A STUDY ON COMMUNITY PERCEPTION ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM IN RAJASTHAN

NISHA RATHORE*

*Junior Research Fellow-UGC, Faculty of Management Studies, M. D. S. University, Ajmer- 305009.

ABSTRACT

The state of Rajasthan has emerged as a number one destination for international and domestic tourists. Tourism is one of the most flourishing industries in Rajasthan. The numbers of tourists arriving in Rajasthan in 2010 alone were 26822400, out of which 1278523 were foreigners. A total of 5938300 of tourists have already visited Rajasthan by March 2011. Tourism accounts for 8% of Rajasthan's total GDP. Though tourism aids the state to a large extent commercially; it also is an important tool to promote culture in Rajasthan. Thus numerous heritage hotels have been opened in the state to serve the purpose of tourism and to provide glimpses of Indian culture. Rajasthan with its historical cultural and natural heritage, coupled with colourful fair and festivals and friendly people has become a favourite destination for tourists from all over the world. Except a sea-beach and snow-clad mountains, it offers everything to the tourists. Some of the tourism products of Rajasthan have become internationally famous and popular among the tourists such as palace on wheels, heritage hotels, camels safaris, and wild life sanctuaries/national parks. The impact of tourism on society is a complex and varied subject. There are many different kinds of tourists and a great variety of society as well. The paper focuses on the community perceptions of the economic and socio-cultural impacts of culture and heritage tourism in particular and examines the extent to which they coincide with the tourism impact literature. The paper uses Rajasthan as an example to illustrate the multifarious impact of tourism. Data obtained from the questionnaire cum schedule and interviews are the main sources of inputs for analysis. The residents perceived tourism development from both positive as well as negative perspectives. However, the dominant view reaffirms that Rajasthan represents an optimistic side of tourism.
INTRODUCTION

The state of Rajasthan is one of the most colourful and culturally rich states of India republic. The state is so rich endowed with history, culture, art and craft forms, ecologically rich flora and fauna biodiversity that it has become the most popular state with international and domestic tourists. The state of Rajasthan has emerged as number one destination for international and domestic tourists. Rajasthan with its historical cultural and natural heritage coupled with colourful fairs and festivals and friendly people has become a favourite destination for tourists from all over the world. Looking at the tremendous potential that tourism industry offer in the field of employment generation and foreign earning capacity, it has been identified by developing countries as their catalyst for economic development. Tourism is a resource industry, one that is dependent on nature’s endowment and society’s heritage (Murphy 1985). Tourism sell these resources as a part of its experiential product, but it also share the same resources with other users including local residents. Tourism related activities (Trade, Industry, Transportation etc) and conflicts among them arise. These conflicts result in either in deterioration of the quality and quantity of the tourists product, because of the undesirable spillover effects (externalities) from one activity to another and consequently, losses to tourism industry as well as the community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Review of the tourism literature reveals a range of impact related to tourism development, the tourists-community interaction, and resulting influences. To asses the role of tourism, as to its positive or negative effects against the benchmark of sustainable development, it is necessary to distinguish between the various types of tourism. There are many types of tourism based on special interest of tourists like cultural heritage tourism, beach and coastal tourism, cruise destination, village tourism, adventure tourism, eco tourism, health tourism, business tourism and tourism based on traditional cuisines, crafts and festivals. Each type will have a different kind of impact on its resource base and consequently, also a different development impact.

This paper focus on cultural and heritage tourism which is possibly the oldest of the new tourism phenomenon. Heritage tourism has historical precedents in the archaeological sites of the ancient world and temples and places of bygone era. Heritage can be seen as offering something more or different to both the tourists and the community.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study was to consider the perceptions of communities towards the presence of tourists and tourism development. This paper investigates the residents’ perceptions regarding tourism impact. It also concentrates on how various segments of the community react to tourism impacts.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN- Descriptive Research

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE- Convenience sampling

SAMPLE SIZE- The sample size is 150

DATA COLLECTION- The primary data was collected with the help of questionnaire cum schedule. Secondary data have been obtained from the government records, published reports, books, journals, periodical and internet sites.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTION

In Rajasthan, tourism has existed since long and is expanding rapidly in the era of globalization. The questionnaire allowed respondents to give their opinions regarding the gains and losses of visits by more and more people to their cities as tourists. The data reveals the-

POSITIVE IMPACT OF TOURISM IN TERMS OF

- Growth of business (29%)
- The source of revenue (27%)
- Provide employment opportunities (16.3%)
- Development of the area (9.3%)
- It provides contact and mutual interaction with outsiders and, thus leads to the world beyond one’s area according to (7%) respondents
- Tourism is an important to earn foreign currency and strengthen nation’s economic status according to (6.3%)
- 5% Respondents affirmed that tourism has been responsible in preservation and conservation of many historical and cultural sites, articafts and skills of their region.

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF TOURISM

- It is related to ecological degradation (27.3%)
- Overcrowding (20.7%)
- Rise in criminal and anti social activities (14.7%)
- Inflation (16.3%)
Pressure on civic amenities (12%)

Increase cultural pollution and loss of cleanliness (9%)

The gains and losses of tourism as inferred from the responses in Rajasthan were received. All categories showed strong support to tourism. A very straight remark was that tourism is beneficial and has no demerits. Similarly, some respondents from all occupational categories agreed that tourism opened up employment opportunities to locals and thus, helped in rising the standard of living of an ordinary person. Many respondents believed that foreigners come to see the place and therefore, government shows interest in the preservation of the heritage sites. Majority of respondents believed that tourism helps in preserving elements of the communities traditional culture and foster a sense of pride based on their heritage. Respondents also agreed that environment loss was more due to population and not tourism. According to many urbanities, population was much to blame for ecological degradation rather than tourism. Tourism, the world’s largest industry, is seen by various observes as either a blessing or a curse. After collecting the general opinions regarding the pros and cons of tourism, the residents’ view about specific impact were received in greater details.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The economic impact of tourism is subject of analysis at two broad levels. One is generally positive about industry’s prospects while other is negative.

The primary economic benefits of tourism are generally regarded as:

- Contribution to foreign exchange earning and balance of payments.
- Generation of employment and income.
- The improvement of economic structures and the encouragement of entrepreneurial activity.

The Economic costs of tourism are considered to include:

- Increased pressure to import.
- Seasonality of production.
- Problems connected with over-dependence on one product.
- Unfavourable impact on the balance of payments.
- Heavy infrastructure costs and the effect on growth of having much of the labour force employed in a service industry with poor productivity prospects.
- Tourism is considered generator of employment by 85.7% respondents. Hospitality activities like hotels, restaurants and lodges are more labour-intensive. Indirect employment arouse in business affected by tourism in secondary way like local transport handicrafts and banks.

- People engage in business activities and hospitality services, increase in their standard of living is visible to some extent according to 72% respondents. An improvement in infrastructure facilities and social services like public health, sanitation and housing are positively simulated by tourism induces development of the area.

- Since handicrafts, artistic and traditional objects are liked by visitors especially foreigners, small scale industries are promoted by tourism stated 72.6% respondents.

- According 85% respondents in Rajasthan number of hotels have come up gradually over time due to increased rush of visitors.

SOCIAL IMPACT

- In the review of social impacts, it was noted that 77.7% respondents professed that they were proud to have visitors admiring their culture and beauty of the region.

- Tourism was seen as catalyst in encouraging social and cultural exchanges by 60% respondents in Rajasthan.

- A small interaction between local residents and tourists sometimes developed into long time friendship. Respondents reported that they exchanged mails with some of the tourists. During contacts tourists and local residents influence each other asserted 71% respondents.

- Hence, 31% respondents there believe that tourism in its present form, seldom promotes understanding between people of different cultures.

- Another 57.5% respondents expressed fearful concern for the increased strains imposed on traditional customs and lifestyles. The deterioration of social values and life styles in the locals was considered equally grave by 34.2% respondents. Tourism is seen as the exporter of western lifestyles and disseminating metropolitan values.

- It was reported by 66% respondents that tourists services are frequently concentrated into a small number of complexes which are commonly referred to as ‘tourist ghettos’. The owners of tourism structures or their agents isolate the tourists and discourage them from reaching beyond the tourist facilities in order to secure a greater proportion of tourists’ money.

- Tourism contributes to an increase in crime. Studies indicate a positive relationship between increases in tourism and crime rates (Routhman 1978, Pizam 1988)
However 66.8% respondents agreed that a relationship does exist between tourism and crime as the existence of large number of people with lots of money to spend attracts criminal elements. Misguiding and cheating are the mildest form of crime against tourists. In the study undertaken, 20.5% respondents noted that certain acts of tourists can also be covered under crime. The shopkeepers recounted their experiences where fake cheques and currency was handed to them by tourists.

CULTURAL IMPACT

- A cultural effect of tourism refers to changes in the elements of culture resulting from the presence and activities of tourism. The dominant perspective regarding cultural impacts is that it is harmful.

- Degeneration of historical and cultural sites due to heavy tourists influx was reported by 34% respondents. It was noted that many Indians tourists scratched walls and inscribed their names on them.

- Commercialization of culture traditions is the most comprehensive statement which covers all impacts of tourism on culture. Few respondents subscribe to the extreme viewpoint that leads to deterioration of traditional forms. Most of the respondents accepted that tourism has encouraged the production of ‘pseudo-traditional art forms like fake paintings, manuscripts, pottery and other art objects.

- The respondents maintained that such ‘airport art’ consisted of stylized work presented in traditional garb and catered to the tourists, thus, providing economic benefits to the region.

- Most respondents (79%) favoured ‘airport art’ inspite of the changes that have taken place in form and functions of art objects, in the methods of making them, in materials used and in the quality of production.

- (76%) Respondents noted that tourists have a strengthening effect in the upkeep of heritage sites as government showed concern towards the conservation and preservation of revival of traditional fairs and festivals (49%) was acknowledged by many respondents.

- Tourism has also spurred preservation of traditional art crafts like jewellery, pottery and paintings etc. according to (63%) respondents tourism sells culture and its various facets as a product.

- The respondents give illustrations of various fairs and festivals like teej, gangaur which were especially staged for tourists because of the keen interest shown by tourists.

- Ethnic restaurants, like choki dhani, swad ri dhani, apno gaon, kesariya showcasing ‘native villages’ with people donning ceremonial attires, traditions, cuisine and sometimes create pseudo traditional items were strongly supported by respondents. They act as ‘cultural capsules’ displaying rural life with all its features and vibrancy with an area in
such an innovative way that tourists not only gain a live experience but also participate joyful as one of the rural folks.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that Impact assessment of tourism is a complex matter and contain both positive and negative elements. Different types of tourism have different effects on different societies. In Rajasthan all the alterations are directed towards projecting it as heritage city with a treasure royal experience to offer to the domestic as well as international travelers. The findings reinforces that the residents of Rajasthan had a more optimistic perspective regarding the economic impacts of tourism. The influence of tourism on consumption patterns and traditional values is also viewed from positive as well as negative perspectives.

Tourism also serves as a major stimulus for conservation of important elements of cultural heritage of an area that might otherwise be allowed to deteriorate or disappear. Revitalization of traditional arts, handicrafts, dance, music, fairs and festivals and various aspects of traditional lifestyles were considered a positive impact of tourism by many respondents. People are increasingly becoming aware of the adverse socio-cultural and environmental impacts of uncontrolled mass tourism. The view here is that while the negative social, cultural and environmental impacts may neither be intentional or inevitable, they must be seriously viewed as risks. Careful management plans involving the calculations of environment and carrying capacities showed be used without creating damage to the resource base so that sustainable development both from economic and environment perspectives is ensured.

REFERENCES


