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Narrow the gap.

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In our earlier posts we put emphasis on introducing our vision and the ideas we are working with in order to translate our vision in to practical terms. But how are all those concepts connected? This post aims to combine the key messages of previous posts and concludes with research findings on how to narrow the green purchasing gap.

In our first posts mind the gap and the green purchasing gap.the what? we introduced research findings on the green purchasing gap and visualisations on how to identify the gap. In our post the conscious customer. is that even a real thing? we introduced research looking at the conscious customer as a centre piece of your tourism products and services and introduced insights on how to meet this customer and how to identify him. What has customer value to do with excellent tourism experiences? everything. connects the idea of catering to a customer's conscious environmental values in order to directly enhance the customer experience. In order to explain if you as a tourism provider are influenced by all the introduced research topics we drew the bigger picture while referring to the tourism value chain. Our post on the tourism value chain. where everyone is connected. seeks to visualise your position as a tourism provider within the bigger picture of the tourism industry. With the post on the use of resources and the green purchasing gap we visualised research on the use of air, water and energy in tourism.

Discussion

Our blog posts are not a random set of ideas, we think you might have noticed. Moreover they rely on each other and give way to an idea on how to narrow the green purchasing gap in tourism. According to your emphasise as a tourism provider on for example customer satisfaction, environmental protection or even simply generating turnover this research topic aims to introduce the idea that all of those emphasises can be met when trying to narrow the green purchasing gap.

According to destinations and tourism researchers conscious tourism products form solutions to the demanded environmentally friendly purchasing options by tourists or the destination (Dolnicar & Leisch, 2008). This shows, that your motivation to use resources in

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tourism consciously is not limited to benefitting your customer satisfaction but stretches to the wellbeing of the host community. Nevertheless this green way of selecting and purchasing tourism products and services does not necessarily mean that customers are willing to give up essential comfort. Moreover customers are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products (Nielson, 2014).

Now that we have discussed the underlying ideas, generating better customer value for conscious customers by using resources consciously in the provision of your tourism services while considering the overall tourism value chain, we would like to introduce to you ways describing how to narrow the green purchasing gap.

Researchers have discovered ways to normalize the gap:

- Dolnicar and Leisch (2008) stress the importance of the supplied infrastructure by the destination which determines to a great extend in what way tourists can keep up their environmental friendly behaviour during their stay. Phipps et al. (2012) support these findings by explaining that the issues concerning habit and routine symbolise the most important ones.
- Mahoney (2011) states the importance of making green purchasing options available for the mainstream across the different industries. This is supported by Bennet and Williams (2011) who are suggesting to move the environmental friendly purchasing options from niche to normal segments.
- Bennet and Williams (2011) explain that, while making the matter of being environmentally friendly personal, a focus can be pointed to what environmentally options can do for consumers instead of what the consumers can do for the environment. Further they highlight the following aspects in order to normalise the green purchasing gap (pp.122-123).
    - "Create better defaults - With better default options, people don’t have to decide to be green.“
    - "Eliminate the sustainability tax - Consumers shouldn’t have to pay a higher price for virtuous behaviour.“
    - "Bribe shamelessly - Everyone loves to be rewarded for good behaviour.“
    - "Punish wisely - Used with care, shame and guilt are powerful motivators.“
    - „Don't stop innovating - High performing sustainable options are required for mass acceptance.“

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- "Lose the crunch - Green marketing needs to be mainstream hip, not hippie.“
- "Make it tangible - Sustainability is easier to follow when the trail is visible.“
- "Make it easy to navigate - Truth, transparency, and a clear road map are bulwarks against consumer confusion and suspicion.“
- "Tap into hedonism over altruism - Show how much fun is to be had on the green side of life."

What does that mean for the tourism industry?

According to the discussed research we see the possibility of using resources in tourism consciously in order to meet the above researched suggestions on narrowing the gap as the one and only key. Using resources consciously has numerous of underlying benefits for you personally, for you as a tourism provider, as an employer, as a valuable member of the community your tourism products is set within and so on. Looking after your companies, natural and social environment resources is further key to an overall sustainable business. And that is something we are sure you all are working for!

Stay tuned and visit now what? if you are interested in learning about best practice examples demonstrating practical ways on how to transfer the suggestions in to practice.

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