Implementation Report
Sharing the unknown paradise
Implementation Report

by

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1. Introduction
This implementation report is a result of my research conducted during my 7-month internship at Street Child. Research was conducted to determine to what extent the community of Makeni and experts support community based tourism development in Makeni, Sierra Leone. The recommendations based on the research outcome will be presented and advise will be given on how to implement these. The goal of this report is to present a plan to Street Child that describes how they can adapt to these finding. It will be indicated what steps Street Child needs to take in order to develop community based tourism.

2. Research
The study the current situation, potential impacts, key factors for success, attitudes and perceptions of Makeni’s community and perceptions of experts. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The data was gathered via interviews and surveys; after which it was compared to the gathered theories. Sierra Leone is undeveloped, but consists over excellent nature benefits and as the tourism industry is the largest and fastest growing industry, it is a great opportunity to incorporate community based tourism development. This research implies new perspectives on perceptions of developing community based tourism in Makeni. In general, it can be said that the locals are very supportive of developing community based tourism in Makeni, however not all seem interested in becoming involved in tourism and having tourists in their community. The experts believe it will foster development, but foresee some barriers. Experts advise to make sure everyone supports the development and to explore the market to successfully develop community based tourism. Recommendations on the aspects of image, selling, demand, tour operators and further research were given to Street Child.

3. Steps
After the research was carried out, several steps were taken to implement the results. It was chosen to discuss and present all the recommendations in this report. This has been chosen, due to the fact that the researcher was most closely involved in the entire process of exploring the support for developing community based tourism, and thus has relevant insights and views on this matter. The advisory report was written during the internship.

4. Change organization
Those involved in the process are mainly Street Child workers. The CEO of Street Child, Tom Dannatt, will have to assign people to work on certain tasks. He will be the person who has to preserve the implementation, which makes him one of the most important persons involved. Someone will have to execute the image, demand and tour operator study. Potential tourists and partners will become involved in this step. The community of Makeni will be involved as well. Another important person involved is Andy Nakoneczny, a Street Child worker who is responsible for the financial department. He needs to decide whether they are willing to provide the implementation with the financial means.
5. Plan for implementation

5.1. Role of the researcher
The company coach asked for an advisory report in order to present the steps that need to be taken. Thus, the role of monitor has been used for the implementation.

5.2. Limitation of risks
The implementation contains the following risks:
- A mismatch could be existing between the researcher and other involved parties.
- The recommendations could be too time consuming or too expensive for Street Child.

The first risked was prevented by the meeting with the company coach and researcher, in which the expectations and visions of both parties were presented. Additionally, the first version of the advisory plan was presented to gain feedback and to make sure that the expectations were met. To prevent the risks of no budget or time, I tried to work out the implementation as good as I could and tried to presented a clear and efficient plan.

5.3. Interventions
The following interventions have been chosen:

Communication: The intended change was communicated in a meeting with the manager and other present colleagues. As the headquarter is located in the United Kingdom, the plan was shared with them and placed in a shared google document, so that all the Street Child workers are able to read it.

Management instruction: The people involved will be informed about the change. They will receive specific information from the management about what they are expected to do and when. The people informed will know what they are expected to do.

Feedback: In the presentation the advisory report was presented and feedback was asked to improve the plan. The manager and other colleagues will give feedback on the implementation and the execution.
Appendix

Appendix 1

Advisory Report

Community Based Tourism in Makeni, Sierra Leone

Evi Vogel
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May, 2016
Objective

In order to develop community based tourism in Makeni, several steps will need to be taken. Sierra Leone is undeveloped, but consists over excellent nature benefits and as the tourism industry is the largest and fastest growing industry, it is a great opportunity to incorporate community based tourism development. In general, it can be said that the locals are very supportive of developing community based tourism in Makeni, however not all seem interested in becoming involved in tourism and having tourists in their community. The experts believe it will foster development, but foresee some barriers. Experts advise to make sure everyone supports the development and to explore the market to successfully develop community based tourism. In this report it will be indicated how Street Child can adapt to the findings of the research.

Image

To achieve a more detailed and broader image of Makeni a study into the existing images that people have of Makeni should be done. Street Child should take into account that images are very important, because consumers are motivated to act by perceptions, rather than reality (Gallarza, Gil, & Calderón, 2002). The image of a destination is the sum of the beliefs, ideas and impressions that someone has of a destination (Skidmore, Day, & Koller). Street Child should make use of the following research methods:

- Quantitative research should primarily be used in order to validate facts, to measure the potential, to assess the image using different customer groups and to segment the market.
- Qualitative research could be an interesting addition, as it gives insights in the backgrounds of the opinions and thoughts. It creates a qualitative image, seen through the eyes of the costumer. Street Child would be able to find out preliminary insights, feelings, new ideas and understanding of ideas and objects. Focus group interviews could be held to gain deeper information.

Conducting this research consists of three phases: preparation, implementation and analysis and interpretation (Morse, 1991). Before Street Child starts with the research, it is useful to make a list of existing information, such as the image of similar destinations or previous studies. This information will serve as input for the research. Furthermore, Street Child should think about the current situation, the desired image and possible expectations towards the image that different target groups have. Questions should be established based on this, they could include statements, to see to what extent one agrees. Additionally, could Street Child present contrasts, to see what extremes one thinks fit with Makeni. In this phase Street Child should also define the target group of respondents, which could be young professionals from the UK and France. When analyzing the results Street Child can see the similarities and differences between the desired and existing image. When it turns out that people are not familiar with Makeni or Sierra Leone, it shows interesting information as well, as this is part of the image. The result of the study should be a clear and understandable report. Not only should the results be presented, the conclusions and recommendations should be included as well. If it appears that the existing image does not correspond with the real world, Street Child should try to influence this image. By showcasing more of Sierra Leone’s nature benefits Street Child might be able to establish a change. However, it needs to be acknowledge that Street Child will never be able to change the existing image purely on its one. But, by showing and informing potential visitors, Street Child could establish a small change. There are different actors involved that have the power to influence the existing image, such as the government and commercial institutes. Street Child should approach various actors to
encourage them to promote Sierra Leone as a tourist destination as well. By repeating this study after 6 months, the effect of the efforts can be measured. If it appears that the the image is in line with the reality, Street Child should focus on the actual demand and perceptions of tour operators.

**Demand**

Before developing tourism, a study to find out how much demand there actually is, is of high need. There has to be a demand if you want to develop tourism. Furthermore, Street Child has to figure out whom to sell it to. Street Child should assign someone to execute the study. Tourism demand has been defined as the total number of persons who travel, or wish to travel, to use tourist facilities and services at places away from their places of work or residence (Cooper, 2008). The study should measure customer demand, identify target markets and determine sales potential. To include all potential customers, the markets should be defined broad enough. The following markets should be taken into account:

- Expats
- Sierra Leoneans
- Regional Market
- Western Market (mainly UK, FR, perhaps USA as well)

Questions should be asked about their willingness to travel to Makeni or Sierra Leone in general. Furthermore, should the type of accommodation, activities, price and other relevant topics be discussed. A direct mail survey should be used to analyze the beliefs and attitudes of different groups. Direct mail surveys are low cost and may cover a larger geographic area. The results of the survey can easily be shown in graphics. A qualitative research could be an interesting addition for this study as well, as it gives insights in the backgrounds of the opinions and thoughts. Focus group interviews could be held to gain specific information and details. Qualitative research will probably present the easiest way to unravel the perceptions of the Sierra Leoneans, because it is a difficult process to make them fill in surveys. It becomes clear that there is no demand, it is of no use to develop community based tourism in Makeni. The study should be repeated after more or less 6 months to see if the demand has changed. If it appears that there is a demand, Street Child could approach tour operators to find out to what extent they are willing to help with bringing the product to the market.

**Tour operators**

Working with tour operators is the best way to sell the developed initiative. However, no insights are available on their perceptions and willingness to work together. Street Child should approach tour operators to achieve a better insight in the support for developing community based tourism in Makeni. As research shows, it can be hard to collaborate with tour operators. Some mainly care about making a profit from themselves, some local tour operators have no idea about the concept of sustainable tourism and some tour operators are scared to offer travels to Sierra Leone because of safety reasons. Tour operators should be approached from the countries where the most demand is. It is important that these tour operators have knowledge on the concept and preferable the same mission, such as Fair2 and VisitSierraLeone. When bigger tour operators would offer the product, it is more likely to have a fixed flow of tourists. Therefore, bigger tour operators should be approached. A good example of a bigger tour operator is TUI. They also have a big focus on sustainability, therefore they should definitely be approached. Topics that need to be discussed include possible collaboration opportunities, type of tourism activity, sustainability, responsibility, price, and other relevant topics.
Selling
Makeni could be interesting as a tourist destination because of its interesting environment with tourist attractions. Even though it has a lot to offer, there is currently no proper packaging of Sierra Leone as a tourist destination. Therefore, it is recommended to improve the way they Sierra Leone is presenting itself. Street Child should start by promoting Sierra Leone as much and honest as possible. It is advised to start by showcasing more of its nature benefits through social media. The following ideas could be used for the social media content:

Website, Facebook and Twitter: The Facebook pages of Street Child have a total of 9.677 likes (May, 2016). Needless to say that Street Child has a tremendous outreach to potential visitors. Street Child could share tourism related pictures or articles on their Website, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Street Child has a number of great pictures themselves, however when additional pictures are needed, they could go to sierraleonephotos.com for high quality pictures.

Article marketing: Street Child should focus on creating and or sharing articles that show and talk about Sierra Leone as a tourist destination. Thousands of unique articles submitted and distributed. Street Child should share or create a unique set of articles and submit them to tourism related article directories and share them on their websites, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Articles such as the following could be shared: Tourism hopes for Sierra Leone as country declared Ebola Free (The Telegraph, 2015) and Unspoilt beaches, rolling hills and NO tourists in sight: Insight the world’s least visited countries (Mail Online, 2016).

Video marketing in tourism industry: Street Child should focus on creating and or sharing videos that display Sierra Leone’s beauty. Videos are essential on the website and Facebook, however there is a big opportunity to create and share videos on YouTube. With more than 3.7 billion search queries, YouTube is the second Largest Search Engine (SEO Hacker, 2016). Cooperation could be sought with YouTube account of “Brand Sierra Leone”, who offer a range of nice videos, such as the “Official Sierra Leone Tourism Video”.

Concerning selling the actual product, Street Child should start small; a good option would be to start with implementing homestay for the volunteers to come to Makeni. This way Street Child could sell it to the volunteers directly and offer the locals the opportunity to get used to tourism at a slow pace. Once Street Child and the homestay hosts notice that everything is going well and they enjoy hosting them, they could start with selling the locally developed tourism initiatives as a part of a bigger package organized by a tour operator. It should be marketed as a “real and authentic African experience”. It could also contribute to tackling the aspect of a limited access to tourism markets. Furthermore, collaborations could be sought with different actors who might be able to promote and offer the product. One organization that should be approach is visitsierraleone.org, as they offer multiple eco-tourism options on their website as well. Additionally, it has been pointed out that it is important to have tourists who are prepared and know what to expect. By informing them about the real situation, tourists will know what to expect and the potential negative impacts will be minimized.

Further research
Even if the suggestions mentioned above would be implemented, there would still be the need to further investigate the support of the local community. It is important that someone from Street Child will consult with the locals as extensively as possible. The results of the survey could form the base of the consultations. The main thing to do is listen to their perceptions, attitudes and ideas. It is important to not only talk with the people that will be directly involved, but also with those who are not. Street
Child should organize group meetings with the residents and formal meetings with the chief and councils.

If it turns out that the community is not interested at all, it would be wise to look into the option of focusing on a particular part within Makeni, where most residents are interested or to decide to focus on another destination. The same process would have to be repeated for this destination. If it turns out that indeed they are interested, Street Child will have to talk to them about what they think is the most important about Makeni, what they are proud of and what they would like to share if there are visitors. This way an inventory can be made of which assets Makeni has which could be used. Products could be developed around this and Street Child can help create a plan. Locals could be provided with the necessary information and perhaps hospitality and tourism classes.
References


