

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR DEVELOPMENT 2017

MOBILIZING THE STUDENTS THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE NETWORK OF UNWTO

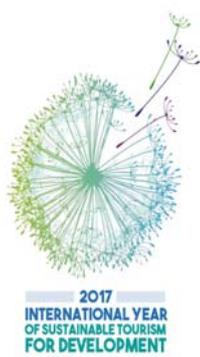
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SUMMARY

In the framework of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 (IY2017), this study aims to propose a line of action on how to achieve higher levels of awareness, responsibility and stewardship of sustainability among the young. Students are entering the work force having already acquired a competitive skillset and well-defined values that often have an impact on their career decisions. The IY2017 is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the contribution of sustainable tourism to development among the younger generation as it constitutes the future leaders of tomorrow.

Qualitative discussions with target groups from UNWTO, Campus Madrid (the Google hub for innovators) and Junior Achievement (one of the largest non-profit organizations dedicated to inspiring and preparing young people to succeed in a global economy) generated a pool of ideas and initiatives that aim to encourage engagement and to shape the mindsets of young professionals.

Unlike other campaigns targeting academia with research initiatives and essay competitions, this one relies upon more action-based approaches such as social entrepreneur challenges and a social media video competition.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR DEVELOPMENT 2017 (IY2017)

The United Nations 70th General Assembly has designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (A/RES/70/193). This is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the contribution of sustainable tourism to development among public and private sector decision makers, while mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change.

<http://www.tourism4development2017.org/>

THE POWER OF THE YOUNG GENERATION

Students are entering the work force having already acquired a competitive skillset and well-defined values and attitudes that often have an impact on the decisions made throughout their entire career. In the fast-changing tourism sector, the youth of today is shaping what the sector will look like tomorrow. Therefore, it is important to achieve higher levels of awareness, responsibility and stewardship of sustainability among students as they begin their careers.

UNWTO KNOWLEDGE NETWORK

With more than 80 educational institutions from around the world and a solid network of students, prominent academic researchers and professors, the Knowledge Network of UNWTO represents not only a strong advocate for fostering talent among the young, but also a powerful platform for dissemination of knowledge and good practices in the tourism sector.

AIM

The aim of this research is to generate ideas and lines of action for the Knowledge Network of UNWTO in the framework of the IY2017. The target group is students and the research seeks to explore ways to get them involved in the celebrations of the IY2017 and empower them to become catalysts for positive change.

RESEARCH METHOD

1. Qualitative discussions with target groups from UNWTO, Campus Madrid (the Google hub for innovators) & Junior Achievement (one of the largest non-profit organizations dedicated to inspiring and preparing young people to succeed in a global economy).
2. Secondary desk research to gather good-practice cases in engaging students in sustainable development causes.

FINDINGS

1. IY2017 Video Competition - an initiative that challenges students to find ways to contribute to a cause they care about during their travels, to identify problems in their local tourism communities and offer solutions to these problems and/or improvements to the communities.
2. Social Entrepreneur Challenge - bringing solutions to persistent social problems in tourism through creation of sustainable business models.
3. Encouragement to participate in UNWTO's 'Travel.Enjoy.Respect' Campaign promoting responsible travel.

DISCUSSION

Conducting problem-based and project-based learning activities, rather than academic essays and research papers, can be effective tools for changing the mindsets and shaping the values of students. Encouragement of social entrepreneurship is an effective way to promote higher levels of awareness, responsibility and stewardship of sustainable tourism practices.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



CONCLUSIONS

Unlike other campaigns targeting academia by proposing research initiatives and essay competitions, this one relies upon more action-based approaches to encouraging engagement and shaping the minds of young professionals from them to become catalysts for positive change in tourism.

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