Chapter 11

Communicating Responsibly with the Global Tourist

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is meant to give a glimpse into the challenges of communicating with foreign tourists. Since people travel nowadays more than ever, having hosts that are prepared for a quality intercultural interaction becomes of utmost importance. Starting with clarifications regarding the global tourist and the global tourist village, the section further discusses the basics of communicating with tourists and how responsibility translates to guest-host interaction. Culture as a potential barrier in communication occupies a central place.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the channels through which meanings, people and goods flow around the world. Global infrastructures such as transportation and communications and global policies for free trade have created a situation in which people and businesses can easily access natural resources and cultures situated far away. In order to understand why is important to communicate responsible with the global tourist and how we are able to accomplish this task, we should start by understanding the main terms: global tourist, communicating with tourists and responsibility in tourism.

SETTING

Stephan is a young entrepreneur that plans to open his own business in tourism as soon as he graduates. He specifically enrolled in a master program on international tourism in order to gain knowledge about the field and the routine of running a business in this domain.

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Some time ago, when coming back from a trip to Berlin, Stephan discovered in the magazine of the airline an interesting article about Plus One Berlin. The concept was completely new to Stephan. He learned that it refers to offering a tourist the opportunity to be “the plus one” of one local which, in Berlin for example, means that the tourist would have a one-off experience of the city life; he would be able to discover a side of it that only locals see and he would also get to choose from a selection of inspiring places to stay in terms of design, architecture and/or commitment to being green.

Later that week, when browsing the news, Stephan read about a similar concept that originated in USA and was implemented in Cluj, Romania: “dine with a local” (Figure 1). This program involved a short 2-3 hour, one time, interaction between a local resident and a tourist. The local would be able to enjoy a bit of adventure from the comfort of his own home and some extra cash, while the tourist could travel to a home to meet a local, have dinner and benefit therefore from a more meaningful experience.

This new information made Stephan wonder: Is there a profile of the global tourist? Are there certain styles of communication that we should be aware of when talking to foreign tourists? How should communication with tourists be approached? What does responsibility refer to when interacting with foreign guests? He decided to bring up these topics in the next class discussion.

*Figure 1. Dine with a local*
*Source: Staicu, 2013*
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