RED ROCKS ECOTOURISM INITIATIVE'S PROMOTION OF A CULTURAL BASED TOURISM IN RWANDA

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beginning in the 1990s and reaching full-fledged recognition since 2000, strategic shifts in business in general, and in tourism specifically, have led to essentially new ways of thinking about relationships among stakeholders and their physical and cultural environments. The social business enterprise movement is growing and gathering supporters across the globe as an innovative approach to sustainable business activity offering people a path to human development and economic prosperity. In a related move within the travel and tourism sector there is growing support for sustainable tourism as a means of providing benefits to the local population while enriching the tourists' visits and "preserving the tourism products for future generations to enjoy" (Edgell, 2006). This interest in sustainable tourism coincides with increasing focus on the concept of cultural tourism and the role it can play in economic growth, investment and poverty reduction around the world.

However, although strategic planning is viewed as the "principal management tool" to achieve the goal of tourism sustainability" (Edgell, 2006, p. xv), case studies of its application to cultural tourism initiatives are limited (Seltzer and Business Enteprises for Sustainable Development, 2002). Beginning in the 1990s and reaching full-fledged recognition since 2000, strategic shifts in business in general, and in tourism specifically, have led to essentially new ways of thinking about relationships among stakeholders and their physical and cultural environments. The social business enterprise movement is growing and gathering supporters across the globe as an innovative approach to sustainable business activity offering people a path to human development and economic prosperity. In a related move within the travel and tourism sector there is growing support for sustainable tourism as a means of providing benefits to the local population while enriching the tourists' visits and "preserving the tourism products for future generations to enjoy" (Edgell, 2006). This interest in sustainable tourism coincides with increasing focus on the concept of cultural tourism and the role it can play in economic growth, investment and poverty reduction around the world.

Cultural Tourism is traveling to a destination to experience places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and the present. It includes historic, cultural, and natural events, educational opportunities, and attractions; depending on the destination, it may also include traditional heritage life-style recreation activities.

II. RED ROCKS ECOTOURISM INITIATIVE BACKGROUND

- **Name of the Company:** Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative
- **Registration No.: 103180398(RDB)**
- **Business ownership:** Business established upon shares
- **Business Location:** Musanze- Northern Province

II.1. Keys to Success

- By focusing on our strengths, key customers, and the underlying values Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative will increase sales steadily in its first three years, while also maintaining the gross margin on sales, with a **"focus on cash management and working capital"**;

- This business plan renews our vision and strategic focus: adding value to our target market segments, and reinforcing our ties with businesses in our local markets. It also provides the step-by-step plan for improving our sales, gross margin, and profitability.

II.2. Objectives

- Exploit first-mover advantage in a highly fragmented market with a unique and differentiated products and services;
- Develop a strong branding campaign to build awareness, positive perception and sales of our products and services within our target markets;
- Continue to develop new services to satisfy an ever growing set of markets.

II.3. Management

Two of our strengths are the low cost structure and flexible personnel needs. Sales people with experience relevant to each new respective target market can be attained as need dictates, but the initial management team consists of the founders themselves, with little operational support. The

Board of Advisors will be a critical foundation for the successful growth and development of Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative.

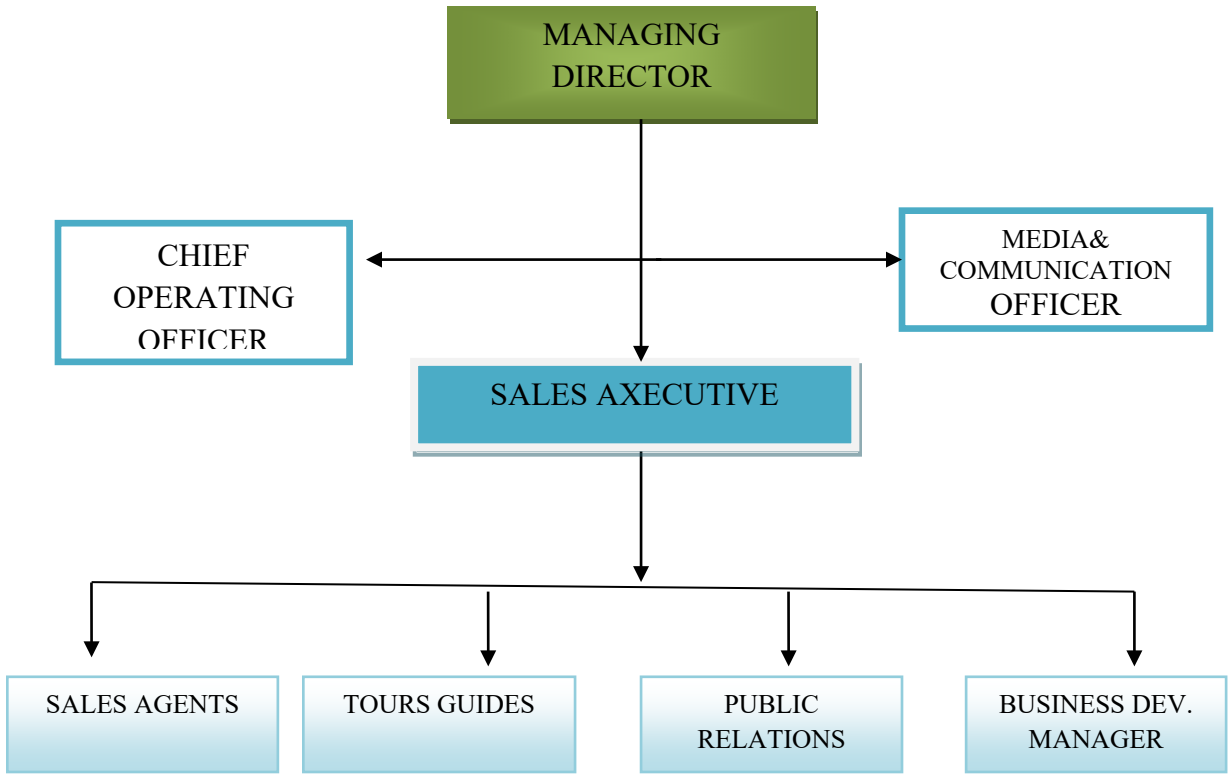
Ideally, the management team should be as shown in this table:

Table 1: Structural Management of Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative

No.	Title	Profile	No. of employees	Work Status
1.	Executive Director		1	Full-Time
2.	Chief Operating Officer	Bachelor's Degree in Business management	1	Full-Time
4.	Media and communication Officer		1	Full-Time
5.	Sales Executive	Graduate in Marketing	3	Full-time
6.	Sales agents		2	Full-time
7.	Public Relations Officer		2	Full-time
8.	Tours guides	Tourism and Hospitality Management	8	Full-time
9.	Business Development Manager	Degree in Rural Development	1	Full-time
10.	Skilled workers	Technical and Vocational Education Training	4	Full-time

II.4. Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative Managerial & Operational Structure

Figure 1: Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative Managerial & Operational Structure



II.5. Service and support

Our strategy hinges on providing unparalleled service and support, which is critical to setting us apart from the competition. We need to differentiate on service and support in order to become true partners with our clients. Our service offers will include:

- ***Uptime guarantees***: we will include "uptime guarantees" with our all-inclusive service agreements to insure maximum productivity for our clients;

- ***Internal training***: the "learning and growth" part of our Balanced Scorecard performance measurement strategy will include the requirement that our operations staff and sales professionals become a certified business entity by the end of FY 2017;

- ***Upgrade analysis***: we will periodically assess our client's business processes and requirements, and offer cost-effective upgrade solutions to meet changing needs.

At Rocks Ecotourism Initiative Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative, we make convergence the theme of its vision, planning, and marketing strategies. We will with the aim of bringing the most efficient workflow solutions to our clients while providing value-added customer support and service, and earning a reasonable profit in the process.

III. THE MARKET AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

Within the cultural tourism and tourism in general, a traveler to the destination may be someone from another country, a nearby state or community, a school group, and especially someone from the destination community itself. It's amazing how many residents of a place have never visited or experienced a nearby event or attraction.

One of the most significant aspects of Cultural Tourism is that the events, attractions, and initiatives are all meant to improve the quality of life of the community's residents, and help preserve or improve traditional resources.

3.1 Market Segmentation

We will target the market segment with value-added and affordable business solutions customized to its unique needs, and offer the same quality of service and support as are afforded the larger businesses.

In order to help develop and grow the cultural tourism sector, Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative will work with the following customer groups:

- Existing and potential tourism business and organizations in the region and abroad;
- Residents from different districts within the Republic of Rwanda;
- Visitors and soon-to-be visitors;
- Travel influencers, including tour operators, travel journalists/media, sport event organizers, meeting planners, associations' executives, etc.

To construct and sustain good "**Channels** of **Distribution"** will be a basic ingredient in marketing to ensure the profitability of our business. These channels will be supported by advertisement through different media (Radio and TV, Pamphlets, Internet, et.) and by the placement of sales representatives nationwide.

We will increase our share of this market segment by offering the same value-added service and support benefits that we bring to our commercial clients.

3.2 Target Market Segment Strategy

Developing a market strategy is a departure from the way the company has been managed in the past. We will change the paradigm of being a product- and price-focused sales organization, to that of becoming a customer- and market-focused organization, with all departments sharing responsibility for customer satisfaction. We will accomplish this paradigm shift through the implementation of a balanced scorecard philosophy of management, with special attention to employee learning and growth.

As mentioned previously our market segmentation strategy is straightforward, and addresses all components of the cultural tourism industry and a community based business. Planning and implementing specific strategies for each of the identified segments/clusters will be an on-going process, and we will consult with marketing specialists, and our manufacturers, to further refine these efforts as we develop our marketing plan.

3.3. Market Needs

All businesses have in common a need to be continuously productive, and they rely on their service providers and vendors to sustain their productivity. Effectively filling this need requires that the vendor bring to the table sound planning, quality products, reliable service, and a true partnership and support relationship.

Specific business needs include the ability to gather, compile, analyze, and distribute information in various media formats. This is where Rocks Ecotourism Initiative Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative's strengths will be most beneficial to our clients, both big and small. Anyone can sell the "box" at an attractive price, but only a true value-added provider can offer the peace-of-mind that comes from a customer-focused approach to the relationship.

Our primary goal is to all clients' needs by bringing true pro-active, and total, customer service to the neighbour business community, and to gain their confidence and loyalty. This will become one of our underlying strengths.

IV. BENEFITS AND COMPETITION

IV.1. Benefits of Cultural Tourism

- Projects are environmentally sustainable, culturally appropriate, and take into consideration the impact on all who will be touched by them;
- For existing businesses, new income generated by Cultural Tourism visitors may add sufficient revenues for them to become more profitable, helping them to grow;
- Creates jobs and opportunities for new businesses – artisans and crafts people; performers and entertainers; lodgings; dining establishments; crafts supply stores; tour operators;
- Diversifies local economy - jobs for recreation: guides, sports outfitters, more retail, etc. crafts teachers, tourism packages; transportation options, web and graphics designers;
- Helps diminish 'leakage" i.e. travel of community residents to a neighboring community to purchase goods and services not available in their own community;
- Attracts visitors with interests in cultural heritage and traditions, history, and preservation;
- Attracts older visitors: often people with expendable income, who travel on;
- Creates opportunities for partnerships – artisan cooperatives, local foods/farmers markets;
- Increases revenues at historic attraction and events thus helps sustain them;
- Preserves and strengthens local traditions;
- Generates opportunities for local investment in historic and community resources;
- Builds community pride and perception/image of the site or area's significance;
- Helps improve property values;
- Creates need for and creation of quality promotional materials, utilization of ICT, etc., all bring positive impressions of the community;
- Attracts investors (banks, foundations) interested in sustainable economies;

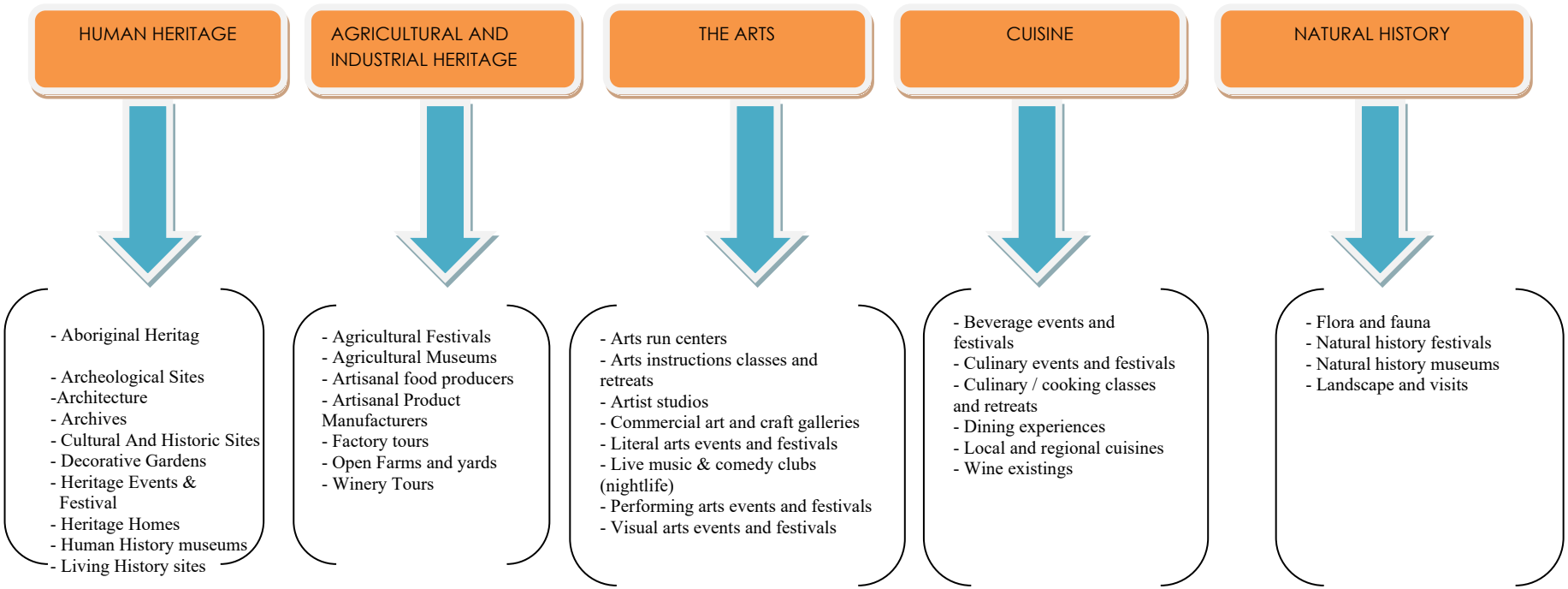
- Etc.

IV.2. Competition

Our competitive edge is our positioning as a strategic all with our clients, who are clients more than customers. By building a business based on long-standing relationships with satisfied clients, we simultaneously build defenses against competition. The longer the relationship stands, the more we help our clients understand what we offer them and why they should both stay with us and refer us to other businesses.

V. THE CULTURAL BASED CLUSTERS IDENTIFIED IN RWANDA

Figure 2: The cultural based clusters identified in Rwanda



From the figure no. 2, the cultural tourism is about visiting museums and galleries, arts events and festivals, visiting heritage attractions and sites, and consuming other cultural experiences. The essence of cultural tourism is not about attending attractions, or visiting sites. The essence of cultural tourism is about encountering a destination's history and heritage, its stories, its people, its landscape, its townscape, its culture. It is about discovering what makes a destination distinctive, authentic, and memorable. It is about the experience of "place".

VI. CROSS CUTTING THEMES

VI.1. Environment

There is a strong link between the environment and disasters. Environmental pre- conditions often contribute to disasters. Disasters can result in negative environmental impacts. Emergency response can have positive or negative environmental impact.

Therefore, being able to rapidly identify, evaluate and respond to critical environmental issues and their effects on lives and livelihoods during a disaster are key to effective disaster relief and recovery operations.

VI.2. Gender

Women and men, girls and boys, have the same entitlement to humanitarian assistance; to respect for their human dignity; to acknowledgement of their equal human capacities, including the capacity to make choices; to the same opportunities to act on those choices; and to the same level of power to shape the outcome of their actions. Red Rocks Ecotourism Initiative recognizes the equality of men/boys and women/girls in its habitual interventions and skills development projects are achieved through gender analysis. Gender cuts across all the other cross-cutting issues.

VI.3. HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS are complex problems with impacts that extend far beyond the health sector. Therefore, a multi-sectoral response is required to prevent HIV- related morbidity and mortality both during and after the crisis. In many humanitarian situations, HIV programming will already be operational prior to the crisis, and priority should be given to maintaining or restoring HIV prevention, care and treatment programs that may have been disrupted by the humanitarian situation.

More systematic integration of HIV programming into humanitarian action will help prevent HIV related morbidity and mortality that may occur as a result of the crisis. This means prioritizing humanitarian interventions that are designed to avert new HIV infections, and reduce the vulnerability of those already infected with HIV.