



World Tourism Forum Lucerne 2011

Where global leaders meet the next generation

"Sustainability in tourism: Challenges, pathways and intelligent business models"

Final Summary

This April, 230 leaders from around the world gathered at the second World Tourism Forum Lucerne to examine in detail the topic of sustainability in the tourism industry. Based on the numerous examples presented during the Forum it is clear that sustainability already now offers many promising opportunities for businesses in the tourism sector.

Two renowned speakers started off the World Tourism Forum Lucerne: James Hogan (CEO of Etihad Airways) presented his experience of managing an extremely dynamic growth process. His speech was followed in direct contrast by Prof Tim Jackson (U.K. Sustainable Development Commission), who put forward that a rewarding life does not solely depend on economic growth in his presentation titled "Prosperity without Growth?". The challenge the industry faces of pursuing growth and efficiency on the one hand and providing authentic and personal experiences with a minimum of resources on the other led to further discussions during the following days.

Dynamic plenary discussions, breakout sessions, workshops, and the World Café provided ample opportunity for presenting numerous examples on the successful use of sustainability as a business concept in this field. An Indian hotel chain owner is committed to turning rundown palaces into hotels, a Canadian tour operator requires all of its product components to be produced sustainably, and entire countries are starting to adapt sustainability in their visions for managing destinations. Whereas the executives surveyed at the Forum indicated that sustainability is not yet of strategic importance to many leading providers, they also agreed that educating and motivating buyers to commit themselves to this issue will be a critical success factor for making the industry more sustainable.

A study that Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts conducted for World Tourism Forum Lucerne showed that buyers are generally unwilling to pay for sustainable tourism products. Instead, they increasingly expect their products to be already sustainable. In other words, sustainability is expected to be built into the product rather than offered as a separate feature. All companies along the tourism value chain will therefore need to fully integrate sustainability aspects into their product design, which will mean a considerable investment. While technology may be part of the solution, it won't be enough to transform the industry as a whole. Instead, the decisive factors for bringing about change will involve boosting cooperation throughout the industry and obtaining effective government incentives.

WORLD TOURISM FORUM LUCERNE

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World Tourism Forum Lucerne again showed its key role as a platform for helping the industry leaders to further develop their strategy. To bring about a change in perspectives and to generate really new ideas and business models is only possible by engaging in intense discussions across disciplines. The Forum also proved to be a first-rate venue for maintaining existing friendships and forging new business contacts. For example, the tourism minister of the Maldives and the CEO of myclimate signed a contract for climate neutral holidays in the Maldives. The World Tourism Forum Lucerne wants to make it known that it is seriously committed to walking the talk, and it therefore compensated all greenhouse gas emissions incurred from the event.

Besides sustainability, the tourism industry faces the crucial challenge of attracting sufficiently well qualified and motivated employees. With its talent management concept, World Tourism Forum Lucerne is the first organisation of its kind to take a step in this strategic direction by offering the best students of its worldwide network of partner universities the possibility to submit a paper on sustainability. The seven winners of the contest were invited to Lucerne, where they could benefit from the unique concentration of management issues under discussion and make new contacts. In addition, many CEOs invited their company's most promising talent to accompany them to Lucerne.

The refreshing exchange of ideas was inspiring to participants, and in particular to young talents, some of whom already now are working for the contacts they made while in Lucerne. For companies in the tourism sector, employees with first-rate training and a strong awareness for service quality are the key to success. At the same time, the sector faces stiff competition when it comes to recruiting, promoting and retaining its best young staff. This makes it all the more important to offer new incentives such as the Young Talent programme to ensure that tourism remains an attractive career choice.

The second successful event established World Tourism Forum Lucerne as the tourism sector's think tank and as the leading platform for discussing strategic issues and exchanging ideas directly in person. Managers now face the challenge of integrating these ideas when designing and marketing their products.

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