THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Responsible Tourism for the Development of Varanasi

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Abstract:
Tourism continues to be a major activity in India, which inevitably produces economic, political, social, cultural and ecological consequences. In India, Tourism has created employment opportunities for airline executives, hotel sales managers, structural engineers, city planners, horticulturists, computer programmers, artisans, textiles workers, etc. But in spite of its growth it has not reached out to the masses because the net benefits accrue only to limited segment of the society, to say, big business agents. It is an imperative duty of the so called richer class to reach out the benefits directly to the Pro-Poor People who are actually working into the tourism sector day and night. Thus, Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT)which is now renamed as Responsible tourism that results in increased net benefits for poor people.
The aim of this paper is to review practical experience of responsible tourism strategies' in Varanasi and its relevance for conservation of cultural residues of the Heritage city in order to identify useful lessons and good practice. The research problem is based on the relationship between pro poor growth and tourism and it is established that tourism can directly affect the poor and their livelihood by involving them in tourism industry in Varanasi as it is a major tourist place.

Keywords: Responsible Tourism, Conservation, Heritage Tourism, Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

As the best way to maximize the positive impacts of tourism and minimize the negative ones, Responsible Tourism (RT) is gaining wide acceptance across the world today. Responsible tourism is an approach to the management of tourism, aimed at maximizing economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits and minimizing costs to destinations. Simply put, Responsible tourism is tourism 'that creates better places for people to live in, and better places to visit'.[1]

Advances in Responsible Tourism (2007) recognized the importance of tourism as it minimizes negative economic, environmental, and social impacts; generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry; involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances; makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity; provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues; provides access for physically challenged people; and is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

A responsible tourism approach aims to achieve the triple-bottom line outcomes of sustainable development, i.e. economic growth, environmental integrity and social justice. The distinguishing characteristic of the approach is the focus on the responsibility of role-players in the tourism sector, and destinations in general, to take action to achieve sustainable tourism development. "Responsible Tourism" is about providing better holiday experiences for guests and good business opportunities for tourism enterprises. RT is also about enabling local communities to enjoy a better quality of life through increased socio-economic and cultural benefits with improved natural resource management.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Why Kashi needs responsible tourism for the conservation of its cultural heritages was the pertinent question in the mind of the researcher while undertaking the pilot survey and the main highlights of the issues emerged has been discussed below:

a) The tourism industry is greedily investing in building new structures on the bank of Ganga to lodge tourists who stop over for short visits and is little concerned with sharing the benefices of development with the local community. The ancient monuments are being encroached by big businessmen. In fact, one of the features of the city is that here the tourism industry is less capable than elsewhere of preserving the resources upon which the tourism business is based, i.e. the architectural, social and cultural heritage of the historic city centre.

b) Many of the historic Palaces, Havelis, forts that are the main tourist's attractions are in a dilapidated state. Developers lobby for new constructions and not for conservation of the old. The result is the rampant erosion of an increasing number of neglected old structures along the Ghats.

c) Unhygienic conditions on Ghats, approach roads, unorganized tourist and religious activities leading to chaos, lack of public facilities on Ghats are other major areas of concern.
d) Most of the people opined that the convergence of the ancient monuments into Heritage sites is desirable where the tourists can visit and have luxury of enjoying the sunrise from the east facing Palaces, watching the serenity of Ganges from the river facing forts, Havelis and the entire management to be done by the local communities residing in the area so that the direct income & employment accrues to them.
e) There are 'trusts' being run by the reputed people of the respective areas in almost every Ghat and they organize for local pujas, rituals and aartis hence, they are already taking care of their ancient structures in their own way. Therefore, it is more desirable to give the management into the hands of the local communities, whereas the policy framework to be guided by the Central & State government. Hence, the community based tourism is greatly supported and the model of Responsible Tourism of Kerala, Rural tourism of Himachal Pradesh is highly recommended by the local communities where the profit is to be shared between the locals and the government on equal footing.

1.2. Brief Review of Literature

Recent market research in the UK and elsewhere has pointed towards a positive trend in consumer and sector demand for "Responsible Tourism" products. This research suggests that ethical business practices can provide commercial advantage, and that "Responsible Tourism" can be a positive marketing tool – provided that claims of responsibility are credible and based on demonstrable delivery of responsible activities and objectives. [2]

- Harold Goodwin (1997) conducted research for the ODA, and published on the impacts of tourism on conservation and the livelihoods of local communities at national parks in India, Indonesia and Zimbabwe had demonstrated the case for enhancing local participation in planning and management, 'involving local communities and giving them a degree of control as hosts', [3] and for ensuring that the poorer members of the community were able to secure access to the market and ownership rights.
- Caroline Ashley, (et.al.2001) [4] found that those benefits to the poor from tourism depend on whether and how they can participate economically in the industry. This paper examined the effects and relevance of tourism on the livelihood of the poor and found how positive impacts can be enhanced. In doing so, it assessed the relevance of tourism to the poverty agenda, and the factors that encourage or constrain economic participation of the poor in the industry.
- Daniel J. Stynes, (2002) [5] described the economic impact of tourism and measured the standard economic impact analysis traces flows of money from tourism spending, first to businesses and government agencies where tourists spend their money and then to : Other businesses -- supplying goods and services to tourist businesses, Households – earning income by working in tourism or supporting industries, and Government -- through various taxes and charges on tourists, businesses and households.
  Further this paper measured the tourism's economic impacts using the formula: Economic Impact of Tourism = Number of Tourists * Average Spending per Visitor * Multiplier.
- Anna Spenceley and Jennifer Seif, (2003) [6] described strategies devised by five private sector tourism enterprises in South Africa to address poverty and development issues in neighboring communities. Each of the enterprises had been assessed against a number of the country's national Responsible Tourism Guidelines in relation to economic, social, and environmental impacts.
- Walter Jamieson, Harold Goodwin and Christopher Edmunds (November 2004) [7] talked about the new method of measuring the impact of tourism in terms of its contribution to SMEs, Employment Collective Benefits, Charitable Giving/Donations, Capacity Building Improvements in Well-being, Changes in Environmental Quality, Changes in Culture and Values, Changes in Cultural and Natural Resources unlike to the traditional method where impact is measured only in terms of Gross National Product and employment creation by looking at the effect of tourism expenditures through direct, indirect and induced spending using a multiplier effect approach.
- Harold Goodwin (2005) [8] analyzed the role of certification played in Responsible Tourism. As the responsible tourism movement gathers momentum, the question is being raised as to whether or not a responsible tourism certificate is needed. While certification has little or no impact on the attitudes or behavior of end consumers, it undoubtedly has some utility in the supply chain assisting tour operators and others to identify suppliers who meet minimum standards.
- Caroline Ashley, Harold Goodwin, Douglas McNab, Mareba Scott & Luis Chaves (2006) [9] study provided an insight to tourism companies to contribute more to the local economy by following 8 guidelines :
  a) Tourism and the local economy – building linkages
  b) Bringing local producers into the supply chain
  c) Building links with local farmers
  d) Employing local staff
  e) Involving local people and products in tours, packages and excursions
  f) Encouraging tourists to spend in the local economy
  g) Building neighborhood partnerships
  h) Managing internal change for developing local linkages

- Dr. P.V. Rajeev and P.J. Shyju (2008) [10] described the following main attractions of Varanasi, such as More than 84 Ghats stretch along the banks of River Ganges,more than 20 very important temples, old shrines and monasteries of Jain and Buddhists, Sarnath, the stupa and Buddhist monasteries and educational institutions which make it a distinct tourist city, and hence emphasized to develop its potentials.

1.3. Highlighting the Gaps
Most of the studies showed a positive relation between RT approach and economic, social, cultural gains for local tourism but none of the case studies complement to the holistic approach of sustainable development for tourism in any parts of the world. They are either driven by poverty eradication motive or profit motive by increasing the income of the private players.

Scope of the study: To the best of the knowledge of the researcher, no such study had been conducted in Varanasi for the promotion of responsible cultural tourism and conservation of 70 architectural monuments which are in a dilapidated condition on the bank of Ganges, stretching from Varuna Sangam Ghat at the northern end to Assi Ghat the southern tip of the 'oldest living city Kashi'.
Therefore, the study pointed out the gaps and had great scope and relevance in not only bringing more economic, social, & cultural benefits but also start a new holistic tourism model in the state which had many ancient cities like Ayodha, Agra, Mathura, Lucknow and help in the development of Responsible Community –based Tourism.

1.4. Conceptual Framework
Pioneering the concept of RT in India is Kerala. Kumarakom, in the State, has the pride of being the first place on the country to have successfully implemented RT. Kumarakom is the tourist village in Kottayam district, Kerala, India. Following the success of Kumarakom, RT is today being implemented in other tourist destinations across the State. The concept sets an impact with in a small period of time and successfully progressing in the state. The four main tourists destinations - KUMARAKOM, WAYANAD, KOVALAM and THEKKADY have become the favorite Responsible Tourism (RT) centers in Kerala. [11]
Likewise, in Himachal Pradesh Naggar and Pragpur are two districts which are following RT successfully.
This holistic form of tourism is helping travelers, the host population and the trade derives the greatest possible benefits from tourism, without causing any ecological or social damage. What is perhaps more remarkable is the fact that RT is providing better living conditions for the local community.

1.5. The Key Elements of Responsible Tourism
The key elements of "Responsible Tourism" can be defined [12] in terms of:
- Developing, managing and marketing tourism in ways that create competitive advantage;
- Assessing and monitoring the cultural, environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism developments, and openly disclosing information;
- Ensuring the active involvement of communities that benefit from tourism, including their participation in planning and decision-making and the establishment of meaningful economic linkages;
- Maintaining and encouraging natural, economic, social and cultural diversity and conserving it for future safely;
- Avoiding waste and over-consumption, and promoting the sustainable use of local resources.

1.6. Responsible Tourism and the (Triple) Bottom Line
Aside from decreasing operating costs, tourism enterprises makes good businesses for at least three reasons:
- RT is aligned to the international trend towards responsible business practice;
- RT meets the growing market demand for responsible tourism products; and
- RT makes customers, staff and investors feel good.

1.7. International Trends towards Responsible Business Practice
Since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, economic growth has been promoted globally in terms of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development – the 'triple bottom line'.[13] In tourism, however, the environmental aspects of sustainable development have tended to dominate the international playing field, for instance in the attention devoted to the development and promotion of 'ecotourism'. There has now been a shift in thinking, to place more emphasis on poverty alleviation and socio-economic aspects of sustainable development.
"Responsible Tourism" addresses this shift in private sector focus by giving equal weight to these three tiers of sustainability: (i) economy; (ii) society; and (iii) environment. [14]
RT incorporates the ethic of respect for culture and environment but –importantly -does not confine itself to these aspects of sustainable development. Presently there has been an international trend in favor of increased Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as the private sector recognizes its (mixed) role in sustainable development.CSR challenges the private sector to empower economically marginalized groups and communities through activities centered on employment, equity and entrepreneurship.

World Tourism Organization (WTO)	Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (www.world-tourism.org)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	Principles for Implementation of Sustainable Tourism (www.unep.org)
International Hotels Environment Initiative	www.ihei.org
Overseas Development Institute, International Institute for Environmental Development and the International Centre for Responsible Tourism	Pro-poorTourism (www.propoortourism.org.uk)
Tourism Concern	Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative www.tourismconcern.org.uk)

Table 1: Some International Initiatives related to Responsible Tourism
Source: Responsible Tourism Manual for South Africa, pg.10

1.8. Various stakeholders of Responsible Tourism
RT can benefit and are designed for use by a range of tourism stakeholders, including
- Tourism enterprises
- Local communities
- Marketing associations & Trade associations
- Professional associations & NGOs
- Central, State,& Local tourism authorities
- Tourism support activity

1.9. Initiatives to be taken by RT for sustainable development:

1.9.1. Economic Responsibility
- Increasing the benefits of tourism and sharing these more widely and equitably among all local groups;
- Diversifying the cultural & economic tourism sector;
- Creating and promoting employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for Historically
Disadvantaged Individuals (HDIs); [15]
• Putting to work locally available labour and skills;
• Creating mutually beneficial economic linkages between the formal and informal sector within the immediate small business community;
• Reducing leakages and increasing the multiplier effect (e.g. retaining as much revenue as possible in the local economy).
Specific areas that may be addressed are:
• Product development, • Marketing, • Business linkages, • Creation of SMEs
• Employment, & • Training

1.9.2. Social Responsibility
Tourism is one of many processes or factors that contributes to social and culture change in host communities. Respect for local culture and tradition is integral to "responsible tourism" practice. RT requires the establishment of trust and effective communication between everyone involved in the tourism encounter. This provide the basis for information exchange, cultural understanding and tolerance of difference. RT is about embracing and respecting cultural variation, not only to avoid conflict and other negative aspects of culture contact but also to explore the potential for "responsible" commercial tourism products that are based on culture and heritage.[16]
- Conservation and sustainable use of shared resources: Acting in a socially responsible manner leads to improved cooperation between resource users and mutually acceptable, sustainable use. For example Ghats and Cultural monuments in Varanasi can be used in more responsible manner by conserving it for future.
• Destination success: Co-operation between government, communities and the private sector on the broader planning, management and marketing of the destination will be beneficial to all.
• Improved problem solving: Tourism enterprises are sometimes faced with problems that they cannot solve on their own. A good example is crime, which is best addressed through a collective approach to safety and security that involves community members, government and other role players. For instance, Rocktail Bay (www.rocktailbay.com), which is operated by Wilderness Safaris, (www.wildnerness-safaris.com) employs a community-based security service that became part of a wider community-policing forum. This strategy has been extremely effective in curbing local crime to the benefit not only of tourists but also of the host community.
Appropriate community benefits: "RT" is about ensuring that host communities have a say in how they would like to benefit from tourism, and how they would like these benefits to be distributed.

1.9.3. Supporting Community Development

Tourism can be an effective local livelihood option provided that it supports the development of the host community. "Responsible tourism" is about helping local people to realize their vision for local development. [17] At enterprise level, the following options could be pursued:

1. Determining the immediate needs of the local community through discussions with its members determining which of the proposed options / projects are feasible for the tourism enterprise, or network of local tourism enterprises. Creating a strategy for implementation. Making the strategy available to staff and community members for review, and showcase this information to clients (e.g. on the website, in brochures).
2. Evaluating local infrastructure design and operation in relation to the current and projected tourism market. Identifying gaps and areas where the enterprise and the community can work together to improve the situation (e.g. quality of roads; communication networks).
3. Cooperating with local communities to identify priority sites for improvements. This may include 'adopting' a conservation site or monument or public area. Monitoring the number of projects supported, the money spent, employment created, etc. reporting, transparency on the source of investment (e.g. from tourism revenue, donations from tourists, donations from corporations; dividends from shareholdings) is needed. Ensuring that the sites are safe and secure for tourists to visit, and promotion of the sites as tourist attractions the wide publicity is needed.
4. Supporting the development and growth of a sustainable local handicraft industry by:
   a) Offering tourists excursions to local workshops and craft markets such as excursions can be commercially attractive to the host enterprise if they are part of the package offered to guests, even if tourists do not purchase goods at each site, community enterprises still benefit from the per-visit fee.
   b) Promoting the development of improved design, production, packaging and presentation of crafts ensuring that crafters are aware of the tastes, needs and price sensitivities of guests. Monitoring the number of new products that become available and the revenue generated for local producers.
   c) Providing advice on pricing, packaging and distribution of goods. Usage of workshops, meetings and demonstrations to make local people aware of the issues and benefits.

1.9.4. Cultural Responsibility

Internationally, there has been a growing interest in heritage and cultural tourism. This growing interest has created positive views of indigenous knowledge and cultural resources, and also engendered a wide range of expectations for the impacts of cultural tourism, especially amongst disadvantaged communities. Cultural tourism can facilitate the necessary financing to rehabilitate and interpret heritage resources, as well as be a tool for stimulating economic development. Cultural tourism can be a source of product differentiation that may establish new Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) opportunities.[18]

The challenge for communities and heritage sites is to provide a unique, special, and

participatory tourist experience that will stimulate investment resulting in jobs and economic development. Emphasizing the development and promotion of products that are community based, community owned, and operated by historically disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and/or groups can be the key to solve the issue. This emphasis promotes poverty alleviation and helps to empower the most disenfranchised members of society.

This challenge is complicated by three critical imperatives:
   a) The need to preserve the integrity of the cultural resources being used for tourism purposes;
   b) The need to offer an 'authentic' experience; and
   c) The need to respect the social and cultural way of life of the host community.

1.9.5. Environmental Responsibility

For larger operations, it is worthwhile considering the development of an environmental

management system (EMS) for the enterprise. An EMS (e.g. ISO14001) is a mechanism that is applied to businesses to audit its environmental performance. The EMS systematically examines the amount of consumption (e.g. energy, water, packaging resources, food) and waste production (e.g. sewage, waste water, organic and inorganic waste) within a company, and tries to find ways of reducing these amounts. Audits assess the magnitude, level and importance of environmental impacts caused by development as a continual exercise. The audits not only have environmental benefits, but also allow improvements in efficiency to reduce unnecessary costs.

1.10. How Responsible Tourism can be Beneficial for Local Communities of Kashi:

Gathering knowledge from RT experiences in South Africa, Cape Town, Kerala the benefits can be diverse such as:

1. Building linkages between Tourism and the local economy –There are many different kinds of linkages that tourism companies can develop with local people. Hotels can purchase directly from small and micro-businesses, as well as increase recruitment and training of local unskilled and semi-skilled staff. Hotels and tour operators can also enter into neighborhood partnerships to make the local social environment a better place to live, work and visit for all and they can support the development of local arts, crafts, cultural products and tourism services, both by developing new excursions and by encouraging tourists to spend in the local economy .

2. Bringing local producers and farmers into the supply chain: Local hotels and other tourism product providers can buy more locally produced products and services for e.g. buying soft furnishings like arts, crafts, table mats, and candles, operational supplies (e.g. uniforms, bed linen), guest amenities (e.g. recycled paper, handmade soaps), services (e.g. floristry, entertainment) or food items from the local economy. They should bring local producers into the supply chain mechanism so that the big private partners buy directly from the SMEs and so the profit accruing to the intermediaries get minimized. In Dominican Republic, for example, the vast majority of hotels' food and beverage supplies are produced within the island, although there is little help for farmers to develop their production further specifically to exploit the tourism market.

3. Exploring new tourism opportunities by converting old perishing monuments on the bank of Ganges into developed 'Heritage Sites' and building strong partnerships with the local communities like boatmen, florists, vendors & gift sellers etc. This would employ local staff- The main cash injection into the local economy from tourism is from the wages of local staff. This linkage is very significant for poverty reduction , but ways to increase it should be encouraged.

4. Involving local people and products in tours, packages and excursions: Tours, packages and excursions need to be available to offer a range of cultural, natural heritage and 'meet the people' opportunities. Such excursions are a key way of enhancing the product and customer experience, and spreading the benefits of tourism wider into the local economy.

5. Encouraging tourists to spend in the local economy: The money spent by holidaymakers in the local economy makes a direct contribution to raising the household incomes in local communities.

1.11. Conclusion

Building neighborhood partnerships: Partnerships with residents and neighbors can cover a variety of issues: waste management, water use, energy supplies, development of local craft markets, local guiding services, improvement of local enterprises and services, seafront development, creation of pedestrian streets and local restaurants and cafes, management of attractions and development of new ones, management of begging, traffic control, control of sex tourism and policing of crime, as well as festivals for local people and tourists to enjoy together. "RT" enterprises respect their neighbors, and vice versa. This shared respect leads to improved communication and co-operation between enterprises and host communities, which in turn can enrich the overall tourism experience.

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