

6 Key Elements to Attraction Sustainability

Africa is full of world-renowned tourist attractions, from the Kruger National Park and Victoria Falls to the iconic Table Mountain and the Namib Desert. Our attractions bring hundreds of thousands of travellers from across the globe each year flocking to see them, helping to keep the tourism industry alive and thriving.

It goes without saying that looking after these attractions is a priority if we want to continue to see tourism grow in Africa, creating more jobs and other opportunities. Here are the five key elements to sustaining a tourist attraction.

1. Attractiveness

It's a no-brainer that if an attraction site is clean, free of litter and is well-maintained, people will want to visit it and enjoy it. Maintaining an attraction could involve simple tasks, such as clearing a pathway from overgrown shrubbery, to making sure windows are clean and public bins are emptied on a regular basis. A well-looked after attraction will appeal to travellers, bringing a steady flow of income and even opportunities for development.

2. Access

There's no use in having a beautiful attraction if no one can get to it. Road signs in nearby towns directing travellers are always a good idea, as well as having good roads into the attraction site that well-looked after. Local and provincial government should be able to realise the income potential of an attraction, ensuring ease of access for interested travellers.

If access is a problem, make sure that this is clearly communicated upfront. Managing visitor expectations is critical, so if the road is bad and it takes two hours to

reach you, be honest. Visitors hate to be misled by false or inaccurate information.

3. Infrastructure

Most attractions, regardless of whether they are natural, cultural or for amusement, require some form of infrastructure. This is all the basic equipment it needs in order to run, including electricity and water access as well roads, buildings and employees.

Maintaining infrastructure is one of the most important things to invest in. If you don't set aside funds for this every year, your attraction will soon deteriorate to the point where visitors won't use it anymore.

4. Enterprise

Make use of opportunities around the attraction to generate income and create jobs within the community. There are usually a number of ways for people to benefit from an attraction, from selling soft drinks, to craft or even guiding. Maximise the opportunities at your site and encourage the community to participate in a meaningful way.

Always make sure that visitors are not harassed by hawkers or guides. Be helpful and friendly, but never be overbearing or pushy. Visitors like their space and will ask questions if they want to know more.

5. Provide quality information

Make sure that the attraction is interpreted to visitors. This could mean a well-trained guide take them around the site, or that you have signboards with information. An attraction is only really appreciated if it is understood, so make sure that you have lots of information available.

Providing visitors with detailed information is essential. Many people have concerns or can become anxious around what will be provided, what is available, or where they need to go when they are away from home. While one attraction may not

need to give as much information as others, answering the most frequently asked questions (FAQ) is a must for all business owners and can be done by means of a brochure, pamphlet or even visitor information signage around the attraction.

Be clear about when guided tours take place or what the operating hours are. Make sure that you stick to this as visitors often plan their days in advance and are left disappointed and angry if they arrive to find a closed gate.

6. Awareness

The final element of sustaining a good tourist attraction is making sure that all relevant information about the attraction is up to date and easily available for interested travellers to find. Having brochures, posters, information at local tourism offices and signage are all great ways of helping to spread awareness about the attraction. Partnering with local and national tourism bodies can be very helpful in marketing your attraction as well. Make sure you have a strong presence online by listing your attraction on websites and make sure your attraction has a page/account on at least one social media platform, such as Facebook, where you can post updates, news, photos and visitor testimonials.