Repurposing solid waste

Greetings!

According to a report by UNEP in 2003, the average international tourist in Europe is approximated to generate at least 1Kg of solid waste per day and up to 2 Kg per day in the USA. Globally, this translates to about 4.8 million tons of solid waste produced by international tourism alone (UNEP, 2011). If mis-managed, most of this waste ends up in the environment.

Out of the total solid waste generated in the EU, 31% is currently landfilled, 42% is recycled, 6% is incinerated with energy recovery and 21% is unaccounted for (EU, 2007). These are statistics from a developed country. Now imagine the statistics from a developing country with poor waste management systems and policies. The result would be something like the photo below of Dandora Land fill where most solid waste ends up awaiting “recycling”.

This waste pollutes the environment causing habitat and biodiversity loss. It also reduces the quality of life of the society causing hunger, disease, death and increase in poverty. It affects tourism negatively
by decreasing a destination’s appeal and affecting the demand which has a ripple effect on the economy especially for those developing nations that rely on tourism as their main economic pillars.

Most accommodation facilities employ the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse or Recycle) method to manage their solid waste. Our first Eco-byte this year centers further on this area, adding another R (Repurpose) to that equation, hence 4Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose then Recycle) to assist accommodation facilities move towards improved waste management that is more environmentally friendly and economically viable.

Repurposing is a process of converting waste or useless materials into new products of better quality or for better environmental and aesthetic value. It is simply being creative with your waste to come up with products of greater value that could be reused to serve another purpose within the hotel. A good example is an initiative by Kicheche Laikipia Camp, a Gold Eco-rated facility by Ecotourism Kenya; where empty wine bottles are repurposed into drinking glasses, used at the restaurant and guest rooms.

Converting the wine bottles into drinking glasses did not require much energy, consumption of another new raw material, decomposition of the glass or the possible release of greenhouse gases. The bottles
were simply cleaned and cut into drinking glasses. This reduces the amount of waste transported to landfills for “recycling” and the costs associated with it.

Greenhouse made from repurposed plastic bottles. (Photos courtesy of www.goodshomedesign.com)

Notably, Re-purpose should not be confused with “Reuse”. Reuse is basically reusing an item for the same purpose more than once.

In an article shared by Green Hotelier “Upcycling bed linen to support social enterprise and The Prince’s Trust”, Marriott International in the U.K found an innovative way of repurposing their worn out bed sheets, bedcovers and pillow cases into useful products such as bags- that can be sold to benefit the hotel and community as well as reused within the guest rooms hence saving on purchasing costs.

Waste management is a key aspect in the Eco-rating certification, and one of the ways of effectively managing waste is through waste minimization. Adopting the 4\textsuperscript{th} R-Repurposing your waste is a good first step towards minimizing waste hence promoting proper waste management.

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What’s latest on EK Eco-rating Program?

Call for Tour Operator Sustainability Training!!

Following the MoU signed between Ecotourism Kenya, KATO, Travelife and CBI Netherlands, tour operators interested in profiling and streamlining their sustainability practices are invited for a scheduled training in Nairobi on 15th & 16th February 2016. Tour operators who have participated in past trainings in 2011 and 2013 will have a refresher training on 17th February 2016. The training will be sponsored by CBI Netherlands but participating tour operators will commit to the Travelife Tour Operator Partner certification at a cost of 200 Euros.

The partnership fee will provide you with the following services:

- Participation of minimum one person to the Travelife training
- Membership fee for Travelife for 2016
- Personal (in-house) company coaching to reach the Travelife Partner award (within 2016)
- Promotion of awarded companies within national and international markets

If interested, kindly apply for participation by registering through the following link:

www.cbi.eu/sustainability-in-tourism

As the number of participants is limited you are advised to apply as soon as possible. For more information you can contact Naut Kusters (Travelife) n.kusters@travelife.info and Joyce ecoratingpa@ecotourismkenya.org

Compiled by

Joyce Kiruri & Job Ochieng
Eco-rating Program
Ecotourism Kenya