

A Study on Ecological Tourism Development For Poverty Alleviation

Vishal J

MBA, Department of Management Studies
Bharath Institute of Science and Technology,
Selaiyur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600 073
Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research

ABSTRACT

The satisfaction of business and social goals, the opportunity for the citizen to get to know his environment, the attraction of a deeper awareness of national identity and a sense of belonging to a culture and nation are all reasons for stimulating tourist's interest in travel. Tourism creates contact between individuals, between different cultures and religions; it gives insight into alien cultures and in the process creates interest and understanding among people. Nations coming into contact through the mass movement of people can never be incited against one another in the same way as nations whose human communication is limited by geographic, economic or political constraints. This security building and peace keeping function of travel and tourism warrants top priority to be attached to sustainable tourism development. Realizing the potential of the tourism sector for economic growth and harmonious relationship in the family of nations, Governments are now giving priority to tourism development. But all development processes entail the problems of environment and ecology, be it science or technology, tourism or agriculture, it is said that tourism can kill tourism. The interaction between tourism development and environmental degradation is so complex that it requires sensitive handling. Tourism development and the protection of the environment should go hand in hand as in the name of conservation development processes can never be stopped. The resource left is to make tourism sustainable. The concept of sustainable tourism embodies a challenge to develop world tourism capacity and the quality of its products without adversely affecting the environment that maintains and nurtures it. Sustainable tourism development is positive socio-economic change that does not undermine the ecological and social system upon which communities and societies are dependent. Its successful implementation requires integrated policy political viability depends on the full support of the people it affects through their social institutions and activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the Rio Earth Summit, global changes such as the environment, employment, education, health and social mobility have multiplied and intensified several studies have revealed that while ecotourism has been presented as a negotiate response to the imperatives of ecological preservation and community development, the profit-hungry tourism industry has focused on ecotourism, primarily to use it as a marketing ploy without regard for environmental and social justice issues. Researchers mostly agree that eco tourism is dominated to a great extent by North based corporations that expose developing countries and marginalized social groups to new dependencies and hardship.

However, ecotourism discussions have overlooked the reality that from the southern perspective, the macro economic climate facilitates but are rightly aggressive to other forms of tourism, that seek to priorities even more, the distribution of benefits and environmental preservation.

Consequently, institutions and instruments for managing change are evolving rapidly. These changes continue at an increasingly accelerated pace in a constantly globalizing world. But despite inevitable change, there are still some constants.

- Triple bottom line i.e., environment, ethical and economic sustainability is being continuously reaffirmed, with the social dimension, upper most.
- Poverty remains the single most important cause of inequality and suffering.

Undoubtedly tourism has emerged in this decade as a central pillar of the services economy and it can adequately respond to global changes, if its growth is managed prudently, with an emphasis on ethics, poverty alleviation and sustainable environment. In 1999, the World Tourism Organization adopted a global code of ethics encapsulating these and related principles. This has been endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations and is now being widely disseminated to the public and private sector as the basis for national legislation and corporate social responsibility strategies.

TOURISM – A UNIQUE AGENT OF CHANGE

Tourism as a development tool has an impact across all economies, directly and indirectly. It is particularly potent in economic terms in respect of;

- Job creation
- Investment attraction
- Foreign exchange earnings
- External debt reduction and
- Diversification of economy

Social terms in respect of

- Employment
- Community enrichment
- Gender equality
- Cultural preservation
- Pleasure and peace and
- Social welfare.

TOURISM BENEFITS AND SUSTAINABILITY REQUIREMENT

Tourism has since been recognized as a major factor in world trade and a prime mover of poverty alleviation, especially in the least developed countries. In any productive process consisting of services, human resources remain the basic need. The volume of manpower engaged in activities complimentary to tourism industry is one of the highest in view of various sectors that are direct or indirect constituents of the industry, which has created a wide range of jobs of different categories.

VOLUME AND REVENUE SHARE OF WORLD’S MAJOR TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN 2016

S.NO	DESTINATION	INTERNATIONAL TOURIST ARRIVAL (MILLION)	% OF CHANGE 2016-2015	RANK	INTERNATIONAL TOURIST RECEIPTS (US \$ BILLIONS)	% OF CHANGE 2016/2015	RANK
1	France	76.5	1.2	1	30.0	-2.5	3
2	Spain	49.5	3.4	2	32.9	4.5	2
3	USA	45.5	-10.7	3	72.3	-11.9	1
4	Italy	39.1	-5.2	4	25.8	-6.2	4
5	China	33.2	6.2	5	17.8	9.7	5
6	United Kingdom	22.8	-9.4	6	16.3	-16.7	7
7	Russian Federation	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Mexico	19.8	-4.0	8	8.4	1.3	12
9	Canada	19.7	0.2	9	10.8	0.7	8
10	Austria	18.2	1.1	10	10.1	1.9	9
11	Germany	17.9	-5.9	11	17.2	-6.8	6
12	Hungary	15.3	-1.5	12	3.4	0.8	16
13	Poland	15.0	-13.8	13	6.1	1.3	15
14	Hongkong (China)	13.7	5.1	14	8.2	4.5	13
15	Greece	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: World Tourism Organizations.

TABLE NO 1

From the above table, it is found that France has topped the list, receiving 76.5 million foreign tourists. i.e., 11% of the total tourist’s arrivals during 2016 and ranked 3rd in revenue share from international tourism. However, the USA had the lion’s share in terms of foreign exchange earnings from tourism i.e., 72.3 billion US\$, more than double earned by France during that period. The WTO report also predicts that tourism in East Asia and the Pacific will grow by an average of 6.7% annually till the year 2020, when the figure is expected to reach 229 million tourists a year.

INDIAN SCENARIO

Indian tourism has also undergone a sea change. Tourism policy in India is being structured and given form by the creation of a separate tourism development fund, setting up of a tourism development authority, visa- on arrival, effective marketing, people’s participation in the planning process and placing tourism in the concurrent list of the Indian constitution. The major steps taken in this direction are the creation of a special tourism task force, setting up of the National Tourism Advisory Council and direct air links with China. Reserve Bank of India data on the composition of service exports show that over a quarter of the local income now comes from software services.

The second largest item is receipts from travel services. Table 2 below is indicative of its importance in the Indian economy in terms of receipts and employment generated by the sector.

INDIAN TOURISM PROFILE 2016

International tourism arrivals world wide	692.6 (million)
International tourism arrival in India	2.537 million
India’s share of world tourist arrivals	0.37%
World tourism receipts	463.6(US billion)
India’s foreign exchange receipts from tourists	14344 (Rs. In Crores)
India’s share of world tourist receipts	0.66%
Domestic tourists in India	234 million

Source: WTO Report, 2017 Tourism Statistics, Department of Tourism, Government of India.

TABLE NO 2

Table 2 below is indicative of its importance in the Indian economy in terms of receipts and employment generated by the sector. The Government of India invited tenders for formulating a 20 year perspective plan for development of sustainable tourism in all States and Union Territories. India’s out bound tourism has grown much more substantially compared to inbound tourism. The WTTC and Oxford economic forecasting conducted a survey in the year 2016 and found that more than 3.7 million Indian tourists are going abroad every year and Indian traveler is consuming leisure and business products and services to the tune of US\$ 16.3 billion. This reveals that the Indians are the fastest growing travel spenders in the world. Worldwide tourism industry creates one in 10 jobs. If by the year 2016, Indian travel and tourism were to generate the same level of employment as the world average then, a further 25 million jobs would be created in this sector in India over the next decade. But travel receipts have remained almost stagnant at around US\$3billion for the last four years, as there has been a downward trend in foreign tourist arrival, which is due mainly to inadequate infrastructure facilities and security measures. India ranks 153 out of 160 countries under survey in terms of investment made in the tourism sector, which highlights the low priority, accorded to this sector in our country.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND THE WTO

Since 1992, the WTO has been engaged in advancing and implementing the principles of sustainable tourism, popularly known as Agenda 21 in this sector, working in collaboration with the national tourism authorities, other inter-governmental agencies and the private sector leadership. The ample range of guidelines and practical tools generated by the WTO and other organizations are disseminated through technical cooperation projects, training courses, conferences and seminars, publications and of course, the internet.

The important ones are

- Agenda 21 for the travel and tourism industry
- Global code for ethics for tourism
- National and regional tourism planning
- Guide for local authorities on developing sustainable tourism, indicators of sustainable tourism.

- Voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism
- Compilation of good practices in sustainable tourism
- Sustainable tourism development at specific destinations – coastal areas and islands, cultural heritage sites, natural and rural areas
- Compilation of good practices in ecotourism
- Ecotourism market studies
- Regional conferences and seminars
- World ecotourism summit
- Quebec declaration on eco tourism.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The accelerated pace of tourism, over the years, is an obvious consequence of the human instinct to break away from the shackles of monotonous and stressful living. More leisure and grater disposable income have greatly facilitated the access to holidays and the desire to travel. In the process, tourism has emerged it is increasingly being used as an effective tool by Governments for poverty alleviation and fostering peace and harmony in society.

However, certain inherent problems in tourism development have posed obstacles. At times, tourism development has been instrumental in the destruction of the very resources on which the industry is dependent. In this context, environmental ethics becomes the key theme for promoting sustainable development.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Tourism development, its dependence on the environment and the subsequent degradation of the latter may be analyzed specifically.

- The fragile ecosystem of islands and beaches are affected by a host of problems – unhygienic conditions due to litter by tourists, high-rise buildings near beaches, erosion of the coast, deforestation for the development of resorts.
- All three forms of travel – air, water and land can contribute to unacceptable levels of noise in surroundings to unacceptable levels of noise in surroundings, apart from inherent air and water pollution.
- Tourism related activities (construction of roads, tourist accommodation, collection of wildlife souvenirs) have adversely affected wild life.
- Mass tourism has interfered with wetlands by discouraging the arrival of migratory birds, silting and shrinkage.
- The beauty of the natural landscape has often been destroyed by the ‘skyscraper hotel’ syndrome. The scenic countryside is often lost behind the concrete façade of hotels and restaurants.
- Loss of native cultural elements especially in economically and socially backward regions of the world where there is an unbridgeable gap in the living standards and cultures of the host and the guest.

Sustainable arguments seem to be emphasizing the need to view environmental protection and consistent economic growth as mutually compatible and not necessarily conflicting objectives improved environmental. Management requires commitment from both the Government as well as

the public. Government, in collaboration with the national and international scientific community should intensify efforts to classify the interaction between and within social, economic and environmental considerations. The WTO advocates progressive liberalization of tourism, with a focus on sustainability and on the special requirements of developing countries.

COMBATING POVERTY

Poverty is a complex, multi-dimensional problem with origins in both the national and international domains. The World Tourism Organization advocates the “Progressive Liberalization of Tourism”, which will serve as a dynamic catalyst of employment, wealth, poverty, development and the environment. An effective strategy for tackling these problems simultaneously should start with a focus on resources, production and people and should include demographic issues, enhanced healthcare and education, the rights of women’s the role of youth and of indigenous people and local communities and a democratic participation process along with improved governance. The long-term objective of enabling people to achieve sustainable livelihoods should integrate the issues of development, sustainable resource management and poverty eradication, simultaneously. The tourism industry has great potential as a poverty reduction strategy as it has immense possibility for wide participation particularly in the informal sector. However, there is the need for developing country specific programmes to tackle poverty. The contribution of tourism in reducing poverty in urban India is undeniable and has been emphasized by many studies. Local communities have benefited economically.

Tourism development has fostered an overall improvement in the local infrastructure network, which in turn ensured the well-being of the community. Along with poverty alleviation, tourism also encourages socio-cultural development. It promotes the empowerment of women, which in turn triggers, the creation of employment opportunities.

Rural tourism is another solution to eradicate the menace of poverty. More than two-thirds of India’s population is concentrated in the rural belt. They have to grapple with multiple problems like unemployment, underemployment, disguised and seasonal employment. With an appropriate marketing strategy, development of infrastructural facilities and better literacy rate, the bountiful resources of rural India can be used to create myriad opportunities for tourism. Tourism has emerged as a central pillar of the economy in this decade, especially in developing countries like India. It is an indispensable industry with noticeable impact over society and the economy.

GLOBAL CODES OF ETHICS FOR TOURISM

As the tourism industry grows and matures, the need to address the ethical conduct from an organizational perspective becomes increasingly important. The available literature suggests that those. Organizations with ethical cultures tend to provide a work environment that encourage employees’ personal growth and development and provide more efficient, effective and productive business outcomes for the stakeholders than those organizations whose ethical practices are questionable.

Organizational culture plays a significant role in framing the ethical or the unethical behaviours of its members. It assists not only in identifying what is an ethical or unethical fact but also how dilemmas ought to be resolved. As with any organizational area, the tourism industry is concerned

with its ethical conduct for reasons of survival and profit and for reasons of environmental education and ecological responsibilities.

Payne and Dimanche have researched the sustainability and the social ecological responsibility of the tourism industry in general and suggest the following regarding the code of ethics;

- The tourism industry must recognize that its basis is a limited resource – the environment and that sustainable economic development requires limits to growth.
- The tourism industry must realize that it is community based and that greater consideration must be given to the socio cultural costs of tourism development.
- The tourism industry must also recognize that it is service oriented and that it must treat employees as well as customers ethically.

Following the adoption by the WTO Assembly in 1999, the code was endorsed by the UN Assembly in 2001 and now underpins all work of the organization but it is by no means a static 'declaration'. It should be kept under review to ensure that it remains responsive to contemporary trends outside or inside the sector and it must be driven forward to the implementation in strategic policy, decision making and action.

Improved environment management requires a commitment from both the Government as well as the public. Moreover, it is essential to close the gap between making and implementing environmental policies. It is clear that the public sector is unable to deliver the expected results mainly due to shortage of money and manpower need to devise cost effective ways of implementing policies. The best way is to give citizens more powers to challenge polluters, whether public or private community groups can check pollution and help in sustainable development even by seeking redress in the courts of law if necessary.

2. CONCLUSION

This study contributes to scholarly literatures that examine tourism's role in poverty alleviation and local development. The study results reveal a complex picture, with strong agreement about improvements in living standards, employment and accessibility, and a diversity of views on the impacts on household incomes, entrepreneurial opportunities, and government subsidies. The study supports the argument that poverty is a multi-faceted problem (Spenceley and Goodwin, 2007). The tourism sector is not a panacea to solve all poverty issues. There are weak linkages between tourism and the wider economy with a heavy reliance on government subsidies in the area. The small-scale, family-owned business can be vulnerable in a broad tourism market dominated by large-scale enterprises.

3. REFERENCES

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