

Sustainable Tourism: Social Transition

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Abstract: Tourism drives the economic growth of India to a very large extent. It's a wholesome package if it is built over the premise of sustainable usage, protection and development of our natural, historical and cultural resources, while creating a favorable investment climate. Social belief and community participation makes tourism thrive rather than becoming threat, resulting in conservational achievements and sustainable development of the clan. Tourists also take interest in experiencing different yet attractive cultural activities and respect the local culture which results in growth of attraction for interaction between guest and host and hence opening door of opportunities. Rise of negative impacts in terms of economy, culture and threat to the ownership are aspects of sheer concern in local community.

Hence, to achieve tourism in sustainable manner education and sensitivity towards the heritage and conservation must be induced in local people before cultural as well as economical exchange. Development of communication and partnership skills are required to be done through interactive session at community level by administration. This paper discusses various ways of integrating tourism into the community in all economics and social aspects.

1. INTRODUCTION

Eco-tourism or sustainable tourism is spreading at a faster pace but in most of the cases it's an advertising mechanism to entice customers. The (International) Ecotourism Society in 1990 defined Eco Tourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. The resorts cropping up in the most untouched, vulnerable and sensitive areas go against the above stated philosophy and damage the eco systems. Generally overlooked aspect is the negative impact on the surrounding communities. The lifestyle of the residents of living in such remote areas depends on agriculture, animal rearing or forestry. The construction of a tourism spot provides employment to them but after the place starts functioning, there is a gap as usually they are good enough laborers but not skilled to take part in running of the resort, which leads to animosity between the management and the residents. The tourism spot disrupts their daily lives too.

Relations among conservationists, communities and tourism practitioners have not always been smooth and collaborative. In cases, where a heritage spot exists in a community, the

regular movement of tourist also creates disturbance. There is dire need of social management plan in such scenarios. And as each case is unique, there is a background study needed of individual cases.



Fig. 1: Effect of Tourism on community [2]

2. SOCIAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Protecting the culture, heritage of a place is a process which must start from the conception of the project itself.

With fast growing population, the protected areas have become a resources base with intense competition amongst local stakeholders. Because of this competition for resources, it's realized that local people and economic circumstances must be incorporated into conservation strategies [1].

It's necessary to plan for multiple functions so that the tourism industry doesn't creates pressure on a particular zone and it's evenly distributed.



Fig. 2: Role of tourism and government [2]

2.1 Preservation of heritage

Each place has an identity in terms of the built structure, the landscape, the flora and fauna, which has grown with time. This indigenous environment plays an important role in the wholesomeness of the place.



Fig. 3 : Traditional Architecture of the city of Madanganj *

So special focus must be on the identification of endangered species, vulnerable structures. Such structures may be developed as the major attractions, around which a whole theme can be developed. The architectural heritage of Madanganj, a small city near Kishangarh “the marble city” is in danger with modern structures cropping up. The city has potential of becoming a significant stop for the travelers going from Jaipur to Ajmer. A carefully planned tourism plan for the city can incorporate guidelines for preservation of the existing architectural feature.



Fig. 4: Traditional art work at Tilonia, Rajasthan*

Tilonia village is famous for the “Barefoot College” and has become a must visit place of Rajasthan. The village is an example of preserving the traditional art. The art is also sold in form of handicrafts etc.

2.2 Strategic Space Usage

When an area is developed for tourism, the population pressure increases as the floating population and the service sector workers are added. So there is the threat of congestion so the area should be planned keeping the future pressure areas, the protected green areas etc. in mind.



Fig. 5: Courtyards in Tilonia*

The state of Rajasthan brings the hot and dry climate to one’s mind. The Tilonia village has courtyard planning. These courtyards provide sit out and gathering spaces to the tourists. The evenings are lively with folk music and add vibrancy.

2.3 Employments Generation / Financial Aid

Guides, guards, researchers or managers may be hired to meet increased tourism demands, when a new venue is developed. In surrounding communities, residents may become employed as taxi drivers, tour guides, lodge owners or handicraft makers,



Fig. 6: The local people are usually employed as labour*

In addition, other types of employment may be augmented indirectly through tourism. More bricklayers may be needed for construction. More vegetables may be needed at new restaurants. More cloth may be needed to make souvenirs. Many employment sources are enhanced as tourism grows.

Tourism will always have many service positions, because it is a labor-intensive industry. But communities may resent ecotourism if their members are not represented in the higher levels of employment. The profitability of tourism for local residents is minimized if they are offered only menial jobs and not given opportunities for advancement. So the Government or the planning body should incorporate the training and skill enhancement as a compulsory part. Some financial aid provided in terms of incentives or loans can help people wishing to enter the tourism industry in their vicinity.

2.4 Acquiring Local Construction Techniques

With growing tourism industry, the local construction techniques face a threat of extinction as usually the resorts etc. are planned by architects based at some other location, who either lack the knowledge about the construction method of the particular area or neglect them. The local methods and techniques have evolved with time and are adapted to the place so they must be used for construction as much as possible. This also pushes exchange of knowledge between the locals and the outsiders.

A critical analysis of the existing techniques is needed as in some cases an improved method can be taught to the locals which may be economically more viable or stronger.



Fig. 7: Traditional construction at Madanganj, Kishangarh, Rajasthan*

In Tilonia, Rajasthan, geodesic dome technology has been introduced which improved the knowledge of the local masons.



Fig. 8: Geodesic dome being used as STD at Tilonia*

2.5 Policy Framework for commitment and improvement

The choice of the community regarding the degree of their involvement must be respected by the planners. A range of participation level should be suggested to the residents, like the following:

- Their land can be rented to develop.
- Hired as part time or full time tour operators
- Providing services like food preparation, accommodation, transport etc.
- Forming joint ventures
- Independent community based programs like handicrafts shops etc.

POSITIVE (with community participation)		NEGATIVE (without community participation)	
For communities	For protected areas	For communities	For protected areas
Sustainable income	Reduced threats and compatible economic development (CED)	Erosion of natural resource base	Incompatible economic development
Improved services	Reduced threats and CED	Growing economic inequity	Poaching, overuse of natural resources
Cultural empowerment	Reduced threats and CED	Cultural erosion	Alienation from traditional sustainable use

Fig. 9: Importance of community participation in eco-tourism in protected areas [2]

Energy and water are two of the most important needs so people could be provided knowledge and aid to install solar panels or to manage their rainwater. The community kitchen at Tilonia is fully based on the solar parabolic cookers.



Fig. 10 : Solar Thermal System installed at Tilonia*

3. GENERATED BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS

All interventions in an existing scenario trigger some positive and some negative changes to the system. The community participation in the tourism leads to the following benefits to the society:

The tourism generates new sources of income for the society. This income could be generated through collecting fees for trails, providing accommodation or guiding services, preparing and selling food and handicrafts and so on. Overdependence on tourism could lead to increased economic vulnerability to economic fluctuations in the marketplace which are beyond their control so a balance should be struck.



Fig. 11: Hathi Gaon, Jaipur*

The visits with traditional and indigenous communities are often the highlights of a trip and provides the tourist an opportunity to learn from a traditional culture. Simultaneously, the community's self-esteem gets a boost as the result of the interest shown in their way of living or crafts. This two way cultural exchange and empowerment is an essential element in the wholesome development if tourism. The Hathi Gaon at Jaipur is a good example as it provides residence to the Mahouts i.e. the guide of the elephant and at the same time is developed in a manner to become a tourist attraction. It has walkways around the water bodies where the elephants bathe. There is provision of feeding them too.



Fig. 12: Community library at Tilonia*

A potential for improvement in health and education service blooms as the general income levels increases. The exposure to the outside world also raises the community consciousness about hygiene, good health and education. The community Library at Tilonia is an inspiring example as it's accessible to all villagers and is relished by all age groups.



Fig. 13: Local markets can be developed on the concept of Delhi Haat *

There are few adverse impacts of developing tourism in any area, which are as following:

The prices of the essential goods and services tend to increase as the travelers are usually ready to pay more prices than the local market dictates. This creates a burden on the local residents. The solution to this scenario can be an exclusive range of products created for the tourists. This could become a local industry providing employment to people too. The other way could be establishing a two tiered pricing system, one for the local residents and other for the tourists.

The tourism should be focused on increasing a community's ability to manage its own affairs i.e. empowering itself. But usually this doesn't happen. The tourism interests take over the higher positions due to their expertise and the communities lose their sense of control, which leads to resentment.

Generally the community is unable to fulfill the demands generated by the tourism industry which creates a gap between demand and supply. This gap seems lucrative to the outside business men. So imported products fill the market. This results in movement of money to outside of the local economy.

4. CONCLUSION

All the decisions should be based on the interest, organizational capacity, experience, cultural sensitivity, presence of strong leadership, quality of natural and cultural resources, tourism demand, training opportunities, availability of partners and private sector interest.



Fig. 14: Community kitchen at Tilonia *

If planned properly and with a sensitive outlook, tourism can protect the nature and community at the same time. Communities can strengthen their traditional stewardship role in the natural areas, which is usually compromised when tourism industry grabs hold of a place. When the community is involved as a stakeholder, the whole scenario becomes more fruitful and less damaging.

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