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SILENT SAFARI BY GREEN SAFARIS: A STUDY ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM APPROACH

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Abstract:

Green Safaris aims to provide quality camps in different destinations in Africa for their clients while working on preserving African wildlife by focusing on eco-safaris based on sustainability aspects. To achieve their aim, Green Safaris has been developing projects to reduce carbon emissions, as well as reduction of noise and pollution of waterways. Different projects have been undertaken, such as related to the conversion of fuel and diesel land cruisers into electronics and solar-powered vehicles, the conversion of their cruise boat into a solar-powered boat, and other initiatives under the silent safari projects. Considering the implementation of innovative and good practices, the Silent Safaris projects and related tourism activities at different locations have become popular in the southern part of the African continent for tourists who are eager to engage in responsible travel.

Resumo:

A Green Safaris visa fornecer acampamentos de qualidade em diferentes destinos na África para seus clientes, enquanto trabalha na preservação da vida selvagem africana, concentrando-se em eco-safaris com base em aspetos de sustentabilidade. Para atingir o seu objetivo, a Green Safaris tem vindo a desenvolver projetos para reduzir as emissões de carbono, bem como a redução do ruído e da poluição dos cursos de água. Diferentes projetos foram realizados, como os relacionados à conversão de veículos todo-o-terreno movidos a combustível e diesel em veículos eletrónicos e movidos a energia solar, a conversão de seu barco de cruzeiro em um barco movido a energia solar e outras iniciativas no contexto do projeto Silent Safaris. Considerando a implementação de boas e inovadoras práticas, os projetos Silent Safaris e atividades turísticas relacionadas em diferentes locais tornaram-se populares na parte sul do continente africano para turistas que desejam envolver-se em viagens de forma responsável.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism is becoming an increasingly popular concept in tourism development. According to UNWTO (2021), sustainable tourism “fully accounts for its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”. Furthermore, the concept seeks to ensure that natural resources, the environment, and wildlife are sufficiently protected while minimizing any negative impacts caused by tourism activities (Buckley, 2000). Therefore, a responsible approach must be adopted to ensure that everyone involved in the process of tourism takes action to ensure that activities developed in tourism contexts can contribute to better tourism, i.e., to more sustainable tourism (Goodwin, 2016).

Green Safaris is a Zambian company whose primary goal is the importance of ecotourism in Africa, especially from a safari point of view. They have won many international awards recognizing their quality tourism and hospitality services, dedication to sustainability, and contribution to wildlife conservation and community empowerment. The company was founded in 2009 by Dutchman Vincent Kouwenhoven and Brit Daniel Allcock, who had previously been involved in a fintech business spanned across Africa. The Green Safaris is inspired by the passion for conserving the African bush (greensafaris.com).

Green Safaris is a company that is very conscious of the ecosystem and whose services/conduct with its clients is focused on the highest principle of sustainability. A statement issued on their website (greensafaris.com) by the Managing director reads:

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With the greatest care, we handpicked our destinations where we operate our premier camps. Every place has a special story to tell and is part of an important ecosystem. We take the greatest care to help protect and nurture these places so that generations to come will enjoy it as we do. And that's where our mission comes from: We design and operate our camps in the most sustainable way and actively involve the local communities (greensafaris.com).

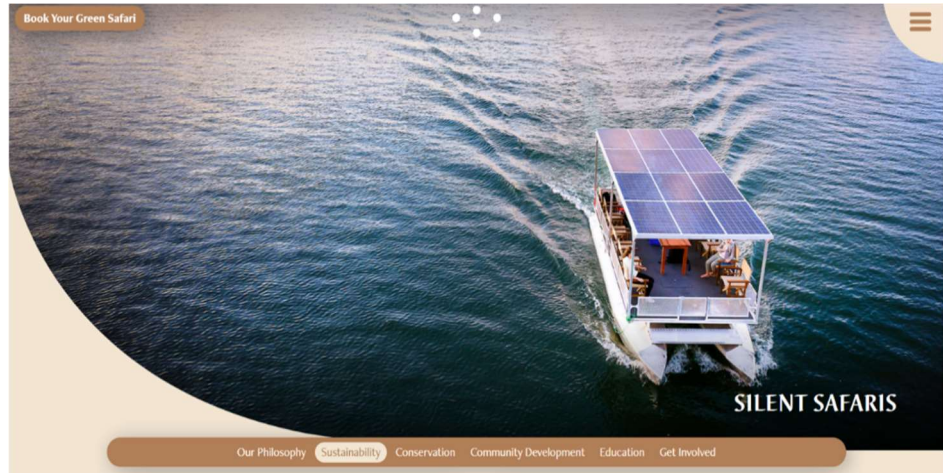
The above quote shows that the management does not compromise on sustainability and on making the environment eco-friendly. Among several projects undertaken by Green Safaris, there is a specific one called Silent Safari. This approach is described by National Geographic in the following way:

In Africa's safari heartlands, green safaris-thinking lodges, camps, and operators have taken the first tentative steps in a quiet revolution: ditching diesel-powered transport and switching to solar instead (Gregg, 2022).

Safari is a tour to observe wildlife and Nature in its natural habitat. Many people embark on Safari for different purposes such as research, relaxation, education, pleasure and other reasons. Silent Safari is an experience where tourists can view and take photos of wildlife through an innovative solar-powered vehicle developed by the company. The organization also works to protect the ecosystems and biodiversity of Zambia through conservation efforts that benefit wildlife, wilderness, and local communities, as well as directly fostering a sense of responsible tourism through eco-friendly camps and lodges.

Figure 1. Homepage from the official website of greensafaris®.

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Source: [<http://www.greensafaris.com>], as available on 12/11/2022.

2. CASE DEVELOPMENT

The Silent Safari project is centered around environmental sustainability, conservation, community development and education, which falls under the tenets of a responsible approach to tourism from the point of view of the company, guests, and the host community.

Goodwin (2016) advocates that responsible tourism is about making better places to visit and better places for individuals to live. In so doing, responsible tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility and take action to make tourism more sustainable.

The Silent Safari project within Green Safari used different marketing strategies to highlight its value and uniqueness. In fact, marketing can be linked to both the profit and non-profit performances of organizations (Shah & George, 2020). Using social media channels helps direct more traffic to increase the brand awareness of Silent Safari. Also, the use of advertising on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram assists the company in boosting awareness for the project and gaining the attention of customers. Another important marketing strategy utilized for the growth of silent safari is the company's website which acts as a digital business card. The company invested in SEO (Search Engine Optimization), which allows its site to be more visible. The website is constantly updated with information and new activities regarding Silent Safari. Once specific keywords are looked up on Google, data about Silent Safari will be readily available on the site for potential clients.

Silent Safari can be exclusive, unique and tailored to suit small groups of individuals. This experience caters to all members of the family, including

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children, teenagers and even the elderly. They also created opportunities for those that are physically disabled or hearing impaired to enjoy the Silent Safari. For instance, the Nest suite in the Chisa Busanga Camp has an elevator that makes it easy for wheelchair accessibility. Individuals' specific needs will also be catered to throughout the entirety of their stay at the accommodations provided in the camps.

There are different destinations and camps under the umbrella of Green Safaris that utilize the concept of the Silent Safari. To participate in the Silent Safari there are four methods available: electronic land rover, eBikes, e-Cruiser and on foot experience (accompanied by guides).

Taking a walk is a very immersive experience that allows tourists to see animals on a much closer level. On the other hand, solar-powered vehicles allow traveling through the bush with little to no noise or disturbances ensuring that the shier game like Antelope and Bushbuck can graze and interact with their environment more freely while tourists enjoy nature:

Now, in a bid to reduce fossil-fuel consumption, a handful of camps have started using electric vehicles. One of the earliest adopters was Green Safaris, a collection of seven camps across Zambia and Malawi. Three of its Zambian properties — Shawa Luangwa, Chisa Busanga and Ila Safari Lodge — operate battery-powered 4x4s (Ila also has an e-boat), with the others intended to follow (The Times UK, 2021).

There are also plenty of other activities to get involved in like game drives, boat cruises (which is the only activity that has to be shared), fishing, bush walks, sunset watching, picnics, visits to the community, etc. There are also bars and restaurants available within the camps.

The objectives of Green Safaris as a company are to reach Sustainability, Conservation, Community development and Education. Inspired by the objectives of Green Safaris as a company, the Silent Safaris project was born. Therefore, Silent Safaris project also aims to achieve the aforementioned objectives while giving maximum satisfaction to tourists who visit the designated destinations, while engaging in more responsible travel: *Many of our lodges are entirely run off solar farms, we utilize water reticulation and biogas systems, and we have banned zero-use plastics (greensafaris.com).*

The founders of the company, Dutchman Vincent Kouwenhoven and Brit Daniel Allcock, were drawn in by the enormous size, unique wildlife and mellow nature of Kafue. In July 2016, they began operations at the Ila Safari Lodge. This luxurious lodge was created with environmental sustainability in mind. The lodge was equipped with a large solar bank to provide massive amounts of energy and allow them to be off-grid.

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The eLandy was first made before the official beginning of Green Safaris, in 2011. However, after many tests, it was officially launched in 2016, along with the first e-boat at the opening of Ila Safari Lodge: *Perhaps most striking so far has been the introduction of the very first electrical game drive vehicle (eLandy), for zero-impact 'Silent Safaris', which was built back home in the Netherlands and then shipped it to Zambia*(Green Safari, 2019).

1.1 PRODUCTS OFFERED BY THE COMPANY:

- Solar-powered vehicle & boat: Under the Silent Safari projects, the Green Safari is the first company in Zambia to run silent solar-powered safaris (Ila Safari Lodge). (greensafaris.com) They modified a regular diesel-powered engine Land Rover to a completely solar-powered electric vehicle. At the same time, they have replaced traditional boat engines with solar-powered boats in Kafue National Park and introduced Electric Mountain bikes to explore the Busanga Plains from Chisa Busanga Camp and Kaya Mawa on Likoma Island.

Figure 2: Solar powered boat



Source: [<http://www.greensafaris.com>], as available at 12/11/2022.

Figure 3: E-Cruisers



Source: [<http://www.greensafaris.com>], as available at 12/11/2022.

- Green building and facilities: Destination properties of the Green Safaris company are designed and built most sustainably to ensure they blend seamlessly into their specific habitat (greensafaris.com).

Figure 4: Zambia international tourist arrival 2005-2016



Source: [<http://www.ceicdata.com>], as available at 12/11/2022.

The World Bank's data as presented above shows that after the launch of the Green Safaris projects in 2009, Zambia's travel arrival increased significantly between 2009 to 2016, which also positively impacted the economy of Zambia. Although the Silent Safaris project may not have been responsible for the spike, we have reason to believe that it has a significant chunk of influence as it pertains to the recognition of Silent Safari by the government and the partnership to open the South Luangwa National Park (cntraveler.com).

The Silent Safari project has become the epitome of sustainable safari tourism in the Southern part of the African continent and has significantly impacted the Nature conservation of the wildlife in the region in many ways, including, but not limited to. Other aspects include:

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- With the emulation of the Silent Safari in other tourist destinations in Africa, the use of solar-powered vehicles and boats, the sound pollution, harmful carbon emission and water pollution through leftover fossil fuel from the boat engines have been significantly minimized.
- The safari experience has become even more exciting and enjoyable with the advent of noiseless vehicles, which means that guests can get much closer to the birds and wild animals, making activities far more comfortable by letting silent vehicles into natural habitats without the din of a diesel engine to scare off animals.
- Subsequently, the green technology building facilities inside different national parks run smoothly without jolting nature's serenity and calmness for the region and its wildlife.
- While solar energy and biogas for all kinds of utilities also make the facilities environmentally sustainable for the overall pristine ecological balance of the African plains, the earth, and humankind. Eventually, the Green Team is guided by a deep love and a need to care for Africa's wild spaces, which is why they champion this sustainable Silent Safari experience through innovative 'green' technology, giving their guests a safari adventure with a low-carbon footprint.

3. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Question 1. How does Silent Safari contribute to safari tourism sustainability?

Sustainable tourism has different definitions; the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines it as *Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities*. Safari in its simplest term is a journey into wildlife for natural experiences.

The sustainability of the safari experience can not only help to preserve the environment for future use but also will have a great deal on the wildlife and nature. In fact, *travelers and tour operators need to become more conscientious and seek new ways to ensure a travel experience that strikes a balance between satisfying our wanderlust and contributing to the wellbeing of the planet* (conservationmag.org). Others argue that tourists should find new ways to ensure sustainability (conservationmag.com). The Silent Safari project is opening several options, and in more locations to ensure that ways of new experiences are not limited.

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Question 2. What kind of relationship exists between silent safari and the environment?

Silent Safari is a project under the Green Safari company, a tourist operator company. According to Aleksanyan (2021) “tourism destination has developmental stages, expressed in time, which allow it to be viewed in the context of spatio-temporal phenomena, which is one of the inseparable features of geographical space”. Silent Safari as a project does not just only answer the question of conserving the environment; it also takes into consideration time and innovation, which are very important aspect related to environmental impacts.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the Silent Safari by Green Safaris is a project that should be encouraged globally for the sustainability of the environment, wildlife and nature. This work has made the authors reflect that although the Green Safari group is working on improving their locations and providing conditions for high levels of visitors’ satisfaction, the culture of their host communities, natural habitats, and wildlife have taken a serious part of their action consideration conservation, sustainability and economic growth.

Silent Safari project comes with some challenges which still need to be attended to, from improving on the innovations for security assurance of end tourists as some wildlife species may need loud sounds to scare them away from attacking tourists. This innovation was not mentioned in any point in their current Silent Safari innovations. Extension of the project rationale to other parts of Africa continent could be considered as they are at the moment only concentrating on the southern part of the continent.

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