

Chapter 2: Aesthetic Values in Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality Development

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Abstract

Aesthetic values are manifestations of sentiments people hold for nature and help people to understand, love and protect it. Aesthetic values need to be interwoven into the whole process of tourism planning and development to achieve sustainability. Tourism is one of the industries that need to put much focus on sustainable development because it brings both positive and negative impacts on the environment and people. Green tourism is one tool in sustainable tourism development whose principles are in line with developing tourism mindful of nature. The purpose of green tourism is providing insight and concern for the environment, increasing greater appreciation for environmental aesthetics and protecting and preserving the physical environment. This chapter focuses on the importance of aesthetic values in diverse tourism activities, creating opportunities to lure aesthetic-oriented tourists to Zimbabwe as a tourist destination. This chapter explores the aesthetics dimensions in a nature-based tourism context, aesthetic values in food and beverage products and services, aesthetic values in the accommodation sector and aesthetic values in all forms of transport. In brief, this chapter examines the aesthetics in Zimbabwe as a tourist destination.

Objectives of the chapter are:

1. to help the reader to be aware of the importance of aesthetic values in diverse tourism operations;
2. to enable the reader to appreciate and consider the needs of the aesthetic-oriented customer in tourism; and
3. to enable the reader to reinforce their understanding of the concept of green tourism and aesthetic values in Zimbabwe through discussion questions.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is the greatest challenge that humans have ever faced (Shrivastava, Ivanaj and Ivanaj, 2012). Sustainable development is a development approach that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Xul *et al.*, 2010). Uygur, Musluk and Iibey (2015) assert that sustainable

development is the starting point of green management. Green management is a paradigm that includes improving environmental awareness, using energy resources and eco-friendly technologies. It also includes re-use of waste and recycling, starting from production activities of business to packaging and delivering to consumers. Commitments to sustainability can be achieved using aesthetics to develop passion and emotional connection for sustainable visits to a tourist destination (Shrivastava *et al.*, 2012). For a sustainable future, the desired tourists are the greens, although they represent only a small fraction of the population (Lohmann, 2004). The largest part of population is ambivalent or not interested in environmental issues (Budeanu, 2007:505).

The world, however, is facing many environmental problems that need solutions if sustainability is to be achieved. Xul *et al.* (2010) note the following problems:

1. The production of large amounts of nitrogen, that remains active in the environment and causes substantial changes to aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem;
2. There is large-scale contamination of rivers and other water bodies and massive water demand resulting in water scarcity and water contamination.;
3. Solid waste disposal and recycling remains very problematic.; and
4. Every year, 50 million barrels of oil are transformed into 500 million plastic bags, millions of which are washed onto beaches, coastlines and riverbeds, thus negatively affecting the aesthetics and beauty of the environment. Some popular tourist destinations are becoming overcrowded and suffer from pollution of water and air, litter, dirty seawater and beach congestion, aesthetic pollution and shortage of resources. Fourth, world energy consumption is essentially composed of non-renewable fossil fuels and their combustion emits billions of tons of carbon in the atmosphere every year. Emitted quantities of carbon cause global mean temperature to rise to levels way above the long-term global goal of limiting warming to below 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels, thus causing incremental climate impacts (Rogelj *et al.*, 2015:519).

To meaningfully address these challenges, there is need to have a clear understanding of their magnitude and the negative effect they have on environmental aesthetics. Options for limiting the global mean temperature increase to below 1.5°C by end of the century (2100) have therefore, become of central interest to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change (UNFCCC). To that end, environmentally-friendly management should be adopted in all sectors of the economy, including tourism and hospitality, with the aims of achieving sustainable development and limiting global warming to below 1.5°C (*ibid.*). Four aims are determined for adopting aesthetic green management by businesses (Uygur, Musluk and Iibey (2015). The aims are:

1. Organisations should determine and control the effects of their activities to the environment;
2. Organisations should establish environment management systems and should include environment awareness, programmes and aims;
3. Top management should engage in environmental protection and uphold it in all developmental policies; and
4. Organisations should be aware of social responsibilities about environment and should train their personnel in environmental consciousness.

Ideally, green management in tourism and hospitality management should involve the upholding of aesthetic values in all business operations to cater for the aesthetic oriented-tourist, who is willing to stay in an environmentally responsible destination.

AESTHETIC ORIENTED CUSTOMER

Following a tourist's decision to take a holiday are the choices related to different elements of a tourism product, starting with the location (destination), transport and accommodation, that will secure a holiday package. Tourism is a travel for pleasure of seeing and having a memorable experience. It is possible to say an increase in overall aesthetic value of a destination leads to an increase in the frequency of revisits by an aesthetic-oriented customer. Bekah (2017:381) noted that there is a positive relationship between aesthetic value and aesthetic experience. Aesthetic conditions of the food and beverages services business entity, accommodation establishment, mode of transport used by the tourist and the attractions visited by the tourist, constitute the customer's experience. Each of these complementary businesses' aim of top priority should, therefore, be to provide customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is among the determinants of customer loyalty, that can affect customer intentions, and business sustainability (Bekah, *ibid.*:383). There are some customers who prefer and are willing to pay extra for staying at eco-labelled hotels (Budeanu, 2007:59). Such eco-efficient accommodation establishments adopt green management activities,

using technology that does not harm nature in all their production activities (Ilbey, Musluk and Uygur, 2015).

DEFINITION OF AESTHETICS

Aesthetic means the pleasant, positive or artful appearance of a person or an object. An example of the word is to say that a particular house is beautiful and has pleasing eye catching features. Aesthetics is concerned with beauty, artistic impact, or appearance of something, including goods and services. It is a term that predominantly refers to visual elements and can also be used as a noun to describe criteria by which an artistic movement or artist is defined.

WHY CONCERN FOR AESTHETICS IN TOURISM VENTURES?

Tourist's decision to visit a destination is influenced, to a greater extent, by the beautiful and aesthetical nature of the environment. To that end, it is wise to ensure that all tourism goods and services are aesthetic and pleasing to the eye. It has been observed that in tourism, there are natural environments, pure historic sites and man-made environments and events in which aesthetic dimensions play an increasingly important role (Rutes, Penne and Addams, 2001). Without any doubt, aesthetics is a key marketing variable carrying appreciable competitive importance in the market place of tourism products and services. Therefore, aesthetic elements and design issues of tourism products and services constitute important dimensions for information processing and attitude formation of tourism consumers. Aesthetics can, therefore, be treated as a strategic tool that a company within a destination can use to gain sustainable competitive advantage (Veryzer, 1995). The experience value of a product is a dominant factor influencing consumer's motivation to buy a tourism product or service.

WHAT IS AN AESTHETIC VALUE IN TOURISM?

In tourism, aesthetic value is commonly used for judging natural and man-made resources within a destination and is also one of the criteria for judging cultural resources. Aesthetic value is the feeling people have about landscapes and scenery. The scenery can resonate with certain emotions for them and each individual may place a different aesthetic value on the same scenery based on their different value system. To ensure good memories for tourists, the aesthetic perceptions must be incorporated into tourism planning (Wang, Xia and Chen, 2008).

To improve aesthetic values in tourism, aesthetic knowledge should be promoted to tourists. This can be done by communicating effectively with them about the natural landscape and providing them with local geographic and cultural knowledge. Local tour guides have the responsibility to explain the beauty of the scenery using appropriate aesthetic knowledge and tools such as oral descriptions, exhibitions and brochures. On one hand, enjoyment of scenery by tourists from specific angles can be achieved when tour guides lead tourists. On the other hand, information centres can organise exhibitions of photographs to stimulate the aesthetic zeal of tourists. The tour guides and staff manning the information centres should receive education on aesthetics within a destination.

AESTHETIC VALUES IN FOOD AND BEVERAGES BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS

Food and beverages business establishments include hotels, restaurants, catering services, fast food outlets and bed and breakfast lodges, to name a few. These places are visited for eating, drinking and gaining experience. Today's customers seek not only a delicious meal and a tasteful beverage when they visit a restaurant, but also an enjoyable dining experience. Accordingly, aesthetic value is considered an important part of the experiential value in these food and beverages establishments. Aesthetic values address and stimulate all five senses of a customer of sight, hearing smelling, touching and taste (Bekar, 2017). A growing body of scientific research now suggests that the experience of taste and flavour is, to a large degree, determined by expectations that are generate prior to tasting. Such expectations can result from branding, labelling and packaging). The smell and aroma of food and drink are clearly important in generating expectations prior to tasting food and drink (Pence, 2015:2). Aesthetics also has great influence on customer perceptions, appealing to the sense of smell.

Culinary practitioners have intuitively developed guidelines to try and enhance the visual appeal of food. Certainly, what we see on the plate rapidly generates expectations concerning the taste, flavour liking and presumably also the probable healthiness of a given dish (Michel, Velasco, Fraemohs and Spence, 2015:4). The visual arrangement (composition, the garnishing or decorations) of food elements on a plate, exert a profound influence over what a customer thinks about the dish. It has often been suggested that we eat first with our eyes (Led, 2014; Spence, 2015). By and large, frequency of repeat visits and loyalty to the food and beverage establishment is determined by the satisfaction they get from quality services provided.

Physical appearance, the design of the created environment and facility aesthetics can cause either positive or negative emotional restaurant experiences in customers. Facility aesthetics means architectural design, interior design and décor that contribute to the attractiveness of a dining environment. Bekar (2017:383) established that there is a positive relationship between interior and exterior visual appeal of food and beverages business premises and revisit intentions of customers. Thus, appealing to the sense of sight is imperative in the growth and sustainability of a food and beverages business entity. In this way, food and beverages business units can increase visit frequency of their customers by designing interior and exterior details like colours, décor, music temperature, cleanliness, lighting, smell and ambiance, or objects that are known to have an influence on customer's perceptions and mood in a way that customers can gain positive aesthetic experiences (Bekar and Zurucu, 2015).

Restaurant owners should, therefore, deliberately create some effects and awareness over customers, creating a unique experience for the customer and obtaining a competitive advantage (Bekar, 2017:383). Lee (2011) concurs that aesthetic value components, such as ambiance, colours, décor and service that can bring in and aesthetic dimension to a hospitality facility, should be used to place one's business in a much better position than those of competitors. This is supported by Bekah (2017: 382) who found out that overall aesthetic value of the food and beverages business unit has a significantly positive effect on revisit intentions of customers and sustainability of the enterprise. Facility aesthetics can be critical in attracting and retaining customers and is imperative for sustainability of business (Ryu and Han, 2011).

Attractive table setting should be another important element of the atmosphere in a food and beverage establishment. Bekar and Kilic (2015) determine that there is a positive relationship between attractiveness of table and satisfaction levels in customers. For example, a restaurant should be designed to deliver a prestigious image to attract upper-class customers, by using high quality flatware, china, glassware and linen, all effective tools to influence customers' perceptions of overall establishment service quality (Ryu and Han, 2011). The way the table is decorated with attractive candles and flowers can also make customers feel they are in a prestigious environment. Table setting is assumed to affect diner's cognitive and affective responses that, in turn, influence customer's behaviour (*ibid.*). Therefore, it can be concluded that the repeat visit intentions of customers would increase with improvement in overall aesthetic value of the business unit and quality of service delivery.

Service staff has a bearing on the quality of service delivered in a food and beverage establishments. Service staff refers to the employees in the service setting. Their interaction between service staff and customers and their appearance positively or negatively influence customers' repurchase intentions (*ibid.*).

AESTHETIC VALUES IN ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS

Related to the choice of destination is the selection of accommodation. Lee (2011) emphasizes that aesthetic dimension to tourism facilities should be used to move their businesses a point ahead of their competitors. Physical appearance of an accommodation establishment brings out varied emotional experiences in customers. Accommodation services may be impacted by high resource consumption (water and energy) and waste generation (wastewater and solid waste) (Budeanu, 2007:500). In this world of abundance and mass production, consumption of products and services is becoming progressively more fashion-sensitive and dependant on aesthetics and well-designed products and services. Today accommodation establishments are visited by tourists not only for board and sleep, but also for an enjoyable, healthy environment, perfect service and memorable experience.

Once inside the accommodation establishment, customers often spend time observing the interior of the dining area. Their evaluations are likely to affect their attitudes towards other services provided within the accommodation facility. In addition to the appeal of the accommodation space, such as the rooms' architectural design, customers may be influenced by the colour scheme of the room, such as those adorning its walls and floor coverings. Other aspects of interior design, including furniture, pictures, paintings, plants/flowers or wall decorations may serve to enhance the perceived quality of the entity's environment, enlisting emotions in a customer and influencing decision and behaviour (Ryu and Han, 2011). Ryu and Jang (2008) found that facility aesthetics was a significant antecedent of customer's pleasure arousal and behavioural intention in an accommodation unit. So to achieve sustainability, accommodation providers" must put in place measures such as upholding aesthetic values, high quality and green product development (Dobers and Strannegard, 2005).

AESTHETICS IN TRANSPORTATION

Another aspect related to the choice of destination is the selection of tourist transport (Budeanu, 2007:500). Vehicles and other recreational modes of transport are commonly used during tours in forest ecosystems. These at times

create noise disturbance, landscape damage and pollution. Transportation is said to contribute about 75% of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions generated by global tourism of which air traffic contributes 40%, car traffic, 35% and travel by bus or train 13% (Sustainable Travel International, 2010:35). Green management mitigation strategies have, therefore, become imperative throughout the world (Mbasera, 2014:45). Thus, towing a caravan instead of other holiday alternatives based on carbon output (especially flying), is preferred in reducing the carbon footprint through transportation. Nature walks, camping, rock climbing and mountain hiking are some examples of activities popular for green management in tourism (Sustainable Travel International, 2010:35). Mitigating greenhouse gases from transportation activities in the tourism sector and adapting tourism businesses and destinations to changing climate conditions, are important steps in green management and maintaining aesthetic beauty of a tourist destination (Mbasera, 2014: 64).

The inside environment within the form of transport used by travellers is an important determinant of consumer psychology. Customers may remain within the travelling confines for many hours and take in their physical surroundings, before during and after the journey (Han and Ryu 2009; Kim and Moon, 2009). In addition to transportation services during the journey, a pleasant physical setting (e.g., innovative interior design, ambience, odours, appealing food service and attractive service staff) determine, to a large extent, the degree of overall customer satisfaction and loyalty (Liu and Jang, 2009; Magini and Parker, 2009).

AESTHETICS AT ATTRACTIONS

Tourists visit holiday destinations for purposes of leisure and pleasure where nature is admired for its tranquillity, relaxing, beauty and aesthetics potentials and also for business (Rahmanita, 2018:356). However, some tourism activities such as recreation and special events have led to changes in the outlook of the environmental because of the overuse of natural resources, deforestation, rivers and lakes pollution, elimination of animals, aquatic and plant species that are of interest to the tourists (Walker and Walker, 2011:17). Given that an unspoilt environment is both a vital constituent of service quality and a significant factor behind the attractiveness and aesthetics of any tourist destination, it is in the interest of tourism destinations to ensure long-term environmental sustainability (Bohdanowicz *et al.*, 2011:798). Efforts are being made to reverse the increasing negative effects on climate change, also

referred to as global warming, that is increasingly becoming an issue of great concern to tourism planners. The importance of creating and maintaining an environmentally friendly attraction has increasingly generated attention amongst managers in tourism, as it is considered a key factor in luring and satisfying customers. Moreover, a distinctive attraction is an important determinant of tourists' decision to pay repeat visits, thus increasing financial performance by maximising income and market share in a tourism destination (Liu and Jang, 2009; Magini and Parker, 2009). The pleasure in the aesthetics of nature tourism in many destinations is found in the beauty of nature for instance when viewing vast seas, slopping beaches, beautiful scenery, and mountains (Rahmanita, 2018:356).

In Zimbabwe, attractions are viewing the sun setting, wild animals, birds, beautiful scenery, lakes, waterfalls, and mountains, to name a few. The expected growth of tourism worldwide is expected to increase the pressures on environmental aesthetics (Budeanu, 2007:500). There is, therefore, need to change of the mindset of the tourist. This may be achieved by encouraging environmentally responsible behaviour amongst tourists that upholds environmental aesthetics (Budeanu, 2007:501). In certain instances, some quicker and more radical changes in tourists can be achieved through increasing fines and fees for environmentally destructive behaviour. Tourists also need to be made aware of the consequences of their behaviour and provided with education on how they can behave responsibly for the sustainability of the environment they are visiting (Budeanu, 2007:501). Such shows concern for loss of wilderness and animals, flora and fauna, scenic areas and aesthetic beauty at destinations and a desire to protect biodiversity by the service providers.

CONCLUSION

Aesthetic values need to be interwoven into the whole process of planning, development and all operations of tourism and hospitality businesses. This is important in catering for the needs and expectations of an aesthetic oriented tourist. Conditions of business entities in tourism and hospitality within a destination determine the customer's experience and, to a large extent, influence the customer's decision to stay and revisit intentions. Therefore, to achieve sustainability in Zimbabwe, much has to done to preserve the environment and uphold aesthetic values in all forms of tourism and hospitality business development and operations. An increase in overall aesthetic value of a destination leads to a high frequency of revisits by an aesthetic-oriented customer.