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The Importance of Cultural Awareness in Tourism

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Abstract: Tourism is vital for the success of many economies around the world. There are several benefits of tourism on host destinations. Tourism boosts the revenue of the economy, creates thousands of jobs, develops the infrastructure of a country, and plants a sense of cultural exchange between foreigners and citizens. Many tourists travel to experience the hosting destination's culture, different traditions, and gastronomy. That's why we should put a huge emphasis on initiating the cultural awareness of both people with very different kinds of tourism jobs and tourists in order to advance the level of tourism development.

Key words: incentive, multicultural, diversity, workforce, intercultural communication, leadership, clients.

Cross-cultural awareness can be said to be a process or desire to adapt to another country or culture that is different from its own culture. Cultural differences have a significant impact on communication methods and relationships. Furthermore, cross-cultural awareness not only gives people an incentive to understand their own culture but also can develop attitudes that recognize and accommodate cultural differences. Therefore, cross-culture awareness is regarded as a driving force to develop skills and abilities to overcome cultural disparities. Cross-cultural awareness may also include the desire to know about other countries or other cultures through tourism activity. Along with the increase of cross-cultural tourism, the consumers' tastes changed from repetitive and passive activities to pursuing new experiences.

Being both culturally aware and culturally competent is vitally important when working in the Tourism and Hospitality industries, where multicultural differences are often evident amongst both the international workforce and visiting tourists. In cross-cultural situations, a lack of cultural awareness can lead to poor decisions or actions which may result in unintended consequences and isn't good for business neither. For instance, in countries like Greece and Albania, misunderstandings can be generated by a simple gesture like nodding the head. Therefore, having diversity in any environment is necessary. Cultural awareness and competence allow employees to make insightful, well-considered decisions, communicate better with and show respect to colleagues and guests, acknowledge diversity, build rapport, avoid offense, attract and retain customers and ensure and improve visitor satisfaction and guest experience.

There are some other examples of behaviors that people who work in the field of tourism should avoid while communicating with foreigners of different cultures.

In Uzbekistan:

- Shaking women's hand while greeting
- Not taking off shoes when entering some specific places like religious
- Going to somewhere without covering exposed parts of the body including arms and legs during Ramadan
- Addressing elders or authority figures with irreverence

The key: Be discreet, and respectful of local culture and traditions.

In Britain:

- Being sentimental, emotional, and openly critical in public
- Boasting about your connections
- Talking too much
- Taking sides in-class questions
- Pushing logic too much
- Looking too serious or always taking things literally
- Pressing them if they become vague

The key: At the meeting, don't rock the boat

In China:

- Showing anger or upset
- Rushing Chinese business partners
- Boasting
- Rejecting a Chinese proposal out of hand
- Ignoring anyone brought into your presence
- Topic of human rights (for Chinese)

The key: Humility, Giving a face

In Spain:

- Paying too much attention to Spanish ladies
- Referring to Spanish lack of punctuality, slowness, political or regional instability
- Allowing any Spaniard to lose face in your presence

The key: Protect Spanish honor and integrity

In the USA:

- Talking about problems openly
- Long silences
- Pulling rank
- Challenging the American dream

The key: Remuneration, new challenges

The increasing level of globalization within service industries has brought many challenges – including how to manage a culturally diverse workforce. Managing a multicultural workforce, either within a business unit or within a global corporation can be a demanding task for managers. For individuals, negotiating the complexity of cultural diversity is a lifelong learning task that is relevant to the world of work, the community, and global contexts. Therefore, a variety of resource guides has been produced to encourage and enable academics and indeed managers to make use of the resources in teaching and learning. It is important that lecturers and students within subject areas of tourism and hospitality are able to access resources that enable their wider understanding of the relationship between social and cultural theory (cultural difference, ethnicity, nationalism, cultural identity, cultural taboos, cultural shock, cultures colliding, equality and diversity) and create opportunities where theory can be effectively applied to practice. Cultural diversity education in the curriculum plays a pivotal role in systematically enabling students (indigenous and international) to develop cultural diversity competencies and skills.

There are many advantages to being aware of different cultures.

➤ Effective communication

An understanding of the elements of the intercultural communication process and barriers to intercultural communication is paramount in the development and implementation of an organization's success. An awareness of the significance of communication is crucial in examining ways in which intercultural communication can be enhanced – inclusive language, ethical issues, communication behaviors, and effective communication processes. The following resources provide insight into aspects of intercultural communication.

➤ Keeping the clients

Learning cultural customs about eye contact, physical contact, and hand gestures as they pertain to any clientele with whom you are working closely can boost their satisfaction from any service and of course, good service leads to encouraging customers to use this kind of service again and again. In fact, many tourism employees were happy to supplement their income with tips. They enjoyed being able to influence their tip amount by providing good service.

➤ Promotes leadership

Cultural awareness benefits people in leadership roles and management roles in the field of tourism. For such roles, developing cultural awareness results in better outcomes. It helps them in making appropriate decisions and motivating employees. In such a way, leaders and managers can take decisions with a global mindset. The employees feel acknowledged and valued in any tourism organization.

➤ No conflicts

Diverse people can be of different sexual orientations, gender, age, and national identities. But if tourist organizations are not managed well, they will lead to conflicts among the employees. They need to have understanding and a sense of inclusiveness so that no mutual conflict occurs. As a result, the employees feel more motivated. So, the work is done more effectively.

➤ Successful globalization

As we begin to explore the world in a particular tourism system, we begin to relate to people with cultural differences. Therefore, the cultural connection becomes stronger and reduces the risk of any cultural conflicts. When we are culturally aware, we can consider what may be inappropriate for people with diverse backgrounds. Indirectly, this helps us globalize more easily and effectively and reduces the barriers.

➤ Better workplace

Certainly, diversity in a workspace acts as an essential and strategic tool. A focus on changing relationships at work and the significance of valuing individual differences is crucial for enjoyment and satisfaction at work. Individual differences can foster creativity, enjoyment, and satisfaction in the workplace but can also be the root of conflict and harassment. The following is a list of book chapters that introduce and discuss cultural differences from a management perspective.

Conclusion

Since the tourism industry is growing rapidly worldwide, it is becoming one of the largest industries in the world. This industry has some distinctive characteristics. It is service orientated in which the intangibility of services and the tangibility of products are combined and labor-intensive. This industry offers the best employment and business opportunities and is becoming the largest provider of employment opportunities in this century. Considering those factors, today's guides must understand the importance of multicultural concepts and communication skills in order to be able to work in a workforce diverse environment. In general, some benefits can be gained from understanding the different cultures of the tourism business. It improves good relations between staff in the workplace and overcomes anti-discrimination. When staff are happy and can work in harmony, they are able to provide better service to guests in order to ensure the guests' satisfaction.

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