than those from less affluent countries (Ayuso, 2006; El Dief and Font, 2010; Miller, 2003). This is supported by the observation that poor environmental quality is the most important factor influencing the level of holiday satisfaction among European tourists (European Commission, 1998).

More broadly, country of origin/nationality has also been shown to influence tourists' environmental concerns. For example, German tourists in particular are especially concerned about environmental sustainability in making their tourism decisions (Fairweather et al., 2005; Hjalager, 1999). However, such concern does not necessarily translate into environmentally responsible purchasing behaviour. For example, Spanish hotel managers reported that few (if any) holiday guests chose their destination hotel based primarily on its environmental practices or ecocertificates (Claver-Cortés et al., 2007).

In the United States of America (US), Watkins (1994) showed that although the majority of tourists preferred to stay in environmentally friendly hotels, most did not believe that their efforts actually helped the environment. Despite this scepticism, 'green' American travellers were prepared to pay on average 8% more for ecofriendly travel and accommodation services (Cook et al., 1992). More recently, in a study that extended across several countries/regions (Australia, Costa Rica, Europe, US) it was observed that, despite declared environmental concerns, only 5% of tourists purchased environmentally responsible tourism packages, used environmentally friendly transportation and/or bought local produce specifically for its social and/or ecological effects (Chafe and Honey, 2004). Other studies have shown broadly similar levels of willingness to pay for environmental sustainability. For example, New Zealand visitors reported that they were willing to pay an average of 7.2% higher price (Fairweather et al., 2005) while 81% of British tourists declared that they were willing to pay up to 3% of the value of their holiday to help protect the environment (Martin, 2001). In contrast, international visitors in Thailand were prepared to pay more for quality service but not for enhanced environmental quality (Baddeley, 2004). However, none of these studies investigated the translation of intent into actual purchasing behaviour. Even among hotel guests with declared environmental concern, few were willing to pay a premium price to stay in ecofriendly hotels. There are even greater barriers to the adoption of environmentally friendly corporate practices in hotels in developing countries, especially in times of economic downturn (Kasim, 2007).

This data supports the observation that 'ecolabels' for tourism products and services typically have low awareness and/or influence among tourists (e.g. Buckley, 2001, 2002; Wearing et al., 2002). Those tourists who do recognise them, consider that they have low reliability and are uncertain that they actually deliver environmental benefits. For example, only 3-19% of tourists in Germany and 6% in the Netherlands were aware of ecolabels in those countries (Budeanu, 2007). In New Zealand, only 20% of visitors were able to recall any place they had visited with ecolabels and only 13% had heard of any tourism ecolabel, although 33% had some prior experience of ecolabels in association with other industries. Despite the modest level of awareness, 61% of the New Zealand visitors were classified as 'biocentric' and

supported the use of ecolabels. They also claimed that they would choose accommodation with such labels (Fairweather et al., 2005).

Once exposed to tourist outlets with ecoaccreditation, however, customers may seek such outlets for future stays. For example, after staying in 'Green Key' certified hotels, 69% of Danish tourists expressed a willingness to pay a premium to stay in such ecolabelled hotels in the future (Chafe and Honey, 2004). Environmental performance of accommodation suppliers was also considered an important factor in the choice of holiday destination for 62% of Italian, and 42% of German tourists (Budeanu, 2007). However, although 71% of travellers in Central Eastern Australia were aware of the direct environmental threats from tourism (Hillery et al., 2001), 62% were more concerned that hotels employed local staff, paid reasonable wages, and provided appropriate working conditions, than the hotel management's environmental credentials (Chafe and Honey, 2004).

Nevertheless, there is evidence from other service industries that ecoawareness may sometimes translate into ecofriendly purchasing, even at a price premium. For example, consumers have been shown to choose 'green power' electricity, generated from renewable resources (e.g. wind, solar), usually at a higher tariff rate than from non-renewable resources. Such price differential is typically around 5% in Germany (Gerpott and Mahmudova, 2010) and 5-10% in the UK (Graham, 2007). Most public or privately owned power utilities in economically developed countries now offer this option (e.g. Australia - <http://www.originenergy.com.au/1542/Green-energy>; UK – various suppliers, Graham, 2007; Germany – various suppliers, <http://www.verivox.de/ratgeber/oekostrom-27748.aspx>). The rate of adoption has, however, been slow. In the UK, although 64% of respondents said they would consider switching to a green supply tariff, less than 1% of households actually made the switch (Graham, 2007). Unlike tourism purchases, energy purchase is a contractual service (typically for a specified period). There are therefore switching costs involved in changing suppliers (e.g. supply under a time contract, form filling, need to change payment details) as well as a financial negative (i.e. higher price tariff). Regarding motivations for such buying behaviour, a survey of (non-green) German residential electricity consumers found that, overall, adoption of green electricity was most influenced by consumers' attitudes to environmental protection issues generally and social endorsement of the concept by close personal contacts. Low energy users were found to be influenced most by price and their confidence in the supplier's social responsibility, while high energy consumers were most influenced by perceived differences between suppliers (Gerpott and Mahmudova, 2010). In Holland, choice of a premium green energy tariff has been found to be significantly influenced by the level of factual knowledge about green electricity possessed by consumers (Arkesteijn and Oerlemans, 2005).

Barriers to uptake appear to include a lack of strong social norms (reflecting possible country of origin effect), personal relevance, switching costs, uncertainty about the credibility of green electricity and a lack of accurate, reliable information in a standard, comparable format (Graham, 2007; Ozaki, 2009).

Availability of reliable, comparable information has also been shown to be important to many buyers of tourism products and services. European tourists, for example Germans and Swedes, have a high level of awareness of their environmental impacts and an interest in factual information on which to base decisions (Fairweather et al., 2005; Hjalager, 1999), while Dutch

tourists appear to be most interested in receiving information on ecolabelled hotels, the region, and entertainment (CREM, 2000). Despite the relatively low awareness of the concept of ecoaccreditation, British tourists have also expressed an interest in receiving more information about available environmental options of holiday services (Miller, 2003).

The primary driver of decisions for tourists remains the destination, however and the choice of hotel is secondary (Claver-Cortés et al., 2007). While good environmental management may contribute to the overall area/destination's attractiveness (Hassan, 2000; Huybers and Bennett, 2003) the evidence of such effect on the financial performance of an individual enterprise is scarce, especially in the service sector. Among 153 Spanish hotels, Claver-Cortés et al. (2007) identified three strategic groups based on their environmental proactivity:

- Proactive (15.8%, more likely to be larger hotels and part of a chain),
- Intermediate (46.5%), and
- Reactive (37.7%, small and least likely to be affiliated as part of a chain).

The most important motivation for adopting an environmental management strategy was resource use minimisation, especially water- and energy-cost saving.

The degree of environmental proactivity alone did not impact strongly on organisational economic performance. However, some aspects (e.g. occupancy rate; profitability relative to competitors) were associated with increasing environmental proactivity, for example, hotel size and chain affiliation (Álvarez et al., 2001; Claver-Cortés et al., 2007). This indicates that small, independent businesses are at a disadvantage.

VII. IMPEDIMENTS TO UPTAKE OF ECOACCREDITATION

To date, emphasis on environmental accreditation has been focused on 'dirty' industries such as mining and manufacturing (Bowen, 2000; Foster et al., 2000), and their attempts to operate more environmentally sustainably (e.g. Hilson and Murck, 2001; Mirmohammadi et al., 2009; Seppälä et al., 2002). In contrast, tourism's environmental impacts are typically assumed to be more benign. The need for ecotourism accreditation schemes is thus less apparent than for industries that are perceived to be substantial polluters. The relatively low awareness of ecolabels for tourism-related businesses may also be influenced by the intangibility of tourism services compared to buying, for example, a physical product in recyclable packaging. The link between tourism actions and environmental outcomes is therefore weak and lends weight to the assertion that 'green tourists can only exist where there are already green consumers' (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999, pp. 206).

While ecocertification/accreditation schemes in the tourism and hospitality industry are proliferating (see e.g. Table 1) it has apparently been historically supplier-led (Banerjee, 1999). It has not occurred as a response to a coherent, strongly expressed desire by a majority of consumers. As noted, most tourists are either unaware of such schemes and/or concern does not appear to translate into purchasing behaviour. Such non-adoption may stem from a lack of credibility, a feeling of temporary lack of responsibility while on holiday, or perceived higher cost/effort (Sharpley, 2001).

Despite declarations of 'willingness to take action' to support the environment, the translation into action or preparedness to pay a premium for environmental quality is lacking (Wearing et al., 2002). The level of interest varies, even within the more affluent countries, typically between 3% in the UK (Martin, 2001) to 19% in Germany (Budeanu, 2007). Possibly reflecting confusion among the many different schemes and/or a perceived association of environmental quality with overall service provider quality, 86% of Dutch tourists were in favour of a 'star system' combining both service and environmental quality performance rating. A universal ecolabel system was also favoured by 90% of Italian tourists (Budeanu, 2007). Even with acceptable schemes in place, however, it remains to be seen if such interest translates into preferential purchase.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, small tourism and hospitality businesses appear less engaged with an environmental agenda than larger enterprises (e.g. Claver-Cortés et al., 2007; Revell and Blackburn, 2007). Despite considerable efforts by policy-makers to present ecoefficiency as a cost-saving measure, many small businesses appear resistant to implementing voluntary changes to reduce environmental impacts. This is because they tend to view such initiatives as expensive to implement (Revell and Blackburn, 2007). We have also demonstrated that awareness and influence of ecoaccreditation among tourists is weak generally and there is therefore limited incentive for suppliers to change current practices. However, despite the current situation, legislative pressures may ultimately force change. For example, since 2006 there has been a European directive that requires ecolabelling of all commercial buildings. The dual issues of climate change and population growth will also, at least in some areas such as the Mediterranean region, result in increasing water scarcity (Iglesias et al., 2007), and the resulting need for increased water efficiency will consequently impact on the tourism and hospitality industry. Merely gaining and promoting ecoaccreditation is therefore not a panacea for poor service and/or high prices, or perceived low value for money. Rather, it is the 'icing on the cake' or perhaps a differentiator only when all other aspects are satisfied. For small tourism businesses the possible financial returns of seeking ecoaccreditation must therefore be carefully weighed against the necessary costs in time and money.

Small business tourism and hospitality operators who do choose to pursue ecoaccreditation need to clearly explain to consumers what benefits accrue to the environment from their choice, and recognise that merely displaying a brand logo will not inspire credibility. This may require, for example, providing detailed information on websites for potential visitors to study in making their choice of hotel, or information booklets at point of sale. Operators may also proactively target consumers from source countries that have been shown to have high receptivity to eco-aware messages and an interest in reducing their impacts, rather than passively relying on mass market promotional media to deliver a 'one size fits all' message to all nationalities. This may mean, for example, providing websites and downloadable information in languages of nationalities other than English, whose citizens have been shown to have relatively high interest in environmentally sustainable tourism.

Linking eco-sustainability with overall improved quality of the holiday experience for such tourists is likely to achieve positive results, as it provides the primary, desired hedonistic experience of the holiday, together with the secondary, satisfaction of knowing that they have engaged in 'good' behaviour. If small operators wish to become eco-credited, they should also

choose an international brand with wide recognition, rather than regional schemes. A European brand is advisable as:

- i) European tourists (especially from northern European countries) have been shown to have a relatively high environmental concern; and
- ii) European ecolabels, especially if EU-backed, have relatively high credibility.

A label that combines both 'quality' and 'environmental' aspects would seem preferable.

To encourage such uptake of eco-credited schemes among small businesses would require education within this business sector. This needs to be targeted broadly, for example through information provided by tourism regulators (nationally and internationally) and through formal tourism and hospitality courses. Such initiatives need to include education of the owners and managers on the economic and environmental benefits of improved environmental practices by outlining the benefits that may be accrued from joining a quality ecoaccreditation scheme. Small business owners also need to be encouraged to join such a scheme and advertise their business's conformity and the associated environmental outcomes accrued.

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TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF ECOACCREDITATION SCHEMES
(SOURCE: RESPECTIVE ORGANISATIONS' WEBSITES)

Scheme name	Sectors covered	Geographic distribution	Further details
The Eco Certification Program	Tourism and hospitality providers	Australia	http://www.ecotourism.org.au/eco_certification.asp http://www.ecotourism.org.au/Summary%20of%20ECO%20Certification%20-%20Edition%20III.pdf
Qualmark Green	Tourism and hospitality providers	New Zealand	http://www.qualmark.co.nz/about_us.php http://www.qualmark.co.nz/responsibletourism.php
The Green Tourism Business Scheme	Tourism and hospitality providers	United Kingdom	http://www.green-business.co.uk/index.asp http://www.green-business.co.uk/GreenBusiness_Criteria_Introduction.asp
The Green Key	Tourism and hospitality providers	Denmark, France, expanding internationally	http://www.green-key.org/
The Legambiente Tourism ecolabel	Hotels and other accommodation providers	Italy	http://www.legambienteturismo.it/en/index.php?mod=pagina&id_pag=10 http://www.legambienteturismo.it/en/index.php?mod=pagina&id_pag=11
Spanish Tourism Quality Mark Established 2000	Tourism and hospitality providers	Spain	http://www.ict.e.es/ http://www.ict.e.es/ESP/e/14/La-marca-Q/La-marca
Austrian Eco-Label	Products, tourism accommodation and services, and education institutes	Austria	http://www.umweltzeichen.at/cms/home/umweltzeichen/content.html http://www.umweltzeichen.at/cms/home/tourismus/content.html
Steinbock Label	Hotels and other accommodation providers	Switzerland	http://www.steinbock-label.ch/ http://www.steinbock-label.ch/pages/auszeichnung/
Green Certificate	Hotels and other accommodation providers	Latvia	http://eco.celotajs.lv/pn/index.php?module=ContentExpress&func=display&meid=6&ceid=11

Scheme name	Sectors covered	Geographic distribution	Further details
Nordic Ecolabel	All sectors	Nordic countries	http://www.svanen.se/en/Nordic-Ecolabel/ http://www.svanen.se/en/Om-Svanen/About/Q--As/
The Blue Flag Programme	Beaches and marinas	Europe, South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, New Zealand, Brazil, Canada and the Caribbean, expanding internationally	http://www.blueflag.org/ http://www.blueflag.org/Menu/Criteria/Application+procedure
The European Ecolabel	All sectors	European Union, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein (+ overseas manufacturers)	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/index_en.htm http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/about_ecolabel/what_is_ecolabel_en.htm
ECEAT Quality label	Tourism and hospitality providers	Europe	http://www.eceat.org/ http://www.eceat.org/fx/en/45/index.html
Smart Voyager	Tourism and hospitality providers	Ecuador and Latin America	http://www.ccd.org.ec/pages/smart_voyager_en.htm#
Certification for Sustainable Tourism Program	Tourism and hospitality providers	Costa Rica	http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/en/ http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/en/cst/how-to-participate/index.php
Brazil Sustainable Tourism Program	Hotels and accommodation providers; Adventure tourism operators	Brazil	http://www.ecobrasil.org.br/publique/cgi/cgilua.exe/sys/start.htm?UserActiveTemplate=ecobrasil_eng&infoid=231&sid=38
Green Seal	All sectors	USA	http://www.greenseal.org/ http://www.greenseal.org/certification/environmental.cfm
Eco-Certified Sustainable Travel	Tourism and hospitality providers	USA, expanding internationally	http://www.sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/sustainabletourismcertification.html http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=260&Itemid=475

Scheme name	Sectors covered	Geographic distribution	Further details
Audubon Green Leaf	Hotels and accommodation providers	USA and Canada	http://greenleaf.auduboninternational.org http://greenleaf.auduboninternational.org
EarthCheck	All sectors	USA, expanding internationally	http://www.earthcheck.org/en-us/about-us/default.aspx http://www.earthcheck.org/en-us/certification/default.aspx
Green Globe	All sectors	Global	http://www.greenglobecertification.com/index.html http://www.greenglobecertification.com/certification.html