

Sustainability and Tourism - Challenges faced and Practices followed

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ABSTRACT

With rise in purchasing power of the consumers across nations, consumption patterns have shown exponential growth, thus stressing the resources in magnitudes as never witnessed before. The same stands true of tourism industry too. Businesses need to relook into their marketing strategies as concerns over sustainability and responsible use of resources has become the need of the hour. Tourism being one of the industries where close interaction between the consumer and the environment takes place, the need for acting responsibly is accentuated even more. In contrast to earlier view, now business models need to incorporate all three, people planet and profit into their strategy, therefore adopting a holistic approach towards marketing also. Environmental protection has to be treated as importantly as economic sustainability. Practices need to be put in place which can help further the cause of tourism while leaving least possible impact on the environment, the onus of which lies on both the consumer and the marketer. Sustainable production needs to be paired with sustainable consumption in order to ensure success of sustainability drive. Only if consumers behave to ensure sustainability the companies adopting such practices will see a boost in their operations, thus encouraging others to follow suit. This paper, considering various stakeholders will make an attempt to understand evolving issues related to ecological marketing of tourism products. Also, an effort shall be made to examine the innovative practices of tourism marketing developed while taking into account challenges faced by the industry.

Sustainable tourism – “Good for the Planet and Good for the Business”

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been found to represent approximately 6% of world trade and 13% of total consumer spending. India, the travel and tourism sector is estimated to create 78 jobs per million rupees of investment compared to 45 jobs in the manufacturing sector for similar investment. Along with construction, it is one of the largest sectors of the service industry in India. Apart from providing employment to a wide spectrum of job seekers from the unskilled to the specialized, a higher proportion of tourism benefits (jobs, MSME trade opportunities) accrue to women. The definitions of sustainable tourism emphasize the following important features:

- ❖ Quality – sustainable tourism provides a quality experience for visitors while improving the quality of life of the host community and protecting the quality of the environment.
- ❖ Continuity -- sustainable tourism ensures the continuity of the natural resources upon which it is based and the continuity of the culture of the host community with satisfying experiences for visitors.
- ❖ Balance- sustainable tourism balances the needs of the tourism industry, supporters of the environment, and the local community.



LITERATURE REVIEW

- Various studies have suggested that there is an increasing demand by consumers for ethical, eco-friendly and responsible travel.
- Research has found that the companies which embrace the concept of sustainable tourism consistently outperform their competitors.
- International Center for Research and Study on Tourism in Paris, notes that: “The literature of tourism is large, >150,000 items in total, with 5000 relevant to sustainable tourism”.
- In the article “Sustainable Tourism—or Sustainable Mobility?”, professor Karl Georg Høyer noted that tourism practices presenting themselves as environmental friendly, using

headings like “eco-tourism”, “green tourism”, “sustainable tourism” and alike, have a tendency to imply longer travel distances to more remote places and more frequent use of air and private car transportation than the “standard” forms of tourism.

- “Soft tourism”, popular concept in common use in German-speaking countries in the early 1980s and served as a contrast to “hard” mass tourism, promoted not only environmentally friendly activities, but also social responsibility towards the community, local population and the tourism industry through developing a shared vision and action plan of measures.
- Several researchers deal with creating models or systems to be used for assessing sustainability in tourism. (See e.g. Kovács et al., 2006; Kósi – Baranyi, 2006; Dávid – Baros, 2009).
- As the fundamental document of Indian’s tourism planning, the National Tourism Development Strategy claims: “The sustainable utilization of the natural and cultural attractions is highly important for tourism; in the utilization of resources the irreversible negative processes must be prevented.” (National Tourism Development Strategy, 2005 p.20). Presently, sustainable tourism is only a theoretical concept in India. In spite of different initiatives the indicator system suitable for the verification of the sustainable operation of the developments and the comprehensive regulation are missing.” (National Tourism Development Strategy, 2005, p.20)

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to fulfill the following objectives:

- ✓ To critically examine the challenges related to ecological marketing of tourism products.
- ✓ To critically examine the practices and efforts taken in order to achieve sustainable tourism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper attempts to theoretically review studies conducted by researchers and practices followed by organizations. Secondary data was the main source for data collection. The secondary data was collected from reports, journals and magazines. Data was also collected by surfing the net and the relevant websites.

FINDINGS

1. Challenges:

- One of the biggest challenges, as identified by Banerjee (Secretary Tourism, A vocal advocate of sustainable tourism), is the psyche of the people. The paper or spit, etc. thrown on ground by people.
- Non-implementation of legislative law.
- Excessive exposure of ecologically fragile areas to human interference which leads to environmental degradation.
- Lack of concern for capacity management

- Tourism development projects are usually developed by Indian Government without any discussion with community leaders and they are dumped to follow the ineffective projects blindly.
- Lack of entrepreneurship opportunities also restrict youth to follow a career in Tourism such as opening a hotel resort or retail outlet or handicraft business to serve Tourism Industry in India.
- High volume, low value tourism.
- Indian politicians are the hindrances in the development of tourism in India; their policies directly can influence the tourism.
- Governmental resources for tourism development are limited which underlines the need for ensuring active private sector participation.
- The 2014-15 budget did not talk about green accommodation, green taxes, strategies regarding preserving, at the same time developing sustainable tourism centering National Parks, controlling pollution in tourism destination and many other areas that need to address in immediate basis.

2. Practices Followed

- High value, low volume tourism – Control on quantity and quality of tourists coming into the country. Kerala, voted by National Geographic as one of the must-see places on earth, has started shifting its position as a tourist destination with the help of this concept. Amitabh Kant, tourism secretary (1999-2000) focused on high unit value realization.” Though, at the same time, restricting the number of tourists is not possible all the time.
- Prohibiting automobiles, as practiced in the hill station of Matheran in Maharashtra, for instance, is one way of preserving local environment; private operators maintaining the cleanliness of Goa’s beaches.
- Edge of India, a project to pilot rural tourism co-operatives for sustainable economic development in the foothills of the Indian Himalaya, led by locals and enable communities to make the most of their cultural and natural, builds local capacity and uses local resources to develop their own destinations and offer visitors a taste of life in some of the most picturesque and untouched parts of India, funded by the Scottish Government’s South Asia Development Programme and partners Dunira Strategy and Queen Margaret University in Scotland, and YES BANK in India.
- The tourism sector’s capability as a sustainable and inclusive development driver, especially for livelihoods, was renewed with the 10th Five Year Plan, the National Tourism Policy, the global Incredible India campaign and the Millennium Development Goals. The emphasis was increasingly to be given to organising more short-term courses for the unskilled workforce as well as unemployed youth on the pattern of ‘Hunar-se-Rozgar’ and ‘skill certification of service providers’.
- Creation of awareness as well as making available the requisite facilities will be given high importance during 12th Five Year Plan through the following measures:

- Major social awareness campaign under the 'Atithi Devo Bhavah' initiative
- Involving schools, NGOs, industry associations, etc. in carrying out sustained cleanliness drives at important tourist destinations.
- Suitable incentives and awards will be provided to all organizations and individuals involved in this initiative.
- Top most priority will be given for sanctioning Central Financial Assistance for setting up of way-side amenities, bio-degradable toilets, etc.

This is proposed to be achieved through the following measures:

- Sustainable Tourism criteria for India (STCI) and indicators for hotels, tour operators have been finalized. Similarly, the criteria and indicators for rural tourism and home-stays are being evolved. Action will be initiated for Tourism industry constituents not yet covered.
- The scope of Market Development Assistance scheme would be enlarged to cover participation of representatives of recognised national associations in workshops/ seminars on sustainable tourism organized by reputed organisations in India or overseas.
- Training of various stake holders under the existing plan schemes of the Ministry.
- The Planning Commission in the Approach Paper to the 12th Five Year Plan has mentioned that Tourism and Hospitality Sector has a key role to play in promoting faster, sustainable and more inclusive economic growth.
- Kerala has hosted international discussions and seminars on sustainable/ responsible tourism.
- In 2006, the International Centre for Responsible Tourism - India (ICRT India) -- part of a growing network of International Centres on Responsible Tourism – was launched in Bangalore. The centres share a common objective, to work with the private sector, government and local communities to “take responsibility for achieving sustainable tourism, and to create better places for people to live in and for people to visit.”
- Ministry of Tourism, Government of India convened a National Workshop on Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India in July 2010.
- Book on rural tourism called “Explore Rural India”, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and it tries to look at the USP of a village. The book looks for art and crafts of these villages which need to be promoted and even preservation of a dying art.
- In the midst of the wildlife reserve of Bandipur in southern Karnataka, Karthik Davey, launched the first luxury tourism resort in Bandipur. It is a unique initiative for several reasons, not least because Dhole's Den is run entirely as a eco-friendly, natural resort, with its own solar power, windmill, water recycling and waste treatment facilities.

CONCLUSION

There is a need for more clearly defined role to be played by each stake holder. Third World governments find themselves in a weak, dependent situation and therefore, feel themselves powerless to enforce restrictions on large operators once the infrastructure for tourism in place.

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