Project Summary

Desk-top research carried out in 2016 through CQUniversity’s Centre for Tourism and Regional Opportunities revealed that, despite the seemingly abundant opportunities, Traditional Owners (TO) of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) appear to show little interest in participating in the lucrative coral reef tourism industry. This project seeks to follow up this research with qualitative studies to gain an understanding of why this is so. The project will canvass TO attitudes to the industry, map out the opportunities for their participation in both mainstream and Indigenous-initiated ventures, and provide an assessment of current obstacles and what can be done to mitigate them. Research will be undertaken through a combination of surveys (e.g., of tourism industry literature), consultations with TO groups and regulatory authorities, and interviews with mainstream tourism operators (and their representative bodies). A final report will provide recommendations relevant to TO groups interested in coral reef tourism, mainstream tourism stakeholders and enterprises, industry bodies and regulatory and management authorities.

Problem

There currently is little contemporary information on TO participation in the GBR tourism industry and any economic benefits obtained from coral reef tourism. An improved understanding of TO aspirations for sustainable economic use of the Reef’s natural resources, particularly in relation to tourism will assist in policy development, target-setting and directing on-ground action associated with Indigenous strategies in the Reef 2050 Plan.

How Research Addresses Problem

The project will provide an improved understanding of TOs aspirations for sustainable economic use of the Reef’s natural resources, particularly in relation to tourism, and a review of international models for Indigenous coral reef tourism will assist in policy development, target-setting and directing on-ground action associated with the implementation of Indigenous strategies in the Reef 2050 Plan.
The project is aligned with the Reef 2050 Plan, particularly Actions EBA1 and EBA2 regarding generating economic benefits for TOs from use and management of their “sea country”. Research outcomes will focus on: (i) increasing the number of TO owned and operated tourism businesses providing a range of experiences along the GBR; and (ii) encouraging mainstream GBR tourism operators to include TO cultural experiences within their range of tourism services. To achieve these outcomes, research will focus on: (i) Indigenous inclusion in the governance structure of tourism in Queensland; (ii) surveying current TO initiatives delivering Indigenous tourism experiences in the GBR; (iii) surveying mainstream tourism services to gauge the extent that Indigenous experiences are already included; (iv) consultations with local TOs with regard to their attitudes to tourism, level of interest in participating within the industry and their assessment of the opportunities and barriers regarding such participation; and (v) consultations with local mainstream tourism operators to ascertain their willingness to include TO experiences within their range of services.

The final report will contain an Indigenous Tourism Business Development Plan that focuses on both TO business aspirations as well as advocating ways in which mainstream tourism operators can include TOs to deliver cultural experiences on the GBR.

Further information
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