Guest education methods you can adopt in your operations

Tourism has for many years played an important role as a driver of local development and conservation in many countries across the world including Kenya. A myriad of benefits has been realized such as construction of school infrastructure, increased access of water by the communities, improved access to health services, tree planting, wildlife monitoring, employment of rangers from local communities, and monetary contribution to conservation groups among many others. At the heart of it all are the guests, who continue to visit tourist attractions to see the enchanting wildlife and the beautiful landscapes that our country has to offer, not to mention relaxing on the sandy beaches at the coast.

However, tourism has also had an impact on the environment and local cultures in various forms and shapes. For instance, with increased tourism natural resources such as water have been placed under huge pressure due to increased demand for consumption in facilities such as hotels, camps and lodges. This necessitates the need for visitor education or communication, so that guests are informed about why they need to be conscious about the environment, and preserve local cultures while on a safari in various tourist destinations. Many accommodations including those certified by Ecotourism Kenya have already deployed a number of strategies to promote visitor education. This week we highlight a few of these methods. We hope you will be inspired and see yourself playing a role too in visitor education.

Visitor information centre

Undeniably, the world we live in continues to evolve at a faster and more furious pace whether it be technological innovation or digital engagement. As a result, more and more people find it
more convenient to just turn to their phones, ipads and tablets for any information they are looking for. However, despite the increased use of digital channels visitor information centres continue to be reliable sources of information that travelers need, for example on tourist attractions and local people. One such facility in Kenya that has implemented this strategy for use by its guests is Basecamp Masai Mara. The camp established the Enjoolata Awareness Centre enabling communication to guests on various issues such as wildlife conservation and Maasai culture. The illustration below is some of the items displayed at the centre, communicating about the Maasai culture taken during the audit of the camp in October 2020.

Metallic models

Our country boasts unparalleled diversity of wildlife species, and rightly so wildlife tourism has been the most dominant tourism for many years even today. While protected areas such as national parks, national reserves and conservancies host a wide range of animals including lions, elephants and giraffes among others, it is important that guests are informed about wildlife species that they are likely to view in particular destinations. It is true that accommodations are using a variety of methods to this end, but one of the emerging and creative ways is through the use of metallic models. The Gold-rated Mara Bush Camp located in Maasai Mara National Reserve is one of the properties that has adopted this strategy, by naming some of the guest tents
after wildlife species found in the ecosystem. The illustration below is a picture of a buffalo model.

Hotel Apps

Perhaps most of us currently use smart phones for almost everything from managing social media accounts such as Facebook and WhatsApp, to ordering our favorite meals and drinks from retails outlets and booking for holiday. It has been quite convenient in that we are able to do all these at the comfort of our offices or even homes.

It is important to mention that the rise of smartphone technology has also led to rise of hotel apps. Through the hotel apps, guests are able to access a range of services, and improving their experience. One of the properties that currently utilizes hotel app is the Gold-rated Sands at Nomad.

Room information folders

Ensuring that guests know when to take their meals, where to leave the keys, where to drop waste and keep safe etc. is a necessary requirement for accommodations. The use of room information folders to provide this information has been an integral part of operations for most
accommodations. The picture below is a picture of room information folder at Satao Elerai Camp.

Communication has been a big part of any safari and will continue to do so in the years and decades to come. It has allowed managers of accommodations and other tourism businesses to pass useful information, which ultimately improves the overall guest experience not only in the premises but also in the larger destination. We therefore hope that through this article you have learnt a few strategies that you can adopt to promote guest communication in your operations!