

A Convenient Truth for Tourism Sustainable/Responsible Tourism and Renewable Energy for Peace

Max Haberstroh, International Consultant on Sustainable Tourism, Branding, Destination Management, Marketing, Germany, haberstroh-max@t-online.de

Introduction

Cherished as a veritable lifestyle industry, Travel and Tourism has been more and more identified as a highly versatile cross-communication tool among cultures; thus often referred to as *The Peace Industry*. Why not take this job-producing Peace Industry and make it the leading industry in renewable energy conversions under the sign of The Sun? *Sustainable/Responsible Tourism and Renewable Energy together could form the strategic linkage jointly promoting a new lifestyle*. But where are the tourism destination marketing organizations, including more than 25,000 worldwide, that claim to be ecological protagonists and who promote sustainable/responsible tourism, by *making renewable energy the pivot of its social and ecological solidarity*?

Everyone can be an Unlimited Clean Energy Producer

These days there is a documentary movie stirring up people's minds (and hearts): *The Fourth Revolution – Energy Autonomy* (www.energyautonomy.org), produced by Carl-A. Fechner. The documentary responds to Al Gore's blockbuster *The Inconvenient Truth* with a visionary '*convenient truth*': Within thirty years from now, solar, wind, or biogas-powered transport will be real. Will this be the first effects of the butterfly flapping its wings to cause a hurricane in renewable energies?

Many years back, Greenpeace succeeded in arousing people's minds and hearts by simply telling them that "*Man can save whales*". Nowadays, experts teach people about the assets of environmental responsibility, decentralization, sustainability, and they write a lot of papers about it. Instead of rehashing the technical advantages of system updates in coded messages, why not tell people that "*everyone can be an unlimited clean energy producer*"?

Renewable Energy and Sustainable Tourism – a Catalyst of Renewed Solidarity

The idea of tourism is freedom, and the idea of energy is power. Both tourism and renewable energy share their proper sense of sustainability, renewability and locality. Cross-promoting sustainable/responsible tourism and renewable energy would provide a *strategic social business partnership* of two separate industries. Extending an already available concept of 'total tourism' *1) to the renewable energy sector could be instrumental to enhancing cross-industry investment and to mutually boosting exports in both energy and tourism. International tourism organizations and the *World Council for Renewable Energy* could supplement and complement the ongoing bottom-up processes by creating a joint platform for top-down impulses.

*1) (benefits from covering the complementary benefits of inbound and outbound tourism – introduced by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) years ago)

Change and Sustainability: No Contradiction

The basic idea of linking sustainable/responsible tourism with renewable energy is that ‘renewables’ have already been a global issue for a long time, with growing intensiveness ever since many scientists have become sensitized over the man-made impact on climate change.

However, it’s not all about CO₂: People’s health is at stake when smog is in the air, and environmentalists, crying for biodiversity salvation, point to diminishing rainforests, fossil energy calamities and an almost pandemic spread of civilization garbage. Enhanced sustainability and durability, for which we all long, are at stake. Yet, there is no controversial awareness of a ‘ticking clock’ among grassroots stakeholders.

It is time to reflect on our own indifference towards the collateral damage caused by a civilization whose negative impact threatens the desired conditions of many. Using and boosting renewable energy instead of fossil fuels would not require ceding one slice from our usual comfort. On the contrary, it would improve it and the profitability of businesses as well. However, using renewable energy is less dependent on a generally acknowledged rationale, but rather on an amalgam of consumer, company and governmental long-headed habits, combined with the well woven networks of conventional energy supplier and traditional financial players to keep wielding their overwhelming lobbying power with political decision makers.

Renewable Energy – the Pivot of Sustainable Tourism

Energy means *power*, and tourism means *freedom*. These are higher values added to mere functions like providing ‘electric power’ and offering ‘transport/accommodation/recreation’. It is up to us to extrapolate ‘renewable energy’ and ‘sustainable/responsible tourism’ to a ‘lifestyle’, keeping in balance the sense of development of social wellbeing, economic progress and ecological sustainability. But how to handle such an outwardly simple, profoundly reasonable but technically complex issue?

- a) It’s the *core-message* that turns an abstract idea into an emotional picture.
- b) It’s a ‘*face*’ to be identified, recognized, and remembered.
- c) It’s the *surrogate* that may stand as a symbol for the object as a whole.
- d) It’s the way to underpin that “*everyone can be an unlimited clean energy producer*”.
- e) It’s the glimpse across the fence that could make the difference.

Fossil energy has started to show its limitations, whereas renewable energy is practically unlimited. Biological systems are energy systems, after all, and invisible energetic conditions create and form visible and tangible conditions, as evolutionary research tells us. Hence, like fresh air, sunshine, and spring water, energy is originally a gift – renewable and accessible for everyone. Today, the heart of the matter is no longer technology, it is up to the political will to turn the magic of ‘tapping the sun’ into reality – it’s pioneering decision-makers awareness of *butterflies flapping their wings*.

The Convenient Truth is ‘(W)holistic’

Nature itself has no purpose, nor goal, nor will. Attaining biological maturity, the ‘natural system’ follows natural fits which supplement and complement one another. Being ‘organic’ rather than organizational, the natural system points to the deficiencies of human efforts to replace natural processes in a ‘(w)holistic’ perspective by sharply defined functions, hierarchically structured, logically broken down and meticulously categorized. Watching the rich biodiversity of which we ourselves are a part, we may conclude that natural organism is far more apt than man-made organization in creating abundance and managing complexity.

It is time to remember the missing link, time to recall ... *solidarity*: Solidarity with ecological responsibility, human dignity, and trust. An animal's compass is directed by instinct; man's by instinct, or intuition, and conscience. In an effort to help maintain or restore trust and dignity, it is good to be conscious of being part of the Creation. In this very case, *the convenient truth is '(w)holistic'*.

The Sun – Symbol of a Solar Age

An unrenounceable ingredient to wonderful holidays, the *sun* has become the '*face of tourism*' on catalogues and advertisements. Providing the basic impulse for any kind of movement and life, *the sun is the 'face of energy'*, a symbol of freedom, happiness, wealth, success, beauty, rebirth and unification. Why not catch the spirit, making *The Sun*, shown in so many national flags and coats of arms, the new symbol of an emerging Solar Age, the face of Renewable Energy and clean global Travel and Tourism'?

In developing countries, especially, and other regions which depend largely on Travel and Tourism, the immense damage caused by tourism, due to high water and energy consumption, plays a major part. In some instances a few major hotels account for most of the total energy (and water) consumption. Mega hotels are energy eaters – almost like a small town under one roof.

People say that travellers won't worry about their hotel's energy source. However, they will once it has become usual that hotel heating, cooling and illumination are constantly available, *clean and free of charge*. This is contrary to some current experiences with scores of power cuts per day in so-called 'holiday paradises'. Once it is common practice that visitors are no longer exposed to the night-and-day sound of diesel-propelled power engines, spoiling the otherwise highly appreciated natural holiday ambience, whether in the shelter of an alpine cottage in the majestic Tien Shan mountains or in a rainforest lodge on the shores of the mighty Amazon river.

More Caterpillars – or Nicer Butterflies?

Sharing the spirit of the natural system in times of global complexity, renewable energy and sustainable/responsible tourism are nothing less than natural allies: '*El sol*' and '*solar*' for '*solidarity*'!

Renewable energy will make the world more beautiful, and Travel and Tourism will become a prime winner. However, the way to sustainability goes via change and needs solidarity behind it. Ultimately it is up to us to do everything to make tourism generally 'sustainable and responsible' and 'renewable energy' self-evident on a global scale. We will decide what should prevail – the Authentic, the Beautiful, the Valuable or mere mediocrity, hypocrisy, fallacy; the fossil-energy consumer or the renewable-energy user; the indifferent tourist or the responsible traveller; paradise lost, or Planet Earth regained? The options are more quantity or better quality; more caterpillars or nicer butterflies, in an ever more beautiful and peaceful landscape.