Toward a responsible luxury in the hotel industry

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates in the sustainable luxury strategy for the hotel industry in French Polynesia, with a particular focus on the Brando hotel. Indeed, the luxury hospitality industry has seen a growing market, named sustainable ecotourism due to an evolution of their wealthy clientele. This paper investigates in the main issues of an insolur environment with regards to this strategy. In order to explore these issues, this investigation applied Htpalde and Thapa (2012) analysing tool of the sustainable eco tourism indicators, which considered environmental, economic and sociocultural indicators.

INTRODUCTION

The aims of the research was to discover the alliance of luxury and sustainable development as one strategy for the hotel industry in French Polynesia. Scholars’ name it sustainable luxury. A new hotel in French Polynesia has subscribed to this strategy, it is called the Brando hotel, on Tetiaroa Marlon Brando’s private island. In addition, the research focus on the main issues that small island environment face due to their insularity. Therefore, the research objectives were: to discover how integrate a sustainable development strategy in a luxury DNA; to discover the sustainable development strategy in a tourism framework; to identify the changes in the management and communication by using sustainable development in its luxury strategy; to discover the motivation/interest of building a resort which aims to be 100% ecological; to discover the benefits that LEED certification provides to the Brando; to identify the different stakeholders in this project; and identify the different issues that this model can raise in an island environment, to identify the eco innovation role in this new concept, to identify the different challenges of this model in an island environment, to identify the different benefits of this new model for the tourism industry.

The research question is : How luxury can coexist with sustainable development for the Brando hotel in French Polynesia?

METHODOLOGY

The research philosophy used critical realism approach as the aim of the research was to discover how luxury and sustainable development can coexist in the hotel industry with a particular focus on the Brando hotel in French Polynesia, a small island environment. Thus, the study followed the inductive approach as it allows to get a feel of what was going on, and the research was about the experience of the tourism actors with regards to the sustainable luxury strategy. Thus the research purpose of this study was exploratory.

RESULTS

Required qualitative data from 7 participants whom are actors in French Polynesia tourism market, agreed to take part in the qualitative research, which subscribed to an exploratory study. The quantitative research had 51 local students as a sample size; the data collected used the survey strategy. The overall research design used cross-sectional qualitative and quantitative design. Therefore the research strategy used was survey strategy as it suggest possible reason for particular relationship between variable.

- Economic sustainability: the Brando hotel had provided employment during the contraction phase and exploitation phase. However the economic sustainability last to improve, as the opening was on July 2014. The sustainability approach has a cost. Sustainable tourism, eco tourism is a growing market, wealthy clientele is seeking for it.
- Environmental sustainability: the use of renewable energies help to be environmentally friendly, it requires special management by the stakeholders in order to be eco-friendly (waste, special management special training). Non profit organisations improve the knowledge of small island such as Tetiaroa through scientific research. Nonetheless luxury standards of a 5 stars hotel meet limits from an ecologist point of view. Moreover, obsolete regulation has pushed the promoter of the Brando to use plane instead of seaplane.
- Sociocultural: space management was required for Tetiaroa island, as there were actors which has a particular interest on Tetiaroa; indeed social and cultural values are shared through hotel activities: restaurant, activities. Also, a special management was set for the employees on site (infrastructures, planning)

Quantitative study:
- The tendency: sustainable development practice are understood by local student (recycling, consumption of organic product) Also they prefer eco label product as non eco label product, they are willing to pay the price for a product which is environmentally friendly. Moreover they mostly choose eco label product because it is better for their health and they are concerned about the impact they have on the environment. Plus they influence by the cause that the brand is defending and the quality price ratio. 
- The majority (87%) have already been to a luxury hotel.
- The profile: majority whom answered were women, they have at least a licence degree and have around 20 to 25 years old

DISCUSSION

- Sustainable development and luxury share values for the hospitality industry
- Certification, labels and involvement in organization devoted to the protection of the marine wildlife acknowledge the commitment of those hotel into the sustainable development concept. 
- Economic: local employment, work with local companies and local importers, the financial sustainability need to be proved in few year. LEED certification and renewable energy cost.
- Environment: new technologies and renewable energies respond to the need of small island in order to be self sufficient in energy and to mange their waste management. Scientific researcher, help to enhance the knowledge about small island like Tetiaroa. Does International standards of luxury 5 stars hotel are obsolete? Does wealthy clientele need a pool in front of their villas while they have the lagoon near by
- Sociocultural: share a common project with the stakeholders; clientele in proposing eco friendly activities, in informing the clientele about Tetiaroa environment (naturalistic guide, interact with researcher) Employee; special training to be aware of their environment.
- Sustainability at the destination scale need to be effectuated (hospitality, agriculture, fishing, waste management, renewable energy). Plus the future generation is joining the sustainable concept, they are looking for ecolabel products, they are concerned about their impact on their environment and their health. Education has to play a role, it will enhance the capacity of the country and its population to

CONCLUSIONS

- Sustainable luxury strategy has an economic interest for the country, as for the tourism actors as for the population. Education has a role to play in order to motivate Polynesian population, economic actors and stakeholders, to have a sustainable vision through their actions.
- Challenges: local agriculture, obsolete regulations, political slowness, international standards of a 5 stars hotel, the economy of scale is lacking as the insularity do not allow mass tourism , the luxury standards of a five star hotel.

REFERENCES