

Sustainability Toolkit Promotion Strategy

DELIVERABLES PACKAGE

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Executive Summary

This research project is a joint effort between the project management student team from Capilano University and the HSBRIS. This project aims to analyze and recommend strategies for promoting sustainability toolkits for tourism operators within the Biosphere Region.

This report includes a summary of the team's findings and insights, analyzing the GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification program, the Vancouver, Coast and Mountain Sustainability Playbook, and sustainability initiatives from other UNESCO Biospheres in BC. The report also presents the project's purpose and objectives, along with an overview of the recommendations and deliverables that have resulted from the findings and discussions with HSBRIS. Each deliverable will be discussed in detail, including an explanation of how it will be implemented to achieve the project objectives successfully.

The detailed deliverables can be accessed through a shared drive, see Appendix A. The final section of this report will contain recommendations aimed at enhancing the value of the HSBRIS toolkit. In conclusion, the report will feature closing remarks and appendices containing additional detailed information.



(Obvious, 2023)

Overview of Project Purpose & Objectives

This research project aims to play a crucial role in advancing the growth of tourism businesses and organizations within the Biosphere Region by strategically utilizing toolkits. The main goal is to highlight sustainable practices and demonstrate the practical implementation of GreenStep toolkits in the tourism industry.



(UNESCO, 2021)

The project also prioritizes assessing the toolkit's effectiveness in addressing the Biosphere Region's needs and challenges. Through collaborative initiatives, this will ensure the sustained well-being of the Biosphere Region and its affiliated communities, positioning sustainable tourism as a fundamental catalyst for the comprehensive development of the region.

Furthermore, the project objectives are:

Research and Comprehension of the GreenStep sustainable tourism toolkit in the market.

Develop marketing strategies on successfully promoting the biosphere sustainable tourism.

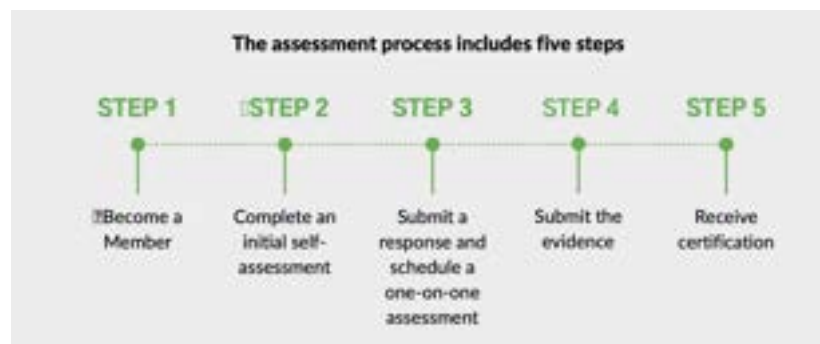
Summary of Research and Findings

The team has conducted in-depth research that contains four (4) components: analysis of the GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification, a SWOT Analysis of the Usability of the Vancouver, Coast & Mountain Sustainability Playbook, the identified potential challenges in adopting and implementing sustainable practices, analysis of UNESCO Biospheres in BC. With the mentioned information, the team has fulfilled the first project objectives: Research and Comprehension of the GreenStep sustainable tourism toolkit in the market. The findings have provided HSBRS with valuable insight into the sustainability initiatives of tourism businesses in the region.

With a thorough understanding of HSBRS as one of the key leaders in promoting environmental conservation, the team has successfully produced three (3) outputs to meet the second project objective: Develop marketing strategies on successfully promoting the biosphere sustainable tourism. The forthcoming recommendations aimed to provide HSBRS with actionable and tangible deliverables to support the promotion of sustainable tourism practices.

Analysis of the GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification

The GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification program, offered by GreenStep Solutions, provides a comprehensive approach to evaluating and certifying sustainability practices in the hospitality and tourism sector.



The assessment includes 81 questions covering sustainable tourism's environmental, social, and economic aspects. The certification levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum) reflect the achievement and commitment to sustainability. Certified companies receive expert guidance,

marketing support, and enhanced credibility. Businesses also benefit from free marketing through social media channels and badges for their websites.

The research focuses on GreenStep-certified businesses in British Columbia, especially in the Howe Sound Biosphere Region. Case studies of certified businesses in BC, such as Sunwolf Riverside Cabins & Fergie's Cafe (Gold Level) and Sunshine Coast Tourism (Silver Level), highlight the positive impact of 1certification on visibility, customer attraction,



(Own Photo)



(Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023)

and community recognition. The study underscores the importance of sustainable business practices in the environmentally vulnerable Howe Sound Biosphere Region. The research also examines the GreenStep Certification program's role in preserving natural, social, and cultural environments.

SWOT Analysis of the Usability of the VCM Sustainability Playbook

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clear Process ● Collaborative Approach ● Comprehensive Guide ● Free Resources ● Local Relevance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partnerships ● Integration with Existing Programs ● Digital Platform ● Training and Workshops ● Continuous Improvement
WEAKNESS	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resource Intensive ● Limited Focus ● Data Availability ● Complexity Disruption of Workflow ● Lack of Customization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited Awareness ● Resource Constraints ● Changing Regulations ● Lack of Engagement

Potential Challenges in Adopting and Implementing Sustainable Practices

CHALLENGE	OPPORTUNITIES
Limited Resources and Time Constraints	Tourism organizations and businesses can address limited resources by prioritizing sustainability initiatives based on their impact and feasibility. They can also consider outsourcing specific tasks to external consultants or agencies to alleviate the workload and ensure efficient use of resources (J. Freese, personal communication, October 10, 2023).
Financial Considerations	Businesses can explore available grants, subsidies, and tax incentives related to sustainability initiatives. Additionally, conducting a cost-benefit analysis can help identify sustainable practices that provide long-term savings, making it easier to justify initial investments (J. Freese, personal communication, October 10, 2023).
Lack of Awareness and Communication	Organizations should invest in effective communication strategies to showcase their sustainability efforts. Utilizing social media, website content, and collaboration with local communities can enhance awareness among customers and stakeholders, leading to increased support and recognition (J. Freese, personal communication, October 10, 2023).
Balancing Sustainable Choices	Businesses can conduct comprehensive research and consult with experts to evaluate different sustainable options. Prioritizing initiatives based on environmental impact, cost-effectiveness, and feasibility can help make informed decisions. Regular reassessment and adaptation of strategies are essential to balance competing factors (J. Freese, personal communication, October 10, 2023).

Analysis of UNESCO Biospheres in BC

To assess sustainable tourism practices in the Biosphere Region, an analysis was conducted of the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region and the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT), both of which are UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and exemplify the integration of sustainable practices into their natural and cultural environments. Both biosphere reserves use sustainable tourism practices, conservation, research, education, and community



(Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, n.d.)

involvement to demonstrate sustainable resource usage and environmental stewardship. Initiatives like West Coast N.E.S.T. and the Man and Biosphere Programme promote essential components such as employment, community participation, and economic diversification for long-term sustainability. The Agenda 2030 Action Plan aligns with the five change-oriented pathways identified.



Photo: Mount Arrowsmith Stegosaurus Biosphere Region

Outline of Recommendations & Deliverables

The following deliverables for sustainable tourism improvements and recommendations for the Howe Sound Biosphere Region consist of the following:

Recommendation 1: **Increase GreenStep's Presence in the Region**

Despite GreenStep's strong reputation, many new businesses are unaware of the Sustainable Tourism Certification. Through engagement with stakeholders and social media, we aim to increase awareness. Accessible materials and a sustainable toolkit will empower local businesses, expanding the region's sustainability. HSBRS strives to guide stakeholders and promote sustainable tourism to warmly welcome visitors.

Accompanying Deliverables:

- Social media posts
- Fact Sheet
- Online Brochures
- Poster

Recommendation 2: **Share Success Stories**

Sharing success stories of tourism businesses that have achieved GreenStep Certification serves as powerful examples of sustainable practices. It helps inspire and motivate other businesses and individuals to adopt environmentally friendly measures. Real-life examples with details will be persuasive elements in getting new businesses involved in sustainable practices.

Accompanying Deliverables:

- Case Studies
- Success Story Videos
- Newsletter Features
- Social Media Posts

Final Decision: After presenting the recommendations for the delivery of the Sustainability Toolkit Promotion Strategy, the team agreed to work on the following chosen deliverables: four (4) Case Studies, a Green Ambassador Program, and a social media communication strategy, as well as a required deliverable which is the Findings (Research Report Analysis). The detailed deliverables will be accessible via a Dropbox link (found in Appendix A), and each deliverable can be downloaded as a PDF file.

Detailed Deliverables

Case Article

The Capilano University student team created four (4) case articles for HSBRIS to showcase successful examples of sustainable tourism practices from the chosen tourism businesses and organizations, inspire other businesses, and contribute to the discourse on responsible tourism. This effort is aligned with the project object: Develop marketing strategies on successfully promoting the biosphere sustainable tourism.

This Case Article is one of the standalone documents in the deliverable package (see Appendix A). In this report, this deliverable will briefly discuss what it consists of.

Using available online resources and speaking with representatives of the businesses, the case articles highlight the sustainability initiatives and achievements of distinct entities in the tourism industry: Fergie's Café and Sunwolf Riverside Resort (Appendix A), Sunshine Coast Tourism (Appendix B), Sandman Hotel Squamish (Appendix C), and Bowen Island Sea Kayaking (Appendix D). These articles aim to provide in-depth insights into each entity's commitment to sustainable practices, detailing certification processes, benefits obtained, challenges faced, and future sustainability initiatives. The purpose is to showcase successful examples of sustainable tourism practices, inspire other businesses, and contribute to the discourse on responsible tourism.



Photo: Screenshot of Case Articles

Case Article Components

This section provides a brief overview of the Case Article deliverable components, explaining their alignment with the second project objective. It outlines practical applications and suggests the next steps for HSBRIS. For a detailed breakdown of the deliverable's components, refer to the document titled "Case Article" in the shared folder (see Appendix A).



Photo: Screenshot of Case Articles

The Case Article will cover the following components:

- **Overview of Case Articles**
This component includes a short definition of the Case Articles and the reasoning for the usage of the term as well as summaries of the collection of the case articles of featured tourism businesses and organizations.
- **Key Elements of the Case Article**
This section features the various elements that provide a comprehensive view of an entity's commitment to sustainable tourism.

How does it meet the second Project Objective?

The case articles offer a detailed overview of diverse perspectives from tourism businesses committed to sustainability, covering motivations, certification processes, key initiatives, and achievements. Additionally, the articles can be effective marketing tools for featured entities, emphasizing the tangible benefits of sustainability certification, such as increased visibility and customer preference. The suggestion to use social media for sharing these success stories enhances marketing efforts, reaching a broader audience, including environmentally conscious consumers.



Photo: Screenshot of Case Article: Sunshine Coast Tourism's Key Initiative and Achievements

How will it be used?

The case articles can serve as valuable educational materials for businesses, students, and professionals keen on understanding sustainable tourism practices (Adobe Communication Team, 2022). Furthermore, these case articles present a unique opportunity for entities featured within them to utilize the content as effective marketing tools. By showcasing their commitment to sustainability, businesses can attract environmentally conscious customers. Lastly, the case articles provide practical guidance for tourism organizations aspiring to adopt sustainable practices, offering insights drawn from the experiences and strategies of the featured entities. This multifaceted approach positions the articles as versatile



Mock Facebook post of Sunshine Coast Tourism Case Article

assets in promoting, educating, and guiding stakeholders within the sustainable tourism sector.



Photo: Screenshot of Tools & Resources page of HSDRIS website

What to do next?

- **Dissemination:** Share the articles through relevant industry publications, websites, and social media channels to maximize their reach (Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library, n.d.).



Photo: South Dakota Bankers Association

- **Feedback and Updates:** Encourage feedback from readers, stakeholders, and the entities featured to update and improve the articles continually (Adobe Communication Team, 2022).



- **Case article Expansion:** Consider expanding these articles into more detailed case studies with additional data and interviews for a deeper understanding of each entity's sustainability journey (jross, 2021).

(SimplyPsychology, 2021)

By implementing these recommended next steps, the articles can have a lasting impact, contributing to ongoing discussions and initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism.



(Wawryk, 2021)

Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program

An innovative continuation of the successes of the Capilano University Summer Co-op Ambassador program is the Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program. The current relationship between the Howe Sound Biosphere and the Capilano University School of Outdoor Recreation Management has established a strong basis, which hinders our desire to establish a long-term, ongoing connection. As we embark on this adventure, the EcoHarmony Ambassadors will play a critical role in integrating academic endeavours with the intrinsic beauty of the Howe Sound Biosphere and the remarkable sustainability initiatives of local businesses. This expanded collaboration aims to educate and inspire a new generation of people who are passionate about responsible tourism, ecological preservation, and the important contributions of GreenStep-certified businesses to our common natural legacy. Through the Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program, we are weaving a story of enduring devotion and profound effect.



Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassador Program Components

We will give a brief overview of the components of the Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassador Program deliverable and explain how it aligns with achieving the project objectives. We will also explore its practical applications and suggestions for the program's next stage. The detailed breakdown of the toolkit's components can be found in the standalone document titled "EcoHarmony" (see Appendix A).

The Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassador Program will cover:

- **Goals and objectives:** We will clearly define what we want to achieve with the ambassador program. In addition, we also set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals for the program.
- **Target audience:** This section will consider demographics, interests, and online presence to identify potential candidates. We will determine who will be the ideal ambassadors based on the target audience.
- **Program benefits:** We will define the benefits and incentives for students when participating in the program, such as free products, discounts, or other rewards.
- **Selection process:** We develop a selection process in order to choose potential ambassadors who align with the project's values and objectives. The section will include application forms, job postings and interview questions.
- **Training & Resources:** In this section, we suggest and develop training materials and resources to help ambassadors effectively represent and fulfill the project's goals.
- **Recognition and rewards:** The plan will recognize and reward outstanding ambassadors during and after completing the program.
- **Communication plan:** The ambassador program's communication plan consists of a crisis plan, a promoting strategy and all important information related to the program.



(UBC, n.d.)

How does it meet the Project Objectives?

Creating an ambassador program is an effective way to meet the objectives by incorporating educational components to promote sustainable tourism in the Howe Sound Biosphere Region. Students can bring a fresh and youthful perspective to environmental and sustainability issues. Their energy and enthusiasm can make the marketing campaign more dynamic and appealing to the younger audience. While spreading sustainable messages and promoting sustainable practices, student ambassadors can gain practical experience as contributors to the project.

How will it be used?

The Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program will recruit students with a passion for sustainability, the environment and responsible tourism.

Assigning students with tasks based on their skills, such as content creation, social media management, organizing events, conducting workshops, etc. Through various activities and projects, the students will share their thoughts and feedback for the program's assessment. By strategically utilizing the Ambassador Program, we can harness their energy, creativity, and commitment to promote biosphere sustainable tourism and achieve the marketing objectives effectively.



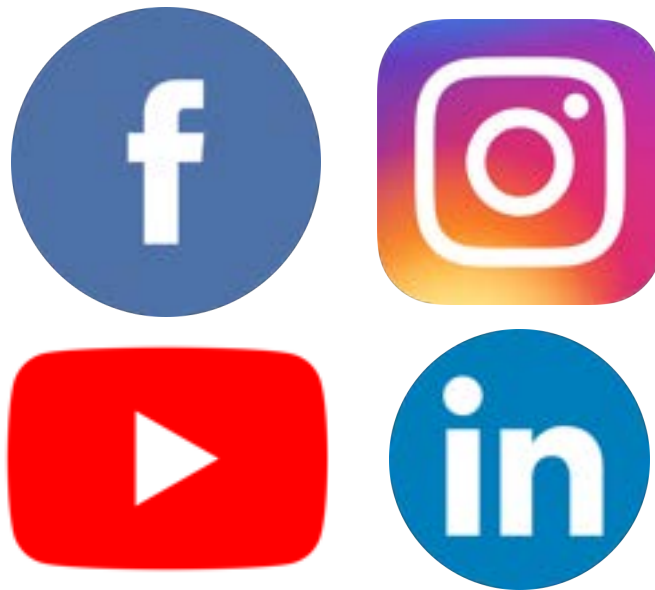
What to do next?

The following action for the Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program is in the implementation stage. However, to make sure everything can run smoothly, it is advisable to execute a test run of the program ahead of time. When selecting a small group of students, they can be testers for the Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program. It needs to ensure these individuals represent a diverse range of backgrounds and interests. The program needs specific objectives that require testing. Then, running this test program is similar to what the complete program will do. After testing the program for a short period, the organization should assess and identify areas that may require adjustments, such as training, promotion, etc. In conclusion, testing the program with a small group allows Howe Sound and Capilano University to iron out any matters and optimize the program before scaling up. It is also the chance to have valuable insights to improve the efficacy and ensure it aligns well with the goals and values.

Social Media Communication Strategy

The proposed social media communication strategy for the Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society (HSBRIS) aims to support sustainable tourism practices in the biosphere region. This effort aligns with the project object: Develop marketing strategies on successfully promoting the biosphere sustainable tourism.

This Social Media Communication Strategy is one of the standalone documents in the deliverable package (see Appendix A). In this report, this deliverable will briefly discuss what it consists of.



The social media posts will showcase successful sustainable business stories and invite companies to attend regional meetings while maintaining brevity and visual appeal. This approach intends to inspire businesses to adopt sustainable practices. The YouTube series, featuring selected businesses with diverse sustainable practices, aligns with the project's goals by showcasing green initiatives. The overall goal is to empower local stakeholders and enhance the region's capacity for sustainability, providing practical guidelines for businesses to follow. The strategy benefits the HSBRIS by supporting sustainable tourism advocacy, fostering community collaboration, and offering tangible examples of sustainable practices for businesses in the Howe Sound Biosphere Region.

Social Media Communication Strategy Components

This section provides a brief overview of the Social Media Communication Strategy deliverable components, explaining their alignment with the second project objective. It outlines a strategy for HSBRIS. For a detailed breakdown of the deliverable's components, refer to the document titled "Social Media Communication Strategy" in the shared folder (see Appendix A). The Social Media Communication Strategy will cover the following components:

- Social Media Posts:**

Mockup social media posts form the core of the communication plan, encapsulating successful sustainable business stories and inviting the audience to regional meetings. Instagram posts focus on brevity and visual appeal, utilizing high-quality images, impactful captions, and strategic hashtags. Meanwhile, Facebook posts offer in-depth storytelling, featuring eye-catching visuals and detailed narratives, fostering discussions within the Facebook community.
- Potential Social Media Post Content:**

Drawing from case studies, social media content includes narratives from successful sustainable businesses, providing tangible examples of eco-friendly practices. These case studies serve as compelling content to inspire businesses, while invitations to regional meetings actively engage businesses, fostering collaboration and a sense of community among local stakeholders.



(Mock-up of Social Media Post)



(Mock-up of Social Media Post)



Mockups of Social Media Post Content

- YouTube Series:

The YouTube series introduction acts as a preview, introducing local sustainable businesses to a broad audience. It also includes careful business selection and a structured production timeline that guarantees



consistent releases, sustaining audience interest. *Mockup of Youtube Series' Thumbnail*

- Strategy of the Communication Plan:

The communication plan strategically schedules and posts content on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, serving as essential tools to engage the target audience, raise awareness, and promote sustainable practices within the biosphere region. The plan aims to foster community collaboration and position HSBRS as a leader in sustainable tourism advocacy.

How does it meet the second Project Objective?

Leveraging social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, the social media communication strategy deliverable utilizes engaging visual content and in-depth storytelling to inspire the target audience towards sustainable practices. Including case studies and invitations to a regional meeting enhances the authenticity and involvement of businesses in the initiative. Additionally, the YouTube series complements the social media approach by providing a visually appealing and informative showcase of diverse local sustainable businesses, reinforcing the region's commitment to sustainable practices. The structured production timeline for the series ensures a consistent release schedule, contributing to sustained audience interest. Overall, this communication strategy strategically raises awareness, engages the community, and promotes sustainable tourism within the biosphere region.



(PhotoStock, 2021)

How will it be used?

The content will be strategically scheduled and posted on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. These materials serve as a vital tool for engaging the target audience, raising awareness, and promoting sustainable practices within the biosphere region.

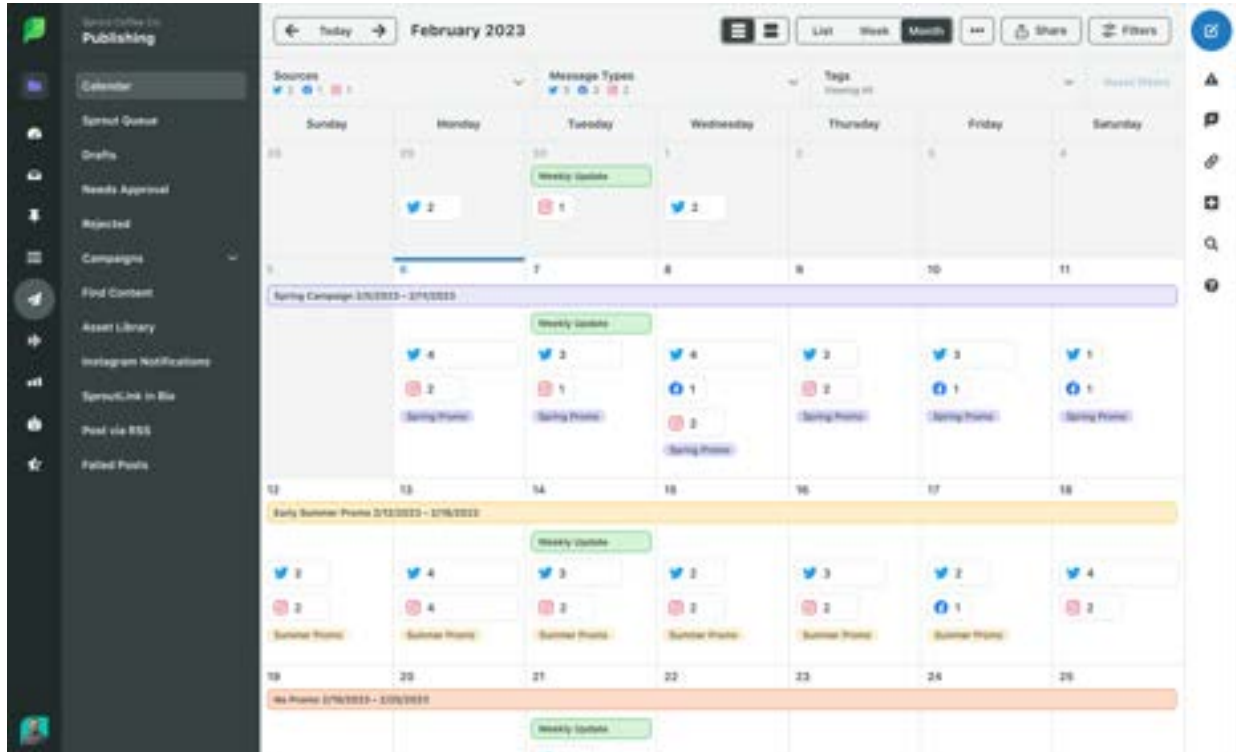
Social Media	Instagram	Facebook	YouTube
Frequency	3-4 posts per week	2-3 posts per week	One-time release to kickstart the series
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High-quality images showcasing sustainable practices. - Succinct, impactful captions conveying the essence of sustainable business success. - Strategic use of relevant hashtags for discoverability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eye-catching images, detailed narratives, and compelling calls to action. - Encourage sharing and stimulate discussions within the Facebook community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaging and informative preview of the video content. - Introduction of local sustainable businesses to a wide audience.
Schedule	Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays during peak engagement times.	Tuesdays and Thursdays during evening hours when Facebook engagement is high.	First day of the month, following the regional meeting invitation.

A Sample of the Media Postings Schedule

What to do next?

- **Finalize Content:** The first crucial step is to transform the mockup social media posts into polished, final content ready for publication. This includes refining the images, text, and calls to action to ensure they are not only visually compelling but also entirely aligned with the project's core messaging. It's imperative that the content resonates with the audience, driving home the importance of sustainable practices and the upcoming regional meeting.

- Content Calendar:** Creating a well-structured social media content calendar is essential to strategize when and where each piece of content will be posted. It ensures a coordinated approach, allowing for consistency in messaging and timing across various platforms. The calendar also accommodates variations in posting schedules for different social media platforms to reach the widest audience.



(Sprout Social, 2021)

- Audience Engagement:** Active and real-time engagement with the audience is key. This involves actively monitoring social media platforms for comments, questions, and discussions related to the posted content. Timely and relevant responses to inquiries are vital in fostering meaningful interactions. Furthermore, encouraging participation in the upcoming regional meeting is a priority. Engaging with the audience builds a sense of community and fosters enthusiasm for sustainability.

- **Impact Analysis:** After the social media posts have been published, the work is not done. It's essential to conduct a thorough analysis of their reach and engagement. This includes tracking metrics such as likes, shares, comments, click-through rates, and conversion rates. This data provides invaluable insights into the success of the social media campaign. Analyzing this information allows the project team to determine which content resonated most with the

audience and what could be improved.

The data-driven approach aids in refining future content strategies for more effective communication.



(Prater, 2023)

- **YouTube Series Production:**

Simultaneously, the project should embark on the production of the YouTube series introducing local sustainable businesses. It's vital that this series aligns seamlessly with the project's objectives and timeline. This involves scripting, filming, editing, and finalizing each episode to ensure they are informative, engaging, and align with the overall communication plan. The production process should stay on schedule to meet the intended release dates.

With an additional six months, the project could expand its content offering to include in-depth articles, interviews, and webinars. Hosting sustainability workshops, creating an online community, and updating case studies would further enhance the project's impact. Establishing partnerships with regional institutions for research and introducing sustainability awards would contribute to the project's long-term success and its mission to promote sustainable tourism practices in the region.

Research Analysis Report

The Research Analysis Report is the outcome of the first project objective for HSBRIS, offering valuable insights and recommendations for supporting sustainability practices in the hospitality and tourism sector. This Research Analysis Report is one of the standalone documents in the deliverable package (see Appendix A). In this report, this deliverable will briefly discuss what it consists of.

The Research Analysis Report explores the GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification program, detailing its process and showcasing its positive impact on certified businesses in British Columbia through detailed case studies. The SWOT Analysis of the Vancouver, Coast & Mountain Sustainability Playbook evaluates its current usability. Additionally, the analysis of UNESCO Biospheres in BC, focusing on the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust and Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region, provides examples of successful sustainability integration into natural and cultural environments. This comprehensive research provides HSBRIS with insights and is a valuable reference for future projects, outlining best practices, addressing challenges, and suggesting innovative solutions. It positions HSBRIS at the forefront of sustainable development in the environmentally sensitive region.



Research Analysis Report Component

This section provides a brief overview of the Research Analysis Report deliverable components, explaining their alignment with the first project objective. It outlines the findings that the team researched and the strategy for HSBRIS. For a detailed breakdown of the deliverable's components, refer to the document titled "Research Analysis Report" in the shared folder (see Appendix A).

The Research Analysis Report will cover the following components:

- **Analysis of GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification:**
This section introduces GreenStep Solutions' Sustainable Tourism Certification program, emphasizing its sustainability assessment, certification, and guidance services for various businesses in the tourism industry, as well as focuses on GreenStep-certified businesses in British Columbia, with detailed information on businesses at different certification levels.
- **SWOT Analysis of the Usability of the VCM Sustainability Tourism Toolkit:**
This section evaluates the usability of the Vancouver, Coast & Mountain Sustainability Playbook, a tool created by Destination BC with GreenStep Solutions, as well as identifies potential challenges faced by tourism organizations and businesses in adopting and implementing sustainability practices.
- **Analysis of the UNESCO Biospheres in BC:**
This section explores two neighbouring UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust and the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region, offering a deeper understanding of sustainable development and conservation efforts within these regions.

How does this meet the first Project Objective?

In the Research Analysis Report, it thoroughly examines the GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification program, detailing its process and demonstrating positive outcomes for certified businesses in British Columbia through case studies. Additionally, the SWOT Analysis of the Vancouver, Coast & Mountain Sustainability Playbook evaluates its current usability. The analysis of UNESCO Biospheres in BC, particularly the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT) and

Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region provides successful examples of sustainability integration into natural and cultural environments. This research offers valuable insights for HSBRIS, serving as a reference for future GreenStep and sustainability projects. It highlights best practices, identifies challenges, and proposes innovative solutions, positioning HSBRIS as a leader in sustainable development within its environmental conservation context.

How will it be used?

The HSBRIS can leverage the comprehensive insights from the GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification program to enhance its understanding of the certification process and guide tailored strategies for sustainable tourism in the region. Drawing inspiration from GreenStep-certified businesses in British Columbia, HSBRIS can collaborate with and encourage local businesses, fostering a shared commitment to sustainability. The benefits of GreenStep certification, including marketing support and enhanced credibility, can be emphasized to attract more businesses to engage actively in sustainable practices. Additionally, HSBRIS can explore GreenStep's range of services beyond certification to provide support and creative solutions for sustainability challenges. The SWOT analysis of the Vancouver, Coast & Mountain Sustainability Playbook offers valuable guidance for decision-making on the usability of similar tools in the Howe Sound Biosphere Region. By learning from successful initiatives in other biosphere reserves and addressing potential challenges identified in the research, HSBRIS can provide more support in promoting sustainable tourism, contributing to the region's environmental conservation, economic viability, and community well-being.



(Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Biosphere Reserve, n.d.)

What to do next?

In moving forward, HSBRIS is advised to actively engage key stakeholders, fostering partnerships with industry leaders, governmental bodies, and local communities to garner widespread support for sustainable initiatives. Maintaining a strong collaboration with GreenStep remains crucial, leveraging their expertise for ongoing updates on sustainability standards in the hospitality and tourism sector. The organization should broaden its global presence by participating in international sustainability initiatives and forums contributing to discussions on responsible tourism. Exploring opportunities to expand the research scope, potentially covering additional regions or sectors within the industry, aligns with the vision of staying informed about emerging technologies and innovations. HSBRIS should uphold its commitment to transparent reporting, regularly communicating progress and achievements to stakeholders, thereby reinforcing its dedication to environmental responsibility and inspiring others in the industry to adopt sustainable practices. Continuous learning, community outreach, educational initiatives, and strategic alliances should be pursued to ensure a holistic and impactful approach to sustainable development. Regular evaluation of sustainability initiatives will be essential for monitoring progress and adapting strategies for continuous improvement.



(Howe Sound Biosphere Initiative Society, 2021)

Next Step

The next steps for the Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society (HSBRIS) encompass a comprehensive approach to furthering the impact of the deliverables created by the Capilano University student team. Firstly, for the Case Articles, it is recommended that the marketing team takes charge of dissemination, sharing the articles through relevant industry publications, websites, and social media channels; however, the Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassador can also be responsible for publishing the articles on the websites and social media. Continuous feedback and updates should be encouraged from readers and stakeholders to ensure the articles remain relevant and impactful. Consideration should also be given to expanding these articles into more detailed case studies with additional data and interviews, providing a deeper understanding of each entity's sustainability journey.

Moving on to the Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program, the responsibility lies with the Program Coordinator or designated personnel. The implementation stage is imminent, but it is advisable to execute a test run of the program with a small, diverse group of students to identify and address any potential issues. Subsequently, the program can be refined based on insights gained during the test run. Recruitment, training, and resource development for ambassadors should follow, ensuring that the program aligns seamlessly with its goals and values.



(UBC, n.d.)

For the Social Media Communication Strategy, the marketing team should lead the Social Media Communication Strategy. Finalizing content and creating a well-structured content calendar is crucial for consistency across platforms. Active audience engagement and impact analysis are essential for success. Simultaneously, produce the YouTube series to align with the communication plan. Moreover, the Research Analysis Report offers insights into sustainability in tourism. HSBRS can use the findings to understand GreenStep Certification. Involve stakeholders, and pursue learning, outreach, initiatives and alliances for a holistic approach.

Given an additional six months, the project could further expand its content offering, establish partnerships with regional institutions, and participate in international sustainability initiatives. This extended timeframe would enable the organization to solidify its commitment to transparent reporting, and regularly communicating progress and achievements to stakeholders. Regular evaluation of sustainability initiatives remains essential for monitoring progress and adapting strategies for continuous improvement.



(Howe Sound Biosphere Initiative Society, 2021)

Conclusion

The comprehensive deliverables presented in this package will significantly contribute to HSBRIS's overarching objectives of strengthening collaboration in the Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Biosphere Region and balancing development, conservation, and equity. The goal is supported by strategically designed deliverables addressing specific facets of the HSBRIS mission.

The case articles are one of the key components of the deliverables. The articles showcase successful examples of sustainable tourism practices from various entities. Moreover, the case articles serve as powerful marketing tools, inspire other businesses, educate stakeholders, and contribute to the discourse on responsible tourism. Furthermore, the Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program effectively integrates academic learning with the natural beauty of the Howe Sound Biosphere to educate and inspire a new generation passionate about responsible tourism. The program is structured with defined goals and recognition of outstanding ambassadors to ensure alignment with project objectives.

The proposed Social Media Communication Strategy utilizes various platforms to promote sustainable tourism in the biosphere region. It includes a structured plan, social media posts, and a YouTube series. The strategy showcases successful sustainable business stories and invites businesses to foster collaboration and engagement. Lastly, the Research Analysis Report offers valuable insights and recommendations for sustainability practices in the hospitality and tourism sector. It establishes HSBRIS as a leader in sustainable development within the region and provides a foundation for informed decision-making and strategic planning. The report analyzes the GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification program, and the VCM Sustainability Playbook, and explores UNESCO Biospheres in BC.

To maximize the impact of these deliverables, HSBRIS is advised to actively engage key stakeholders, foster partnerships, maintain collaboration with GreenStep, explore expansion opportunities, and continuously evaluate sustainability initiatives. Through these actions, HSBRIS can ensure a holistic and impactful approach to sustainable development, inspiring others in the industry to actively adopt similar practices and contributing to the long-term vision of a balanced and sustainable Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Biosphere Region.

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Appendix A: Google Shared Drive Folder Link

Case Articles, Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassador Program, Social Media Communication Strategy, and Research Analysis Report can be accessed through the link below:



<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jD2sLZAF8bRxyI6exEiY7QeHLHvd7fEO?usp=sh>

[aring](#)

Appendix B: Fergie's Cafe & Sunwolf Riverside Resort Case Article

SUSTAINABLE EXCELLENCE: FERGIE'S CAFÉ AND SUNWOLF RIVERSIDE RESORT'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

A Case Article | 6 mins read



Introduction

Fergie's Café, located within the Sunwolf Riverside Resort, is a popular brunch spot nestled along the Sea to Sky where the Cheakamus and Cheekye Rivers meet (District of Squamish, 2022). Owned and operated by the husband-and-wife team Jake and Jess Freese since 2010, the cafe stands out not only for its scenic location and exceptional food but also for its commitment to sustainable business practices. In February 2017, Sunwolf Riverside Resort, including Fergie's Café, received a Gold certification from Green Tourism Canada (now Sustainable Tourism), indicating a high level of commitment to environmental and social responsibility (J. Freese, personal communication, October 10, 2023).

BACKGROUND

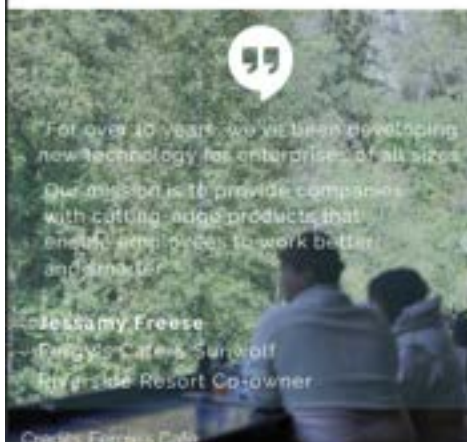
In a conversation with Jess Freese, the owner, she highlighted that the decision to pursue green certification was driven by the business's inherent ideology of operating in the most sustainable ways possible (J. Freese, personal communication, October 10, 2023). The certificate provided a structured framework and guidance, ensuring their choices aligned with sustainability targets. The initial certification in 2017 offered a clear framework, revealing areas where the business excelled and identifying areas for improvement.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CERTIFICATION PROCESS

To achieve and maintain the Green (Sustainable) Tourism Canada Gold certification, Fergie's Café and Sunwolf Riverside Resort undergo a comprehensive process. This includes submitting detailed information on various aspects such as energy usage, waste management, and water consumption. The process involves an initial 3-hour phone call and a follow-up report (GreenStep, n.d.). The certification has different levels - bronze, silver, gold, and platinum - and the businesses are currently certified at the gold level (J. Freese, personal communication, October 10, 2023). Recertification is required every two years, ensuring ongoing commitment and improvement.

BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

The certification has brought multiple benefits to Fergie's Café and Sunwolf Riverside Resort. The Green (Sustainable) Tourism Canada website serves as a platform for customers to choose businesses committed to sustainability (GreenStep, n.d.). This has translated into increased visibility and customer preference. The certification has also opened doors to local awards, media features, and positive customer reviews on platforms like Booking.com and Expedia (J. Freese, personal communication, October 10, 2023).





Credits: Tourism Squamish

SUSTAINABILITY CHANGES

The commitment to sustainability is evident in the operational changes made by the business. Notably, the decision to remove the hot tub in the trees, a popular amenity, was made to align with sustainability goals (Sunwolf Team, 2017). Sunwolf Riverside Resort has been continuously working on waste reduction, energy conservation, and the use of eco-friendly products (Sunwolf Team, 2017). The reconstruction after a devastating kitchen fire in 2018 emphasized green materials and eco-conscious design, reflecting the business's dedication to minimizing environmental impact (District of Squamish, 2022).

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Maintaining the Gold certification requires not only adhering to the existing sustainability practices but also demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement (Sunwolf Team, 2017). Fergie's Café and Sunwolf Riverside Resort regularly seek guidance from Green Tourism Canada, using them as a resource for making informed decisions on sustainable features, such as on-demand water heaters (U. Freese, personal communication, October 10, 2023).

Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that we are located on the territories of the Líl'wat, x'məḅk'óyám (Musqueam), shisháḅ (Sechelt), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Salilwota7/Selilwitulh (Tsilil-Wautulh) Nations.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Fergie's Café and Sunwolf Riverside Resort actively engage with the local community and promote responsible tourism. Initiatives include supporting local businesses, implementing wildlife viewing ethics, and involving both staff and guests in sustainability initiatives. The commitment extends to sourcing fresh, local, and seasonal food, contributing to the broader goal of being a leader in Responsible Tourism in the Sea to Sky community (Sunwolf Team, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Fergie's Café and Sunwolf Riverside Resort exemplify a successful integration of sustainability into their business operations. The commitment to Green Tourism Canada's Gold certification, ongoing efforts to reduce environmental impact, community engagement, and a dedication to continuous improvement position them as leaders in responsible and sustainable tourism. The businesses serve as a model for others looking to align their operations with environmental and social responsibility while maintaining a successful and thriving enterprise.



Credits: Tourism Squamish

Appendix C: Sunshine Coast Tourism Case Article

>>> CASE ARTICLE | 12 MINS READ <<<

"SUNSHINE COAST TOURISM: SILVER STANDARD ATTAINED IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CERTIFICATION"



FEATURE OF THE MONTH

INTRODUCTION

Sunshine Coast Tourism, a destination management organization (DMO) situated in the picturesque Sunshine Coast region of British Columbia, has continually addressed significant environmental challenges, such as water conservation and active transportation issues. This journey led them to achieve Silver Certification with GreenStep Sustainable Tourism for their Gibsons and Sechelt Visitor Centres, showcasing a robust commitment to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. This comprehensive case study explores the motivations, challenges, and initiatives undertaken by Sunshine Coast Tourism, shedding light on the certification process and the subsequent benefits derived from their dedication to responsible and sustainable tourism practices.

>>> BACKGROUND

Sunshine Coast Tourism, led by Executive Director Annie Wise, is committed to promoting sustainable tourism through various initiatives. Operating two visitor centers in Gibsons and Sechelt, Sunshine Coast Tourism has dedicated efforts to educate visitors and local businesses on sustainability initiatives. Their commitment led them to explore GreenStep, a renowned sustainability certification program aligned with global standards.

Under the overarching goal of elevating the operations of the Gibsons and Sechelt Visitor Centres, Sunshine Coast Tourism embraces the principles of sustainable tourism, emphasizing environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability. Their initiatives are guided by the Sustainable Tourism 2030 Pledge and the Sustainable Sunshine Coast initiative (Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023). As a destination management organization (DMO), Sunshine Coast Tourism actively engages in community partnerships and initiatives to enhance sustainability, aligning its efforts with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023). This approach demonstrates the organization's commitment to sustainable tourism and environmental preservation.

>>> CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Despite its decentralized structure, Sunshine Coast Tourism undertook a dedicated certification process with GreenStep Sustainable Tourism for its two visitor centers. The organization faced challenges due to its size but committed significant time and effort to meet the 87 criteria outlined by GreenStep (A. Wise, personal communication, October 13, 2023), aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goals. Typically a three to four-month process, Sunshine Coast Tourism extended the timeline to a year to accommodate organizational constraints (A. Wise, personal communication, October 13, 2023). The criteria covered diverse aspects, from environmental considerations like low-flow toilets to purchasing policies, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of sustainability practices.

The GreenStep certification criteria served as a robust framework, encompassing environmental conservation, cultural awareness, and staff welfare. Despite being a small organization, Sunshine Coast Tourism's commitment to certification led to the creating a detailed action plan outlining steps for improvement over the next two years.

The rigorous assessment by GreenStep assessors, measuring practices against Global Sustainable Tourism Council-Recognized criteria, resulted in Silver Certification for the visitor centers, valid from 2023-2025 (Wickham-Foxwell, 2023). This certification signifies adherence to sustainability standards, with a mandate for re-certification every two years (Wickham-Foxwell, 2023).

MOTIVATION FOR CERTIFICATION

Sunshine Coast Tourism's pursuit of GreenStep certification was driven by a versatile commitment to sustainable tourism (A. Wise, personal communication, October 13, 2023). Recognizing the pivotal role of the region's natural beauty in its appeal, the organization sought to preserve it for future generations. This decision stemmed from a core alignment with community values, emphasizing safeguarding the natural, social, and cultural environment.

The certification process provided Sunshine Coast Tourism with a structured approach, validating their sustainability efforts and fostering a sense of leadership within the community. By obtaining certification, the organization aimed to set a positive example for local businesses, encouraging them to embrace and implement sustainable practices (A. Wise, personal communication, October 13, 2023). Furthermore, the certification served as a strategic tool, enhancing the organization's attractiveness to environmentally conscious visitors and prospective employees.

Sunshine Coast Tourism's motivations also extended to the practical advantages of GreenStep certification. Beyond environmental stewardship, the organization recognized the potential for financial savings by implementing sustainable practices, contributing to overall financial efficiency (A. Wise, personal communication, October 13, 2023). Overall, Sunshine Coast Tourism's decision to pursue GreenStep certification was a comprehensive strategy, intertwining environmental responsibility, community values, leadership, and financial prudence.

>>> BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

The benefits of obtaining GreenStep certification for Sunshine Coast Tourism included (A. Wise, personal communication, October 13, 2023):

- **Financial Savings:** Lower utility bills through reduced energy and water consumption.
- **Employee Satisfaction:** Attracting employees who share the organization's sustainability values.
- **Community Engagement:** Building positive relationships with local businesses and communities.
- **Competitive Advantage:** Gaining a competitive edge by appealing to environmentally conscious travellers.
- **Clear Action Plan:** Having a detailed action plan to guide future sustainability initiatives and improvements.



Credits: Sunshine Coast Tourism



Credits: Sunshine Coast Tourism

KEY SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

3

Sunshine Coast Tourism's journey towards Silver Certification was marked by a series of impactful sustainability initiatives, contributing to responsible tourism practices and environmental stewardship. These initiatives encompassed various facets, showcasing the organization's commitment to fostering a sustainable and inclusive destination.

- **Sustainable Sunshine Coast Campaign** (Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023; Wickham-Foxwell, 2023):
 - A flagship program that educated visitors on responsible travel practices.
 - Aimed at supporting low-impact and regenerative tourism experiences.
 - Focused on reducing tourism operations' ecological and carbon footprints through stakeholder collaboration.
- **Cultural Awareness Training** (Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023; Wickham-Foxwell, 2023):
 - Mandatory training for staff to enhance cultural awareness and acknowledge Indigenous Peoples.
 - Emphasized the importance of cultural integrity and inclusivity in destination management.
- **Visitor Education Resources** (Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023; Wickham-Foxwell, 2023):
 - Provision of on-site and online resources covering wildlife safety, boating guidelines, and water conservation.
 - Empowered visitors to engage in responsible behaviours, minimizing environmental impact.
- **Wheelchair-Accessible Facilities** (Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023; Wickham-Foxwell, 2023):
 - Ensured both Visitor Centres are wheelchair-accessible, promoting equal access for all visitors.
 - Inclusive facilities cover parking, entry, washrooms, and reception areas.
- **Environmentally Conscious Suppliers** (Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023; Wickham-Foxwell, 2023):
 - Prioritized collaboration with socially and environmentally sustainable suppliers for retail goods.
 - Ensured products sold at Visitor Centres meet ethical and environmental standards.
- **Energy Efficiency and Recycling** (Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023; Wickham-Foxwell, 2023):
 - Implemented energy-efficient fixtures, appliances, and lighting.
 - Established recycling programs to promote waste reduction and responsible disposal practices.
- **FSC Certified Paper Usage** (Wickham-Foxwell, 2023):
 - Sunshine Coast Travel Guides are printed on FSC-certified paper, underscoring commitment to responsible forest management.
- **Employee Welfare** (Sunshine Coast Tourism, 2023; Wickham-Foxwell, 2023):
 - Upheld staff welfare through fair employment standards, living wages, and continuous learning opportunities.
 - Fostered a supportive work environment for the team.

>>> RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES FOR DMOs

Sunshine Coast Tourism recommends that fellow destination management organizations (DMOs) in the biosphere region consider pursuing the GreenStep certification. Despite initial concerns about time constraints, the organization found the process manageable and rewarding, strengthening community relationships, and promoting sustainable practices.

Building on this experience, Sunshine Coast Tourism aims to continue its sustainability efforts and offers support to local businesses in their certification journey. By encouraging responsible tourism practices, they hope to inspire the adoption of similar initiatives within the community, fostering a culture of sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Sunshine Coast Tourism's journey to Greenstep and Silver Certification exemplifies its steadfast commitment to sustainable tourism. Their holistic approach, integrating sustainable practices, cultural awareness, and community partnerships, not only meets global standards but inspires other organizations. The Silver Certification for the Gibsons and Sechelt Visitor Centres reflects their dedication to improving environmental practices, fostering community relationships, and enhancing economic competitiveness.

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Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that we are located on the territories of the Lílwat, x̱məḡḵ'aḡəm (Musqueam), shisháḡ (Sechelt), Skowwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlilwataʔ/Səlilwíṭuth (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.



I would like to thank Annie Wise, Executive Director of Sunshine Coast, for taking the time to speak with us.



Credits: Sunshine Coast Tourism

Appendix D: Sandman Hotel Case Article



Introduction

Nestled in the stunning Howe Sound Region, Sandman Hotel Squamish is ramping up its efforts to become more sustainable. This initiative, spearheaded by the hotel's general manager, reflects a blend of personal passion and corporate responsibility within the broader framework of Sandman Hotel Group. In our exclusive interview with Mark Enright, the General Manager of Sandman Hotel Squamish, we delve into the motivations, challenges, and triumphs propelling the hotel's ambitious journey to become a beacon of sustainability practices. Emphasizing a genuine commitment to responsible business practices, Mark Enright sheds light on the economic benefits, future plans, and progressing accomplishments that underscore Sandman Hotel Squamish's dedication to sustainability. Moreover, the hotel proactively addresses its environmental impact, acknowledging the challenges of waste generation, energy consumption, and water use. With a proactive stance, the hotel aligns with corporate directives from Northland Properties, the parent company of Sandman Hotel Group, intertwining personal commitment and corporate strategy to fulfill the overarching goal of being a responsible and sustainable business partner within the local community.

Benefits and Incentives

Through sustainable practices, Sandman Hotel Squamish demonstrates environmental responsibility and gains economic benefits. Implementing energy-efficient practices, waste management, and water conservation initiatives has resulted in substantial cost savings, contributing significantly to the hotel's financial well-being (M. Enright, personal communication, November 9, 2023). This dual impact on both environmental and economic fronts underscores the hotel's commitment to balancing profitability and sustainability.

While these economic benefits are evident, a recognized opportunity exists to enhance public awareness and promote its green initiatives. By effectively communicating its commitment to sustainability, the hotel aims to attract environmentally conscious guests, tapping into a growing market trend where sustainability plays a pivotal role in consumer decision-making. Additionally, the hotel envisions potential revenue growth, aligning with the evolving expectations of a consumer base increasingly valuing sustainable practices.

Current Sustainability Approach

The Sandman Hotel Group adopts a holistic approach to sustainability, intertwining various initiatives such as the Green Team's oversight, sustainable purchasing practices, towel/linen reuse programs, recycling efforts, and strategic energy and water management (Sandman Hotel Group, n.d.). In partnership with Green Step Solutions and Rethink2gether, the 'Go Green' Program reinforces this dedication by incorporating audits, carbon footprint measurement, and investments in eco-certified products and services (Sandman Hotel Group, n.d.).

Motivations for Sustainability Initiatives

Sandman Hotel Squamish is deeply committed to sustainability, driven by a combination of corporate responsibility and personal passion. As part of Northland Properties, the hotel integrates hospitality and environmental stewardship seamlessly. Mark Enright, the local manager, leads this commitment with a personal dedication to being a responsible business partner in the Squamish community.

Integrated Sustainability Implementation: Challenges and Efforts

Achieving sustainability in the hotel industry is a complex challenge that requires effective communication and operational harmony to convey its positive impact and ensure its legitimacy. The challenge extends to fostering shared understanding among staff members across departments, from the front desk to housekeeping, to achieve collective awareness of the profound significance of sustainability efforts (M. Enright, personal communication, November 9, 2023). Externally, communicating these initiatives to guests without compromising their satisfaction is a delicate task that requires tact and sensitivity.

Waste disposal practices add another layer of complexity, particularly concerning guests' participation. Upholding proper disposal, a cornerstone for effective recycling and composting efforts emerges as a significant hurdle (M. Enright, personal communication, November 9, 2023). It underscores the intricate nature of aligning everyone with these sustainable practices.

To address this multifaceted challenge, the hotel actively engages in ongoing education for its staff, teaching their staff to find a balance between environmental responsibility and guest satisfaction (M. Enright, personal communication, November 9, 2023). This balance has become a crucial aspect of their sustainable hospitality journey. In fact, the lessons learned revolve around implementing sustainable practices that do not alienate guests. The hotel views the encountered challenges as opportunities to fine-tune its sustainable hospitality narrative theme, which emphasizes the importance of effective communication, operational harmony, and environmental responsibility. By prioritizing sustainability, the hotel sets itself apart from its competitors and shows its commitment to creating a better world for future generations.

Conclusion

Sandman Hotel Squamish's sustainability journey is a comprehensive and ongoing commitment to environmental responsibility, blending corporate directives with local passion. Striving to redefine the role of the hospitality industry in a conscious world, the hotel exemplifies responsible business practices. As part of the biosphere region, the hotel actively contributes to its preservation, setting a model for responsible hospitality in the Howe Sound Region. Balancing economic benefits with environmental stewardship, Sandman Hotel Squamish not only meets but exceeds the sustainability standards, inspiring hotels seeking a greener, more sustainable tomorrow.

"We believe in the value of being a socially and environmentally responsible company. We're not just a hotel; we're a force for positive change, and we're dedicated to doing our best."


SANDMAN
HOTEL GROUP
 
 Mark Enright
General Manager

Recognizing the Milestones

Sandman Hotel Squamish takes pride in its achievements, even without formal awards. The hotel has successfully implemented sustainability initiatives, including a robust recycling program, a composting system, and significant reductions in energy consumption through LED lighting and occupancy sensors (M. Enright, personal communication, November 9, 2023). Positive guest feedback on the transition from single-use items to more sustainable alternatives reflects the success of these efforts (M. Enright, personal communication, November 9, 2023).

The hotel's young team members express a strong sense of eagerness in working for a socially responsible company, adding another layer of achievement to Sandman Hotel Squamish's sustainability journey. Looking forward, there is hopeful anticipation for future recognition, acknowledging the ongoing commitment to a more sustainable and responsible hospitality experience.

Charting a Course Towards a Greener Tomorrow

Sandman Hotel Squamish's commitment to sustainability is embedded in a comprehensive roadmap beyond present initiatives. The hotel has already taken strides by participating in Green Step's Eco Fund and implementing various energy-efficient measures, recycling programs, and waste reduction initiatives. Other future plans involve the installation of EV charging stations, transitioning to LED lighting for signage, and a thorough energy assessment to shrink their footprint even further. This commitment to sustainable practices goes hand in hand with collaborative efforts, particularly with local environmental initiatives like the Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society, forming a key component of their vision for the future.

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Appendix E: Bowen Island Sea Kayaking Case Article

PADDLING WITH PURPOSE: BOWEN ISLAND SEA KAYAKING'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN HOWE SOUND

A Case Study Article | 6 mins read



Credits: Peterson Photography

INTRODUCTION

Nestled in the breathtaking expanse of the Howe Sound Biosphere Region, Bowen Island Sea Kayaking stands out not only for its commitment to offering safe and enjoyable sea kayaking experiences but also for its unwavering dedication to environmental stewardship. With a mission to protect the marine environment, Bowen Island Sea Kayaking has seamlessly integrated sustainable practices into its operations, setting a commendable example for sustainable tourism in the region.

MOTIVATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

At the core of Bowen Island Sea Kayaking's commitment to sustainability lies a profound recognition of its inseparable connection with Howe Sound. Their motivation to undertake sustainability initiatives stems from a deep understanding that their business thrives when the environment is flourishing. In a heartfelt interview with Steve Mather, the owner of Bowen Island Sea Kayaking, emphasized, "We feel almost a custodial responsibility for the state of Howe Sound, given that it's not only the playground but also the business place for us." The understanding goes beyond the typical business concept and transforms into a sense of responsibility towards the region. He recognizes that an unspoiled environment is essential not just for its beauty but also for the prosperity of the business. This realization strongly motivates their efforts towards sustainability.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

While Bowen Island and Howe Sound generally boast clean waters, challenges arise from washed-up trash from transient boaters and occasional storms. The business addresses these challenges by proactively cleaning up beaches and removing any encountered trash during paddling excursions. Recognizing the potential harm of accumulating trash on its dock, the business refrains from creating a visible demonstration of its efforts and focuses on the broader picture of maintaining a consistently clean environment.



Bowen Island Sea Kayaking offers safe and fun experiences for both novice and experienced kayakers. They provide well-maintained kayaks, gear, and safety equipment, and a basic paddling orientation for each guest. They are committed to protecting the marine environment and sharing their knowledge of local ecology with the guests.



STEVE MATHER

Owner of Bowen Island Sea Kayaking

"We feel almost a custodial responsibility for the state of Howe Sound, given that it's not only the playground but also the business place for us."



Credits: My Sea to Sky

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Rather than crafting standalone initiatives, Bowen Island Sea Kayaking actively participates in existing programs aimed at preserving the Howe Sound ecosystem (S. Mather, personal communication, November 8, 2023). Notably, the business collaborates with the BC Marine Trails organization, contributing to the creation of a public network of marine trails along the BC Coast (BC Marine Trails, n.d.). Through this partnership, the kayak guides play a pivotal role in reporting on the condition of local beaches and campsites, actively engaging in cleanup efforts, and educating guests about environmental conservation.

SUCCESS STORIES AND FUTURE PLANS

The success story of Bowen Island Sea Kayaking lies in its consistent, long-term commitment to sustainable practices. As a testament to their dedication, the business actively participated in the proactive removal of a giant piece of sea trash, showcasing its commitment to environmental protection. Looking ahead, Bowen Island Sea Kayaking aims to deepen its connections with organizations working for the protection and development of Howe Sound. Steve Mather has expressed his interest in joining the round table of the Howe Sound Biosphere Organization, signalling an eagerness to contribute more actively to long-term sustainability initiatives.

In 2021, the company pledged to allocate a portion of the tour earnings (total of 1000 CAD) to support My Sea To Sky, a community-driven environmental organization dedicated to defending, protecting, and restoring Átl'ka7tsem /Howe Sound (My Sea to Sky, n.d.), for #ProtectHoweSound initiative.

CONCLUSION

Bowen Island Sea Kayaking exemplifies the harmonious blend of adventure and responsibility. As they paddle through the pristine waters of Howe Sound, the team at Bowen Island Sea Kayaking is not just providing memorable experiences; they are stewards of the environment, actively contributing to the preservation of a natural treasure. In a world where the intersection of tourism and conservation is crucial, Bowen Island Sea Kayaking stands as a beacon, showcasing that a thriving business can coexist with and actively contribute to the health of our planet.

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY

Beyond paddle strokes and pristine beaches, Bowen Island Sea Kayaking is an advocate for environmental conservation. The proactive education of paddlers about "Leave No Trace" principles forms a crucial element in their strategy to minimize human impact on the environment. It's an investment in creating a community of conscious paddlers who, beyond the tour, carry the torch of environmental responsibility into their lives.

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*Note: "Leave No Trace" is a set of principles and practices that promote responsible outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship. It outlines seven principles that form the foundation of responsible outdoor recreation: Plan Ahead and Prepare, Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces, Dispose of Waste Properly, Leave What You Find, Minimize Campfire Impact, Respect Wildlife, and Be Considerate of Other Visitors

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that we are located on the territories of the Lilwat, x^mmaθk^mayam (Musqueam), shishálih (Sechelt), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Salilwata7/Selilwitulh (Tsilil-Wautuh)

Appendix F: The Job Posting for The Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program

Job Title:	Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassador	Job Category:	Public Relations
Reports to:	Lead, Ruth Simons	Travel Required:	Across the biosphere region
Location:	Remote Office Environment	Training provided:	HSBRIS, GreenStep Solutions Inc.
Level/Salary Range:	Internship for 3 months and then 20.00 per hour (TBC) plus expenses.	Position Type:	30 hours
Employer:	Capilano University Tourism Student	Supervisor:	Ruth Simons
Accountable to:	Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society		

Applications Accepted By:

Email:

1. Ruth Simons, Lead, Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society
HOWESOUNDBRI@gmail.com
2. EcoHarmony Coordinator
ECOHARMONY.AMBASS@gmail.com
3. GreenStep Solutions Inc.
ABC@email.com

Job Description

PURPOSE OF JOB/ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassador position is intended for students who are passionate about environmental preservation, promoting sustainable tourism and creating community engagement while attaining GreenStep Certification. You will be the link between local tourist and outdoor recreation organizations and the UNESCO Biosphere

Region as a Sustainability Ambassador. Conducting research to assess operators' understanding and interest in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, improving public relations with these organizations, pushing responsible tourism practices, and introducing GreenStep Certification will be among your tasks.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Research and Engagement

- Keep contact information for visitor and outdoor recreation organizations up to date.
- Conduct interviews with operators to assess their awareness of and interest in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Community Connection

- Implement the communication strategy with Howe Sound Biosphere Region businesses.
- Participate in activities as a biosphere spokesperson.
- Ensure that operators understand the UNESCO Biosphere Region and its significance.

3. Promoting Sustainable Practices and presenting GreenStep Certification

- Encourage operators and the general population to use responsible tourist practices.
- To raise awareness and engagement, take part in the creation of content for social media and other communications channels.
- Motivate businesses to implement eco-friendly practices by bringing up the advantages of obtaining GreenStep Certification as an example of a sustainable certificate.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- A strong understanding of UNESCO biosphere reserves and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Exceptional organizational and task management abilities.
- Self-driven, results-oriented, and resourceful.

PREFERRED SKILLS:

- Photography skills and experience in public relations are beneficial.

Additional Notes:

- Travel within the Howe Sound region is required.
- Flexible scheduling, including weekends and holidays, may be necessary.
- Self-directed and resourceful individuals are well-suited for this position.
- Adherence to HSBRIS guiding principles is expected.

BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES:

- Get practical experience in ethical tourism, public relations, and sustainability.
- Make connections with regional outdoor recreation and tourist organizations.
- Gain a thorough grasp of the Howe Sound Biosphere Region's distinctive natural beauty and biological value.
- Acknowledge your contributions with certificates of appreciation.
- Encouraged GreenStep Certification and its guiding principles.

EXPENSES:**Salary**

- Co-op Ambassador: Salary is paid by **Capilano University** according to timesheets current and submitted to Capilano University to a maximum of 420 hours – June-September approximately 30 hours per week
- Non Co-op Ambassador (could be chosen by one of these options below):
 - **Nonprofit Organizations:** Funding for the Sustainability Ambassador program, including salary for the ambassadors, may come from nonprofits like the Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society (HSBRIS) in your earlier example.
 - **Government Grants:** Funding possibilities or grants from the government may be available to support environmental and sustainability projects, depending on the program's goals and objectives. The wages of ambassadors may be paid with these monies.
 - **Local Businesses:** As part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives, GreenStep-certified businesses or other local businesses that

gain from the program may contribute to program costs, such as ambassador salary.

- **Grants for Sustainability:** A number of foundations and organizations provide funding for initiatives and projects with a sustainability theme. The positions of ambassadors may be funded by these funds.
- **Donations and Fundraising:** In order to pay for the wages of Sustainability Ambassadors, the program may hold fundraising events, sponsor events, or accept donations.

Travel and other expenses include

Transportation: car @ \$.55per/km, ferry fares, entrance and tour fees, food and beverage to an estimated maximum amount of \$1,000.

Contractor Name:	[Name]	Date:	November
HSBRI Team Lead:	Ruth Simons	Date:	November 25, 2023

Appendix G: Interview Questions for The Howe Sound EcoHarmony Ambassadors Program

- What does sustainability mean to you? How do you envision your role in promoting sustainability within the Howe Sound Biosphere?
- Explain your understanding of GreenStep Certification and its significance for businesses and the environment.
- How do you believe responsible tourism practices can benefit the Howe Sound Biosphere? Provide examples or ideas that showcase your perspective.
- Can you share an experience where you effectively engaged with a community or a group of people to achieve a common goal? How did you contribute to the group's success?
- What are your long-term goals or aspirations in the field of sustainability and responsible tourism? How do you see the Sustainability Ambassador Program aligning with these goals?
- Share an example of a challenge you faced in a team setting. How did you overcome it, and what did you learn from the experience?
- How would you handle a situation where a local business is interested in GreenStep Certification but faces challenges in implementing sustainable practices?
- Are you involved in any extracurricular activities or organizations related to sustainability, environmental conservation, or community engagement? If so, please provide details.
- What unique skills, qualities, or perspectives do you bring that would contribute to the success of the Sustainability Ambassador Program?