

Hamanasi Eco-Resort: Examining the Profit, Planet, and People Bottom Lines of Sustainability

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This piece was originally published in [Inquiry Journal](#), an online, multi-disciplinary undergraduate research journal that features first-person accounts of undergraduate research done for a course or project under the direction of one or more faculty mentors. The following was written by Kate Early, who spent nine weeks at Hamanasi, a resort in a rural fishing village in Belize. Early, from Corning, New York, is a fifth-year senior, studying Hospitality Management.



HOPKINS BEACH

LOOKING TOWARDS HAMANASI'S DOCK.

Every morning I wake up in my room, a small house built among the trees, sit on my front porch, and watch the sun climb up over the ocean. After breakfast, I walk barefoot along the beach towards the Hamanasi Adventure and Dive Resort in Belize. As I near the resort, a boat full of scuba divers leaves the dock for a day of exploring the second largest barrier reef in the world. But I was not sent here to scuba dive with the hawksbill turtle or relax on the beach sipping a coconut, and I am not here to taste local Caribbean cuisine or visit ancient Mayan ruins. I am here to research the practices of ecotourism and sustainability as conducted at the Hamanasi eco-resort. During my research here in the summer of 2011, I learned the importance of balancing economics (profit), with the environment (planet) and society (people), the three Ps of the triple bottom line under which Hamanasi operates.

Research at the Resort and the Triple Bottom Line



KATE EARLY WITH OWNERS DAVE (LEFT) AND DANA (RIGHT) KRAUSKOPF OF HAMANASI.

My research in Belize was funded through the International Research Opportunities Program (IROP) of the University of New Hampshire, which allowed me to spend nine weeks researching at Hamanasi, located in Hopkins, a rural fishing village of 2,000 people. I conducted my research in four phases. In Phase One I distributed questionnaires to guests and conducted interviews with Hamanasi employees, resulting in 34 completed guest questionnaires and 47 employee interviews. The questionnaires and interviews focused on gaining demographic and green knowledge information. During Phase Two I conducted interviews with the owners and general manager of Hamanasi, during which we discussed the planning and start-up of an eco-resort as well as current issues such as employee training, marketing, business management, and plans for future expansion or further implementation of green practices. In Phase Three I conducted a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) Analysis of Hamanasi, a marketing tool which examines these four categories of a business internally and externally. I also conducted a market analysis of properties that compete with Hamanasi, which included interviewing owners and general managers at five local properties in Hopkins Village and at four eco-resorts in the Cayo District of Belize. (In this article, I am not including this information.) Finally, in Phase Four I examined the green certification programs of Green Globe International and Sustainable Travel International (STI). Before leaving Belize, I helped Hamanasi write the policies and procedures for an intermediate certification from STI.

Belize is an English-speaking country, which immensely facilitated my research. An old British colony, Belize only gained independence in 1981. Belize itself is a small Central American country bordering Mexico, Guatemala, and the Caribbean Sea. Approximately the same size as Massachusetts, the region is tropical, hot, and humid. A veritable melting pot, there is no average Belizean face; the ethnic backgrounds consist of Mestizo, Creole, Maya, Garifuna and more (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). Hopkins Village is located on the east coast, nestled between the Maya Mountains and the reefs of the Caribbean Sea.

Discovering the charming fishing village of Hopkins in 1995, Dave and Dana Krauskopf are now the proud founding owners of the Hamanasi Adventure and Dive Resort. They

found the location an idyllic place to start an eco-resort and, after four years of extensive planning, saving, and construction, the dream of owning a resort came to fruition with the opening of Hamanasi in 2000. And so, with no previous hotel experience, the husband and wife team became the owners of an eco-resort.

From the beginning, their plan was to manage an eco-resort, one that followed sustainable practices. The basic concept of sustainability is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition is provided by Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report, a report commissioned by the United Nations’ World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) examining the state of world sustainability in 1987 (World Commission on Environment and Development). There are three components of sustainability by which a business examines its impact: economic accountability, environmental accountability, and social accountability. These three components of responsible accounting are called “the triple bottom line.” The triple bottom line is a phrase coined in 1994 by John Elkington, the founder of SustainAbility, a strategy consultancy working to transform sustainability in the business world (The Economist, 2009). Most companies only measure their success from the bottom line of profit. Hamanasi strives to be environmentally and socially responsible in addition to being economically successful. The owners accomplish this by examining and acting upon the effects of all three components of the triple bottom line on the long-term performance of the resort. These areas are often referred to as the three Ps: profit, planet, and people. My research showed me how Hamanasi addresses and balances the applications of the three Ps in all areas of operation.

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