Manual

A Practical Guide for Responsible Management of Tour Operators in Myanmar
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Publishers:
Ministry of Hotels and Tourism
Building No 33, Naypyitaw
Tel.: +95 67 406454
website: www.tourism-myanmar.org

Myanmar Tourism Federation
No.3A, Corner of Waizayandar Road & Thanthumar Road,
Thuwanna Township, Yangon
Tel: +95-1-855 1012, 855 1013
Website: www.myanmartourismfederation.org

Hanns Seidel Foundation in Myanmar
Unit 7, Ground Floor, Inya Lake Hotel,
No.37, Kaba Aye Pagoda Road,
Mayangone Township, Yangon
Tel.: +95 1 667 225
Website: www.hss.de/southeastasia/en/myanmar.html

All Asia Exclusive
No 16/1, Bawzin Lane (2), 24th Quarter
Thuwanna Township, Yangon
Tel.: +95 1 563 808
Website: www.allasiaexclusive.asia

Author: Lisa von Bischofinck
Special Acknowledgments: Nicole Häusler, U Phyoe Wai Yar Zar, Achim Munz,
Chit Su Wai, Lee Sheridan, Nyein Chan, Edwin Briels, Frauke Wendler
Cartoon Credits: Ko MAuk Gyi, Chit Thu, APK
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Layout: Ko Aung Myo
Translation: U Khin Htun

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Union Minister’s Introduction

Myanmar has earned a reputation as a world class tourist destination since it possesses a wide variety of attractions for tourists. Majestic mountain ranges with snowcapped peaks, lush green forests with interesting flora and fauna, great lakes and rivers and long stretches of unspoiled beaches are all part of Myanmar’s natural endowment. Myanmar also has a rich and diverse cultural heritage. These assets, coupled with a pleasant climate and a hospitable people, confirm Myanmar’s vast potential to develop its tourism sector.

Recently, Myanmar has enjoyed the dramatic growth in international tourist arrivals. In response to the rapid growth in tourism demand, Myanmar has been taking cautious steps to sustain the development and work in synergies of tourism stakeholders in making Myanmar a better place for people to live in and a better place to visit. We have shown our strong commitment to develop tourism in Myanmar in a sustainable and responsible manner by the adoption of Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy and Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism. In addition to this, we have developed and adopted Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2013-2020) in order to maximize the tourism benefits and minimize the negative effects of tourism. These policies serve as the guiding principles for any undertakings of tourism activities.

Tour operators play an essential role in tourism. If tour operators are responsibly working, it can have direct impacts on the stakeholders. Many of the tour operators in Myanmar are small and medium enterprises. Increase competitiveness and limited access to financial and human resources make it challenging for some small and medium tour operators to invest time and money into responsible tourism management.

Recognizing these challenges the Manual was written to give tour operators in Myanmar a better understanding about responsible tourism and opportunities to improve their own standards and products. This will help in the long term all the people in Myanmar.

This Manual should be seen as a living document to be reviewed and updated when deemed necessary. It is one further step for the systematic development of responsible tourism in Myanmar’s tourism sector.

H. E. U Htay Aung
Union Minister of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Myanmar Tourism Federation - Introduction

Responsible tourism is becoming a widely known and appreciated concept. Many travellers are searching for experiences that are in harmony with the social and ecological environment but still tailored to their interests. They are informed about the negative impacts of tourism and like to travel with companies who manage their tours and businesses in a responsible way.

Myanmar Tourism Federation is working hard to achieve our Mission statement: “To support and represent the private sector in the promotion of Myanmar as responsible world-class destination benefiting our communities, living cultures, values and environment.” And the Federation wants to give the local tour operators a better insight in responsible tourism in practice, and to support them in an increasingly competitive industry to meet the international standards. We are therefore happy to present this manual for the tour operators in Myanmar.

The manual provides an overview on the theory of responsible tourism but its main objective is to show how responsible tourism can be translated into practice. Therefore it presents small, inexpensive steps that can be put into action quickly.

The handbook should be seen as a work in progress. The situation is changing quickly and the manual should also be regularly adapted to the newest standards.

Myanmar Tourism Federation hopes this manual will be a useful resource for tourism suppliers and supporters who are interested in responsible tourism.

U Yan Win
Chairman
Myanmar Tourism Federation
Background

This handbook includes practical examples and tools, which tour operators in Myanmar can use in order to manage their business in a responsible way.

The manual provides a theoretical background to responsible tourism as well as best practice examples for responsible tourism activities in Myanmar and other countries. The aim is to present simple suggestions that any tour operator can use to start manage their business in a responsible way.

Readers of this manual should not attempt to implement all of the options outlined in this manual at once. It is often better to start with a few achievable actions and then build on those in future. The manual should therefore rather be read as a set of options that can be used to achieve a responsible business. The intention of this manual is to initiate a process that leads to responsible operational procedures in the long term and a multi-stakeholder involvement.

By using this manual tour operators will learn how to:

- Manage their business in a responsible way
- Save money by reducing operating costs
- Increase the quality of their products and services
- Maximise comparative advantages in the marketplace
- Support their stakeholders in implementing and maintaining responsible tourism

Once a company has decided to manage its business in a responsible way, there’s always the question how to do so. To make this task easier, this manual divides tour operators businesses in the following four sections:

1. Responsible management at your office
2. Responsible Product Design
3. Customer Relations
4. Responsible management of suppliers

The partners contributing to this manual are the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF); Myanmar Tourism Federation (MTF), and Myanmar Tour Operator all asia exclusive.
Responsible Tourism

Tourism industry in Myanmar is a growing pillar of the state’s economy. In the past decade tourist arrivals were growing significantly. Since 2008 international arrivals increased from 700 thousand to over 1 million in 2012 and are projected to reach 3 million visitors in 2015. (Tourism Master Plan Myanmar, 2013)

Increasing tourism can offer many benefits to Myanmar. If managed in the right way tourism contributes to the improvement of the quality of life in Myanmar. While poorly managed developments and irresponsible tourism practices can adversely affect the environment and destroy the natural and cultural beauty on which the tourism industry is depending.

Tourism consumes massive quantities of resources on a daily basis (e.g. water, energy, fossil fuels, etc.). In addition tourism creates waste and pollution (especially caused by transportation). It can force local people to compete for essential resources with tourism businesses and their guests (e.g. land rights, access to the beach) and raise the prices for basic goods like food to a critical level.

A shift in thinking and acting is needed in order to ensure that damage to the very environment and cultural heritage that sustains the industry, is minimized. This can be achieved through Responsible Tourism.

Responsible Tourism is an approach to manage tourism, aimed at maximising economic, social and environmental benefits and minimising costs for destinations. Simply put, Responsible Tourism is tourism “that creates better places for people to live in, and better places for people to visit.” (Responsible Tourism Policy Myanmar 2012, p. 4)

Responsible and sustainable tourism are interchangeable concepts – we prefer using the term ‘responsible tourism’ as it underlines the necessity that everyone, suppliers as well as tourists need to be committed – which means you and your company as well.

In 2012 the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism in cooperation with the Myanmar Tourism Federation and Hanns-Seidel-Foundation (HSF) published the “Myanmar Responsible Tourism Policy”. This Policy is led by the following vision: “We intend to use tourism to make Myanmar a better place to live in – to provide more employment and greater business opportunities for all our people, to contribute to the conservation of our natural and cultural heritage and to share with us our rich cultural diversity. We warmly welcome those who appreciate and enjoy our heritage, our way of life and who travel with respect.” (Responsible Tourism Policy Myanmar 2012, p. 6)

This vision is also the basis for this manual.
Tour operators play a central role in the tourism supply chain. Accommodations, transport companies, tour guides and customers from around the world are all part of the stakeholders network of tour operators (see illustration below). Therefore tour operators have a crucial role as a link between the supply and the demand side of tourism services. Their decisions and restrictions can influence the tourism industry significantly. Consequently tour operators have a special liability and can be the driver for change towards more responsible practices.

Why is Responsible Management Important for Tour Operators?

Tour operators have a long supply chain, which involves different companies and places. And responsible tourism can only be achieved if all the partners work towards the same goals. Responsible tour operators have therefore the vital task to manage their businesses in a responsible way, but also to encourage their suppliers and clients to act in a responsible manner. This is only possible if the upper management is committed and supports responsible management and to maintain environmental management in the long term.

The reasons for implementing Responsible Tourism have been already discussed: Tourists want to enjoy beautiful nature and meet friendly local people. If landscapes are polluted and local people are alienated by tourism, tourists will not visit those areas. Thus tourism destroys itself in the long term if the industry doesn’t take care of its surroundings.

But there are also a lot of positive outcomes for your business if managed responsibly. The most important advantages on the supply side are cost savings and secondly an improved service. If environmental management is implemented on a broad basis even small steps can lead to cost savings.

Responsible Tourism seeks to improve quality. Thus responsible companies can offer products of better quality to their customers. The tourism industry is highly competitive and tour operators are under increasing pressure to differentiate their products. Research suggests that once the main criteria for a holiday are satisfied, clients will make choices on ethical consideration.
Responsible Management at your Office

In this chapter you can learn, how to:
- Manage your office environmental friendly
- Involve and train your employees in aspects of responsible tourism
- Develop your own responsible management code for your company

Environmental Management at your Office

It might be argued, that sustainability of office operations is not important for tour operators, because in comparison to the impacts of flights their effect on the environment is rather low. But the purchase, use and disposal of materials and equipment, as well as the energy and water consumption can cause a wide range of impacts. Such small practical aspects like minimising paper use help to focus on the importance of environmentally responsible management on a daily basis.

Box 1: Guiding principles for environmental management:
- Take from the earth only the minimum
- Put back only the minimum waste
- Follow the 3 R’s of environmental conservation:
The “3R” saving principle: REDUCE – REUSE – RECYCLE

The order of these three steps is fundamental. Prior to recycling or reusing, one should try to reduce the use of the resources in general. By changing our daily consumption behaviour in this way, we save money and respect the environment.

Following are some suggestions on how to minimize the negative impacts of your office operations:

Minimise paper use. Reduce paper by thinking where you might not need paper anymore and use electronic records instead. Think before you print, there's no need to print every email. Use both sides of paper sheets in the office. Collect paper in a separate bin and recycle it.

Efficiently regulate air conditioning. Air condition can account for up to 60 percent of office energy bills. Increasing their efficiency by closing doors and windows while the air condition is on and using timed thermostats will cut costs. Try to use a fan and open the windows in the cooler season. Turn off air condition during lunch break.
Electronic devices. Set computers and monitors to go into power-saving mode if unused for 15 minutes. Switch off computers, scanners and printers at the end of the day. When you have to buy new electronic devices take their energy consumption into account.

Reduce the use of plastic. Using big water gallons in your office, where everybody can refill their glasses instead of small plastic bottles saves money and the environment. In box number 2 is an example how to reduce the use of plastic bottles during tours.

Switch to renewable energy sources wherever possible. Non-renewable energy sources – such as fossil fuels are limited and they have negative impacts on the environment. Renewable sources – such as sun and wind are infinite and do not damage the environment.

General small steps to minimize the impact on the environment of your office operation:

- Use only rechargeable batteries. This might look more expensive at the beginning, but it is an easy cost saver in the long term
- Eco-labelled cleaning products are making their way into Myanmar and why not be one of the first in Myanmar who replaces the chemistry cleaning products with eco-friendly ones
- Try to use only tea and coffee from Myanmar in your office, if possible even fair trade/ organic coffee and tea.
Box 2: Engage tourists to use reusable water bottles - Best practice example: Khiri travel

Khiri Travel, a tour operator with its main businesses in South East Asia, developed a concept how to travel during their tours in Thailand without buying water in disposable plastic bottles.

First they made a survey with the guests from Khiri Travel and the office staff about how they like the idea of reusable bottles during their travel. After that they created a plan to implement reusable metal bottles during roundtrips. Now Khiri Travel Thailand gives the guests reusable metal bottles at the beginning of their journey and provides the opportunity to refill these bottle on big cans with drinking water. For more information visit: http://khiri.com/2014/08/reusable-water-bottle-thailand/
Involvement of Employees

It is important, that the staff of your company understands and is committed to the concept of responsible tourism. Without an active participative staff, responsible tourism is not achievable.

The ways staff is trained, rewarded and empowered will have significant implications for the success of the company. Beyond that the concept of “putting people first” is an essential concept of responsible tourism.

Responsible operators should be committed to assist their staff to improve their expertise on an ongoing basis. Staff training can range from generic topics applicable to everyone (e.g. responsible tourism, potential positive and negative impacts of tourism, etc.) to more specific and technical topics that focuses on particular job descriptions.

For the general working conditions tour operators should aim to:

Sign formal contracts with all staff. Respect the fundamental “working principles and rights at work” of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) such as Freedom ——of association – Elimination of forced labour – Abolition of child labour – Elimination of discrimination. (For further information see page 30).

Ensure a good working environment. This includes health and safety issues, like hygiene standards and safe transport but also a friendly atmosphere nobody has to be afraid to ask questions. Pay fair wages above the standard minimum wages are recommendable.

Ensure employee satisfaction. Try to give your staff a variety of tasks and responsibilities. Provide cash and non-cash incentives for good work. Think about flexible working hours, this might help especially staff with children. Provide opportunities for career advancement, staff that stays long term in your company can support you the best.
Promote equality in gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability. Ensure that in your whole company at low and high management level equality is considered.

Provide regular staff training.
- Mix classroom training and on the job coaching
- Ask staff where they would like to develop more skills or knowledge
- Involve staff in developing responsible standards
- Give recognition/awards as an incentive to put trainings into action

(based on TEATA 2010, p.38)

Box 3: The Code – Best practice example
One important training opportunity is offered by The Code. The Code is an industry-driven responsible tourism initiative with a mission to provide awareness, tools and support to the tourism industry in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. Child sex tourism often takes place in hotels and uses other travel infrastructure. That’s why working with responsible tourism companies is a powerful way to keep children safe and prevent these crimes. The Code offers a variety of trainings for employees at tour operators and tour agencies in children’s rights, the prevention of sexual exploitation and how to report suspected cases. You can directly get in contact with The Code by visiting their website www.thecode.org or call +662 637 9939
A responsible management code describes the ethical rules of operations. It works as a guideline that everyone will operate under, managing directors as well as all staff. The benefits of such a responsible management code are that it defines your principles of ethics and provides the base for a corporate culture. Your customers and business partners know what the company stands for. You have clear guidelines to help to protect the environment of your company’s core products.

A code has a value by itself but an important part is to develop and to improve the code through a continuous dialogue with your staff.

To develop your own code, you have to think about how your company wants to behave in certain situations, what your company stands for and how you will deal with difficulties.

Such enterprise specific guidelines don’t need to be more than two pages long and should contain roughly equal proportions of economic, social and environmental objectives.

How to develop your own responsible management code:

- Discuss with your staff what impacts your company has on the environment and on the society. Both at the destinations where your tour programs take place and at your office
- Develop short guidelines as your responsible management code explaining how your company will work to minimize negative impacts and to increase benefits
- Publish the code online and in your brochures
- Design your tour programs according to these guidelines
- Train all staff about the guidelines, explaining the reasons behind the different elements and show them how they can help to put the code into practice.

Below, criteria are listed, that could be part of a responsible management code. You should though choose the criteria carefully that fit your own company.
- Corporate Values and Behaviours
  - What are our core values?
  - What is our general workplace culture?

- Economic Benefits
  - Fair employment / Good working conditions
    - How can we guarantee fair working conditions?

- Local Benefits
  - How can we support local communities?

- Social Benefits
  - How to work with local communities
    - How can we ensure that negative impacts for the social and cultural lives of local communities are minimized?
  - Safety and Health
    - How can we guarantee safety and health for our employees and customers?

- Environmental Benefits
  - Energy conservation
  - Water conservation
  - Waste disposal
  - Respect animal rights
    - How will we minimize our negative environmental impacts?

There already exist many codes of conduct and criteria for sustainable tourism, developed by international organisations. Such a general code can be a good inspiration for developing your own code.

In the box below are some codes of conduct for the tourism industry listed:

Responsible product design intends two things. Firstly it aims to reduce the impact of tourism through practices that are environmentally friendly, economically viable and socially equitable. Secondly responsible products are to be developed to meet the expectations and needs of visitors, thus quality of the product is important.

Designing a responsible holiday package includes understanding the destination very well. Finding ways to maximise positive benefits and knowing what negative impacts the different tour components can have.

Box 4: Examples for code of conducts in Responsible Tourism:
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators:
  www.gstcouncil.org
- Global Code of Ethics for Tourism from the World Tourism Organisation:
  ethics.unwto.org

Examples for Code of Conducts from tour operators in Myanmar:
Khiri Travel Inbound tour operator in Southeast Asia
Exotissimo Inbound tour operator in Southeast Asia
  http://www.exotravel.com/exotravel/story/exo-values/
  http://www.exotravel.com/exotravel/story/responsible-travel/
Exodus Uk tour operator with tours in Myanmar
  http://www.exodus.co.uk/responsible-travel/responsible-travel-policy
The newest surveys on responsible tourism show, that the demand for responsible travel products is rising. 42% of the German travellers say: “It’s important that tour operators are engaged in responsible tourism.” One third of UK holidaymakers say they consider responsible tourism when booking. And 12 percent of the German travellers are even willing to pay a higher price for responsible tourism packages. Lack of information and limited offers were the most barriers for people who want to travel responsibly.

During the World Travel Market 2014 in London a survey was published on the engagement from UK tour operators in responsible tourism. 50% of the respondent say that responsible tourism is already central important or very important within their company. Furthermore two thirds of the industry says the importance of sustainability will increase over the next three years. The industry’s increased focus on responsible tourism should have an impact on responsible tourism in general.

Careful planning and selection of the parts of a holiday package is therefore essential. And contributes to the conservation of biodiversity, reduces negative socio-cultural impacts and supports the local economy.

Furthermore you should consider offering creative and special products that differ from your competitors. The motivation for travelling is moving away from only passive sun and beach to more curiosity motives. Myanmar still provides a lot of opportunities for niche markets.

- Favour service providers that offer fair working conditions for their employees.
- Provide opportunities for customers to purchase locally made goods.
- Pay fair prices for goods and services sourced from local communities. If local entrepreneurs are unsure of a feasible price for their goods,

Box 6: Focus on special target groups – Best practice example 3 Sister Adventure Trek

The tour operator “3 Sister Adventure Trekking” in Nepal is specialized in providing female trekking guides and assistants for female travellers. Many tours that they offer are for women only. With this they occupied a niche market and achieved great success. For further information about the 3 sisters, have a look at their website: http://www.3sistersadventuretrek.com

The Target Group is an important point for your product design. You should know what they want to do while travelling, and plan the tour accordingly. Be creative about your target group. In Myanmar there are many things that still can be developed – why not make a tour program for single women traveller – Myanmar is a good place for single traveller because it is safe and women are treated with respect.
facilitate cost calculation in terms of time and effort taken in production, and the cost of materials, rent etc. in order to derive a price which ensures a break-even. The objective of fair pricing is not to obtain rock-bottom prices, which may ultimately lead to the demise of the businesses. Indeed, it is relatively easy to drive a hard bargain with emerging entrepreneurs who are in any case acting on your advice and mentorship but this will not create enduring businesses and foster economic progress in your local community.

Show interest in local culture, explain the tourists beforehand what they can expect and how they should behave.

Give feedback to everyone you work together with e.g. community members, local enterprises, restaurants, etc. And pass on positive feedback from the guests

Plan the route of a tour package carefully. Avoid parts of destinations at certain seasons or for a specific period (e.g. at animal breeding season,...).

Take care of animal rights. Avoid places where animals are not treated with respect (e.g. most of the elephant camps, snake temples, etc.).

Create Opportunities for involvement of local people and cultural exchange
Minimize the impacts on the environment by minimizing your waste. Use reusable water bottles (see box No 2 about reusable water bottles). Carry all waste and trash you generated with you while there’s no rubbish bin available.

Limit your group size. Especially when going in remote areas.

Include visits to communities or conservation organisations which are conducting conservation work. And give guests by that the opportunity to contribute to environmental sustainability.

Diversify your products and offers
- Develop and encourage the initiation of new tourism products and services
- Read online web-forums to see what tourists are discussing and learn what they want

Box 7: Child Protection
- Tell tourists, they shouldn’t support begging children.
- If they want to donate money collect it and give it to a local organisation. By giving money to children you support them in not going to school and leading an unsafe live.
- Children are no tourist attractions
- Visiting an orphanage exploits children for the financial gain of the organisers. Often poor living conditions are maintained to get more money from tourists.
- Tell your tour guides and your guests, they should report immediately when faced with a situation of potential sexual exploitation.
- Globally a high percentage of sex workers are minors. If your tour guides or guests witness anything suspicious with underage offering sex or adults propositioning a child. They should report to you, or call the following number:
- Child Safe Number Myanmar: 09594955888

Environmental Aspects of a Responsible Tour

Box 8: Rural Development Society (RDS) - Best practice example:
This community-based organisation provides different aid-projects for the surrounding villages. For example they build schools and libraries and provide microfinance and water supply. The RDS finances itself from donor organisations. They have a small office in Kalaw where they sell artworks from surrounding villages. If you have a small trekking tour, consider to visit RDS in their office and give the tourists the opportunity to buy some local artwork.

Further information and contact details can be found here: https://ruraldevelopmentssociety.wordpress.com/
Economic Aspects of a Responsible Tour

- Identify opportunities for new products
- Evaluate the economic implications (so that local communities profit)
- Relate the proposed new product to the market
- Exploit different markets
- Assure the quality of local services and products

Retain as much as possible in the local economy. Support small traditional entrepreneurs during your tours (e.g. Boatmen, traditional massage, pottery, etc.).

Increase the length of your tourist season. You could achieve this for example by promoting festivals in Myanmar during low season (e.g. Water festival in April), by promoting “cooler” regions, which are better to visit during the summer time and by offering lower prices outside the high season.

Relate prices to quality. Ensure that the quality offered is appropriate to the market being targeted and the price charged. Only then you have satisfied customers who will book again and tell their friends and family about your company and their time in Myanmar.

Two of the main reasons to decide for an accommodation are the location and the price. In some destinations in Myanmar you might not always have the possibility to choose but if you do, consider also the following aspects:

Box 9: Green Hill Valley Elephant Camp: - Best practice example
This Elephant Camp is a small camp founded by Htun Htun Wynn, his wife Tin Win Maw Toet and her uncle U Ba Kyaw Than. Maw. They all have the love for elephants and for their country in common and wanted to create a unique product in Eco based Tourism. That’s why they founded the Green Hill Valley Elephant Camp.
Now they have seven elephants at the camp. The uniqueness about their camp is that all elephants are free and you can watch them in the morning taking a bath or wash them when you’re lucky.
They also have a forest recovery program for people who love to conserve the nature and environment. For each visitor they plant one tree.
For including this project in your tour program get in
Planning the Tour Components

To plan a responsible tour, each part of the supply chain has to be considered. Especially important are: the type of accommodation, the method of transport, the type of excursion and the inclusion and selection of food and beverage.

Accommodation

Consider environmental management standards. For example what is the accommodation doing with their waste? Do they measure their water and energy consumption?

Inform yourself about the working conditions for the staff. Do they have fair working hours and get fair wages?

Consider the Supply Chain from the accommodation. Where does the accommodation get its products from? Do they offer mainly products from the region?

Regard the design of the accommodation. Does it fit in its surroundings? Is it far enough away from the coast – or other sensitive areas?

Getting to the destination and getting around at the destination, for both ways it’s important to consider environmental friendly methods of transport:

Contribute to the value of the destination by decreased levels of air pollution.
Use environmental friendly methods of transport whenever possible. Walking, bicycles, busses or trains are better for the environment than air planes and cars. And tourists frequently enjoy using environmental friendly transportation like bikes or horse carts.

Diversify your product through different use of transportation. Tourists might get a better insight into the destination, when travelling with slower transportation. Be creative think about new means of transport (e.g. trishaws, non-motorized boats, public busses, private ox-carts, moped-taxis, etc).

Environmental friendly transportation is often cheaper which might be another reason to think twice about your transportation decision.

Taking into account the type of holiday and the options available, it should be considered that Myanmar still has many options to diversify the forms of excursions. It’s not always about where guests can go (new destinations); it’s also about what guests can do (new activities). When planning excursions think about the following aspects:
Discover new destinations in a sensitive and gentle way. Myanmar has still a lot of unknown off the beaten track destinations. When planning tours in rather remote areas it’s very important to consider the tourism capacity. Plan everything in an extra thoughtful and comprehensive way, so that the negative impacts are minimized.

Create creative opportunities for cultural exchange with local people. Develop interesting activities based on special aspects of local life and culture, which community members feel proud and comfortable to share with guests. This could include arranging a class for guests where they can learn traditional arts and skills. For example a workshop could be visited where guests can learn to produce their own lacquer ware, or guests could take part in a cooking class, etc.

Provide your guests with opportunities to actively support local communities and environmental preservation (e.g. hands-on activities, visit local projects, …)

Plan activities in cooperation with local companies and communities.

Consider the following aspects for food and beverage in your tour package:

Eat at local restaurants as often as possible since these can form key economic benefits for the destination

Create new experiences for tourist and at the same time new income opportunities for locals
Food and Beverage

Don’t include all the meals in the package price. Otherwise customers have little opportunity to explore the food variety by themselves and visit small, local restaurants.

Arrange stops where local food is served and give tourists the opportunity to try it. Markets and tea shops as part of the tour experience can add valuable, unique elements to a tour. And you can improve economic benefits to local people.

Consider the hygiene standards at restaurants, give restaurants assistance in providing hygiene standards, see the capital on responsible management of suppliers for more information.

Give preference to regional, “fair trade” and organically grown products wherever possible.

And support restaurants where they do so. The choices and behaviour of tourists are key contributors to the overall sustainability of a holiday package. At the same time tourists are often unaware of the impacts they may be causing during their holidays. Tour Operators are ideally positioned to raise awareness and support and influence responsible behaviour by

Provide opportunities for tourists to purchase locally made goods
their customers. Information prior to the tour and interpretation during tour are equally important to increase visitors’ awareness, knowledge and appreciation of the natural and cultural environment.

In the following are some ideas collected on how tour operators can explain tourists their role in responsible tourism. Tour guides play an essential role on explaining tourists how they should behave during their trip:

- Provide an information package for guests on arrival, with details on how they should behave. Such an Information Package for Tourists could include:
  - The Brochure “Do’s and Don’ts for Tourists”
  - The Myanmar phone number for Child Safety
  - Possible activities that they can do on their own during free time
  - Relevant customs, laws and souvenir restrictions

Research and prepare excellent information for tour guides on how they can instruct tourists to act in a responsible manner.

Tell tour guides to give relevant advice to guests before and during program, especially in sensitive natural or cultural environment.

Tell tour guides to give guests advice on when it is not appropriate to take photos.

Satisfaction of tourists is central to whether tourists return and recommend the tour operator and the destination in general. It is therefore a leading indicator of the long-term sustainability. Tourist satisfaction is based on different factors, including experiences and attractions during travel in general, service quality and the expectations of each tourist.
Many of the elements are highly related to a good management (e.g. information before the tour, quality at supplier side, harmonious itinerary, etc.). Even though there are others that are less influenceable (crime, acts of hostility, weather, etc.)

The things you can and should consider for a good customer satisfaction are:

Be well organized. Programs can be relaxed or artistic but need to be well organized.

Employ knowledgeable tour guides and staff and train them regularly.

Help guests to solve problems during their trips and provide guests with a direct emergency phone number.

Prepare a plan B in case something unexpected happens.

Tourguides should instruct tourists to act in a responsible manner.

Box 10: Informing customers - Best practice example SST Travel

The Myanmar Tour Operator SST Tours has built up a page at their website for Travel Advices for first-time travellers to Myanmar. On this page they’ve put 17 general advices – ranging from advices on tips to general Myanmar culture. For more details see: http://www.ssttourism.com/travel-advice/

Maintain and organize all equipment in advance and double check the day before. (based on TEATA p.20)

The success of tour operators is highly depending on the professional work of each supplier. Responsible tour operators must take accountability for ensuring the sustainability of their suppliers. The selection and contracting of the suppliers is therefore an important task to build up responsible tourism.
But in Myanmar it might be a challenge to find suppliers who manage their business in a responsible way. For that reason tour operators should try to support their suppliers in responsible management. This means that tour operators have the vital task to encourage and to help suppliers to work in a responsible manner.

First the suppliers current performances on sustainability issues should be evaluated. These assessments allow establishing a baseline scenario, against which to measure future improvements. After the assessment a policy for all suppliers should be developed. This policy should include measurable objectives that suppliers have to implement. The main suppliers that should be involved in a Sustainable Supply Chain Policy are accommodations, restaurants, transport companies and excursion providers. But for a start choose only one type of supplier, and maybe only one aspect, depending on the size and specialization of your company, e.g. environmental performance at hotels or hygiene standards at restaurants.

**Method to develop a sustainable supply chain policy:**
1. Prepare assessment
   - Select a sample of suppliers to involve in the assessment
   - Chose the indicators that should be measured
   - The indicators will vary, depending on

If you have the choice prefer hotels who try to minimize their negative social and environmental impacts.
the supplier, the resources available and the number of suppliers
- For example for a hotel the following issues could be covered for a baseline measurement:
  - Electricity consumption per guest-night;
  - Water consumption per guest-night;
  - Management of solid waste,
  - Labour and employment policies;
  - Food sourcing,

2 Assess suppliers current performance
- Determine suppliers general levels of awareness, technical capacity and desire to be involved in a sustainability program
- Use questionnaires, personal meetings or workshops to assess suppliers current sustainability performance on the chosen indicators
- Assess their main concerns and the key areas requiring improvement

3 Develop a Sustainable Supply Chain Policy
- Elaborate a common vision based on the results of the assessment (e.g. minimum environmental and social criteria: for hotels water- and energy-saving measures; Employment policies; etc.)
- Discuss the common vision with key staff
- Based on the discussion and the common vision, develop and agree on a policy and strategic goals for improved supply chain sustainability

4 Prepare and implement an action plan
- Based on the assessment, set targets on which to measure suppliers performance
- Ensure that the standards are achievable
- Develop an action plan to implement the strategy and meet set targets

5 Set the standards into action
- Inform suppliers about the sustainability policy and action plan, and the benefits of improved environmental, social and economic performance
- Recognize that suppliers may have different priorities for improvement and are likely to make progress at different rates

6 Measure the outcomes and report on performance
- Select appropriate indicators for monitoring performance
- Hold regular meetings with relevant individuals, to review progress and help sort out problems as they arise
- Learn from success and difficulties in implementing planned actions and modify plans accordingly
- Report internally by communicating the results back to staff

(based on Tour Operators Initiative 2004)

In the long term perspective, to engage the suppliers, you can integrate sustainability criteria into suppliers contracts.
Box 11: Hygiene control campaign - Best practice example: Atlas Voyage

A Morocco-based inbound tour operator developed a supplier Hygiene Control Campaign. First they identified 17 hotels and restaurants as their main suppliers. Then the tour operator requested an external Food Safety Company to assess the hygiene standards of the restaurants and hotels. After this first examination the tour operator was slightly concerned about the hygiene standards and developed a policy with defined standards. All 17 suppliers are now fully-complying with the designated standards. To ensure this Atlas Voyage visit their suppliers on an annual basis to monitor quality and to begin implementing the next phase of development, which will focus on energy saving and waste recycling.

(based on Tour Operators Initiative 2003, p. 32)
Further Information

Further information on Responsible Tourism Management:

- Tourism Transparency NGO with interesting examples for Responsible Tourism in Myanmar: http://www.tourismtransparency.org/
- Best Practice Examples from Responsible Tourism Projects in South East Asia: www.tourism.wildasia.org
- Asia’s sustainability publication: http://www.gaiadiscovery.com/
- Best practice examples for responsible tourism in Asia: http://www.mekongresponsibletourism.org/myanmar
- Voluntary Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Tour Operator from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council: www.gstcouncil.org
- Tour Operators Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development: www.toinitiative.org
References


