

Scope of Eco Tourism through Strategic Approach: A Review study of Rajasthan (India)

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Abstract

Eco tourism is a new concept that supports the environmental conservation among local people, and also provides employment opportunities to them. Today, eco tourism is the emerging concept among tourists and encourages the development of tourism without degrading environment and natural resources. It has a potential to conserve and protect the natural areas and also known as vehicle to sustainable development. It is one of the accepted forms of alternative tourism that provides revenue to the people and also increases employment opportunities. As per 'TIES' eco tourism is defined as a "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and welfare of local people. " The objective of this paper is to explore the status and scope of eco tourism potential in Rajasthan state. Rajasthan has a various national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, biosphere reserves, lakes and diverse economic segment .This paper will explore the opportunities and potential of eco tourism destination of Rajasthan. It will also focus on the challenges of eco tourism activity in Rajasthan and strategies by managers to resolve it .The paper is based majorly on secondary data collected from different published research articles, book chapters, Rajasthan government policies, reports, tourism policies, NGOs' reports, articles and websites of Rajasthan Tourism. The findings of the study revealed that there is an implementing realistic ecotourism plan to overcome the lack of coordination between public and private sectors and to make local people more aware about the importance of conservation of nature so that their participations in future can be increased.

Key Words: Eco Tourism, Sustainable Development, Local people, Rajasthan.

1. Introduction

According to (UNWTO, 2013) travel & tourism is one of the emerging sectors in the worldwide. "Tourism is the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited". Due to tourism there is an employment generation and also it creates foreign exchange in various countries. Tourism is traveling for recreational or leisure purposes and it can also nurture a sense of pride among the people. According to Mathieson & Wall, (1982), Valentine, (1992) & Fennell & Smale, (1992); sometime tourism sector can bring some harmful impact to the natural environment. As per UNWTO, tourism sector will persist to boost in the future and it will reach 1.5 billion worldwide in 2020. Holden (2008) stated that "the notion of travelling with the intention to spend one's vacation at a distant location is generally recognized as tourism". According to Okuyama (2012) the tourism sector can give benefits by motivating industries, and also increasing the standard living of people. Amposta (2009) argued that in developing countries this sector has an imperative role by developing transportation and increasing fiscal activities.

From few years there is a boom in the tourism sector, especially in India. It provide direct or indirect employment for about 17 million people and also generate revenue for travel agents, hoteliers , transporters , craftsmen, souvenir-sellers , tourist guides and airlines. India is one of the countries where it has a typology of tourism like adventure tourism, culture tourism, medical tourism, dark tourism, rural tourism and spiritual tourism. It is important that tourist should be informed about the damage of the environment after using the resources and should promote sustainable tourism in the future. According to Cater (1997), the term ‘eco’ in the concept of ecotourism refers to ‘*ecologically responsible*’. India has a great scope of eco -tourism and there is a need of improvement in the promotion of this segment. It mainly focuses on the conservation of environment among local people which does not mean loss of economic opportunity. It is also one of the forms of alternative tourism which have huge scope among tourists. Eco tourism brings the employment opportunities to the local people and educates the travelers to remove harmful activities like overgrazing or construction building near natural environment. In recent years, tourism trend have emphasized on the distinction between socio- cultural value and economic values. There is also change in the perception and attitude of people towards tourism due to increase in disposable income and paid holidays.

1.1 Concept & Definition of Eco Tourism

From many years, ecotourism is becoming one of the most imperative segments in tourism. Several explanation of ecotourism has been existing in the literature. According to Hawkins & Lamoureux (2001) and World Travel & Tourism Council, (2004) ecotourism is a vigorous and growing constituent of the world’s major fiscal segment. It helps to preserve the biodiversity for local people and also promote the community based eco tourism. It makes the tourism sustainable for the future generation. Brandon (1996) et al. stated that “*Ecotourism has been widely advocated as an economic tool for biological conservation and community development in recent decades*”. According to UNEP it is defined as a “*responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people*”. It is a main sector which brings financial growth in the country. Though unplanned development and growth of tourism can also bring risk to the environment and also can cause pollution in the natural environment. The term eco-tourism refers to “*ecologically sound tourism*”. This concept of eco-tourism is emerged from Belize in Central America that is popular for wildlife and greenery.

Eco tourism is a particular type of tourism that proposed a new aspect in the travel & tourism sector and reduces the destructive impacts on environment. “*Eco-tourism*” also refers to ‘*ecological tourism that is responsible travel to fragile, pristine and usually protected areas that strives to below impact and small scale*’. This concept is relatively new as it creates attention in the mind of researchers during 1980s. Schaller (1999) have given the various names like soft tourism, nature tourism, eco tourism, responsible tourism and green tourism. It can be defined as a “*powerful travel to nature areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the eco system, while producing the economic activity that makes the conservation of natural resources financially beneficial to local citizens*”. In India, the foundation of this concept was laid in 1998 in the tourism sector. As India is very rich in culture heritage and provides great diversity of natural resources which includes: mountains, beaches, monuments, wildlife, fair & festivals & entertainment activities. According to Zurick (1992), there is an increase in the nature tourism in the tourism industry worldwide. Drumm (1991) defined ecotourism as a “*progressive, educational travel, which conserves the environment and benefits local communities*”. According to Ceballos-Lascurain (1987) it is defined as an “*ecological tourism involving traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas, with the specific aims of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects found in these areas*”. There are also some synonyms of eco-tourism such as :

environment friendly tourism, nature tourism ,green tourism, scientific tourism , designer tourism , safari tourism , wildlife tourism , hard tourism , risk tourism , safari tourism etc.

1.2 Principles of Eco-tourism:

According to the International Eco-Tourism Society (TIES) in 1990, eco-tourism is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people”. The principles of Eco-tourism are as given below:

- To reduce the harmful effect on the natural environment that can cause destruction to the attraction.
- To provide education to the travelers about the significance of preservation and management of resources.
- To provide direct revenues for the management and conservation of protected areas.
- To stress on the requirement of local tourism zones and for tourists supervision.
- To stress on the utilization for ecological and environmental studies.
- To strive to maximize economic benefit for the local business, communities and host country.
- To focus on the clean environment with local people participation.
- To reduce the usage of natural resources and fuels like petrol, kerosene.
- To protect the eco tourism resources for the future.

1.3 Characteristics of Eco-tourism:

According to Martha Honey, there are seven characteristics of Eco-tourism, which are given below:

- Focus on the environment awareness.
- Minimize the negative impact.
- Involves travel to natural destinations.
- Provides financial benefits for the local people.
- Respect local culture.
- Provides direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Supports human rights and democratic movements.

2. Review of Literature:

A comprehensive review of literature has been made to locate out the research gap and to recognize the applicable research problems for the study.

Ceballos-Lascurain (1987) was the first pioneer who use the term Eco –Tourism. Cammorata, (2013) describe eco tourism as “*Traveling to a remote area to enjoy, protect, and bring awareness to endangered wildlife.*” Hall and Page (2006) defined eco tourism as “*Any form of tourism development which is regarded as environmentally friendly and has the capacity to act as a branding mechanism for some forms of tourist products*”. Honey (2008) described eco-tourism as “travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strive to be low impact and (often) small scale”. It also helps to provide education to the tourist and also involve local communities. Nguyen & Slater (2010) argued that there is harmful impact on the natural resource and environment due to social and economic growth. Elizabeth Boo (1990) used the term interchangeably with nature tourism. According to him “*Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes*

conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local population”.

Kaul R.N (1985) investigated the strategies and purposes with the function of national and international tourism organizations. Gupta.V.K (1987) has research a descriptive study on the scope of tourism in eastern, western, northern and southern regions of India .According to him the tourism sector is growing very fast since 1947. Sanchez and Jaranillo-Hurtado (2010) declared that for eco tourism the model of sustainable development is the most viable one. Rob Davidson (1989) during his research found that there are diverse services like transportation, cuisine and accommodation in tourism sector and also focus on the new concepts like leisure and recreation. JavidAkhtar (1990) investigated the functions of management and its principles in tourism sector and focus on the welfare of the local people and sustaining natural resources. Scholars like Santhosh P Thampi (2003) investigated on Ecotourism marketing at Kerala, where he stated, “Almost all districts of Kerala have a number of potential ecotourism destinations”. Niranjan Das (2004) in his research found that "Assam has tremendous potentiality for growth and development of Eco-Tourism”. Mowforth and Munt (1998) in their study focused on the interdisciplinary approach which includes conservationism and socio-cultural studies .They also emphasized on the development of tourism. Dr.PrashantaAthma and Ms.Vijaya Lakshmi (2008) have emphasized the significance of eco tourism in Andhra Pradesh. A.K. Bhatia (2006) has explained the trends of tourism sector where he traces the history of travel in early times, and described tourism in a much uncomplicated method. In developing countries the concept of ‘ecotourism’ is an emerging trend which focuses on the conservation of natural resources and promotes economic growth. Krippendort (1987) investigated that tourism should provide additional benefits to the people which can increase their satisfaction level. According to Helber LE (1988), there is an increase trend towards adventure, action, fantasy, nostalgia and exotic experience.

3. Research Gap

There are few studies that focus on the scope of eco tourism in Rajasthan. So this study mainly highlights the challenges and strategies from stakeholders and managers which will help for the growth of eco tourism in Rajasthan in future. The suggestion from researcher will be highly helpful for the policy makers in the state. The main focus of the study is to overcome the challenges faced in the state from eco tourism activities.

4. Objectives of the Study

- To explore the status and scope of eco tourism potential in Rajasthan state.
- To focus on the challenges of eco tourism activities in Rajasthan and management strategies for the development of the state.

5. Research Methodology:

This research is a descriptive and is based on majorly secondary data collected from different published research articles, book chapters, Rajasthan government policies, reports, tourism policies, NGOs’ reports, articles and websites of Rajasthan Tourism. The researcher also used the information and facts already available as base in order to analyze, explore and evaluate the problem at hand critically to figure out conclusion.

6. ECO-TOURISM IN INDIA

Tourism is believed as one of the main business in India. The awareness of tourism in India is on the historical as well as spiritual places, wildlife, cultural and to some extent the beaches. Eco-tourism is a new model being considered in India. India has numerous biosphere reserves, aquatic parks and national parks having diverse eco-

biological mechanism and distinctiveness in plants and animals. These reserves have fascinated a number of Eco tourists. It is though, essential to have suitable managing plan with rigorous actions to control contamination and curtail the impact of tourism on the coastal system, analyzing the total carrying capacity of the area. India has mainly an undeveloped nation with an enormous choice of natural diversity. The manufacturing sector is at the present playing a chief role in the country's financial system after the economic liberalization in 1991. India has amazingly and beautiful natural and cultural tourism resources .It is very rich in monuments and famous sites like Taj Mahal, Red fort, Golconda forts etc show its uniqueness. India is known for its rich biodiversity in the world and has a great potential to emerge as one of the major eco tourism destination in the world.

6.1 Major Eco-Tourism Destinations in India:

- Kerala
- Sundarban Eco-Tour
- Goa Eco-Tour
- Himalayas
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- Coorg
- Deserts of Rajasthan
- Uttaranchal
- Corbett National Park
- Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary
- Gir National Park
- Sikkim
- Kodaikanal

6.2 Tourism in Rajasthan

Rajasthan is a land of rich culture, heritage, wildlife, deserts, green forests etc, which makes it one of the popular destination in the country. This state attracts the tourists worldwide due to its attraction like museum, heritage, palaces and forts, wildlife, lakes, desert etc. Rajasthan is located on the oldest mountainous range known as Aravali range. This state has many ancient cities, forts and many beautiful attractions like lakes of Udaipur, deserts of Jaisalmer , palaces of Jodhpur , religious places of Ajmer and Pushkar that attracts tourist worldwide . Rajasthan is one of the popular destinations of the country from the last decade and it attracts many domestic tourists. There were around 2 million of domestic tourists in Rajasthan in 1973 which now increases to around 5 million domestic tourists who visited every year. There are many attractions which makes Rajasthan favorable for the both domestic and international tourists. Many people get employment due to segments of tourism like hotels, restaurants, transportation, guide service etc. There are many heritage sites, cultural sites, rich traditions, fairs and festivals and flora and fauna .It covers almost everything from beautiful lakes to wildlife to deserts which gives a unique experience to the tourists.

6.3 Potential of Ecotourism in Rajasthan

There are various ecotourism destinations in Rajasthan which have variety of wildlife, plants, national parks etc. These varieties of natural resource make Rajasthan as a unique ecotourism destination. The main attraction of the state is historical sites, forts and palaces, archeological sites, temples, mosque etc. Some of the natural sites in

Rajasthan have forests, herbal gardens, ponds, lakes, rivers, valleys and gorges. There are 3 national parks, 25 wildlife sanctuaries and two Ramsar sites that cover almost 2.80% of the state. There is Ranthambhore National Park, Sariska Tiger Reserves and Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur. Rajasthan also have Sambhar salt lake, Tal Chhappar and The National Chambal Sanctuary that attracts many tourists. Some of the attraction like Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Udaipur and Mount Abu has also greater scope of eco tourism which attracts tourists worldwide.



Figure 1 Tourism Map of Rajasthan

Source: mapsofindia.com

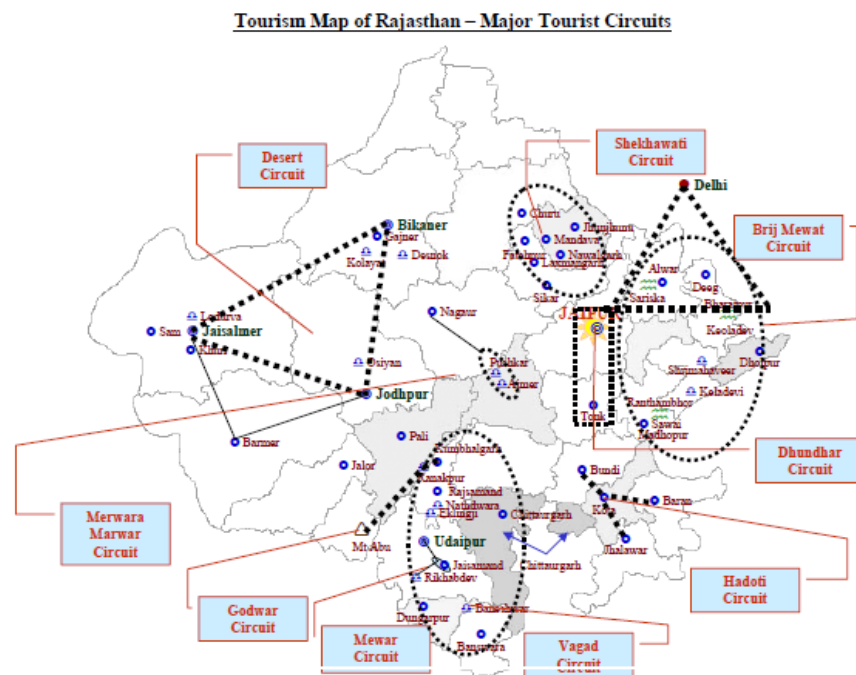


Figure 2 Major Tourist Destinations in Rajasthan (Circuits and Destinations) as per Department of Tourism, Govt. of Rajasthan

(Source- 20 year's perspective plan for sustainable tourism in Rajasthan report)

The key eco tourism destinations in Rajasthan are as follows:

1. Ranthambhore National Park (RNP), Sawai Madhopur.
2. Keoladeo National Park (KNP), Bharatpur
3. Sariska Tiger Reserve ,Alwar
4. Desert National Park
5. Kumbhalgarh WLS
6. Mount Abu

6.4 Wetlands of Rajasthan:

There is also an importance of wetlands in Rajasthan which attracts tourists as they are closely associated with all life forms. It mainly forms of lakes, rivers, water sources, marshes. Rajasthan is known for a variety of wetlands which plays an important role in the sustainable development. There are almost 123 natural wetlands and 931 manmade wetlands in Rajasthan. It also has 44 ponds and lakes, 79 plyasa, 915 reservoirs and 16 waterlogged areas. Some of the famous wetlands in Rajasthan are : Sambhar lake , Bandh Baretha in Bharatpur , Foy Sagar in Ajmer , Siliserh Lake in Alwar , Mansagar Lake in Jaipur , Pichola lake in Udaipur , Jhadol lake and Bal Samand lake in Jodhpur . The fort of Chittorgarh is also famous place in Rajasthan for tourists, where the largest numbers of wetlands are found.

7. Challenges of Eco Tourism in Rajasthan

There is also a pressure in the environment through the flow of tourism and it provides major threats to its ecosystem. Due to the flow of tourists many hotels are running without waste water management and in many places tourist also throw some garbage which causes destruction in the eco tourism sites.

Some of the following problems of Eco Tourism in Rajasthan:

- Lack of strong economic plan.
- Damage of the environment due to overuse of natural resources.
- Lack of financial support from central and state government
- Shortage of skilled and trained employees.
- Lack of communication network.
- Loss of Habitat of local people and wildlife.
- Increasing human wildlife conflict.
- Illegal trade and poaching in wildlife.
- Lack of education among local people.
- Lack of promotion.
- Lack of benefits for local people.
- There is also a problem of employment among local people.
- Lack of strategy from both public and private sector.
- Lack of modern technology.
- Lack of training centers.
- Shortage of tourist guides.

8. Discussion

This paper focuses on the potential of ecotourism in Rajasthan. Many tourists from all over attracts towards the tourist destinations of Rajasthan. The government of Rajasthan promotes various types of tourism and eco tourism is also making its impact. The Golden triangle which comprised of Delhi- Agra- Jaipur plays an important role to influence tourists to visit Rajasthan. Also, tourism plays a major role for the economic growth of the state as it contributes direct employment to the local people .

The eco tourism in Rajasthan has a great potential as it has many diversity like wildlife, national parks, lakes, wetland, waterfall etc. . There is a need of some development and rapid promotion of eco tourism sites in Rajasthan. Also, there are large numbers of zoo, animal rescue centers and ecological parks in Rajasthan. According to Department of Forest, (Govt of Rajasthan) there are about 126 ecotourism sites , which are proposed in Ecotourism Policy (2010) out of which 29 major ecotourism sites are recognized and found suitable for the development of eco tourism . There are also various activities which are done for the promotion of eco tourism in Rajasthan. The tourists get attracted by the different kind of activities like trekking, horse and camel safari, conducting education camp, bird watching, jeep safari, hiking, mountaineering and photography. There is also scope of adventure sports near Chambal River in Rajasthan. Hadoti is the main area where adventure activities take place like boating, kayaking, windsurfing, water rafting and water skiing. Government should take some proper steps for the development of eco tourism in Rajasthan and should involve local people for the betterment of the growth of destination.

9. Suggestions & Recommendations

It is necessary to take some urgent steps to resolve the challenges regarding the protection of eco tourism destination in Rajasthan. There should be proper coordination between private and public sector. The role of local people and their participation is very important to address the issue of eco tourism. Proper planning and management should be there to preserve and conserve the eco tourism destination of Rajasthan.

Some of the strategies for the development of Eco – Tourism are as given below:

- Providing employment opportunities for the local people and establishment of training centers for them.
- Conducting awareness programme and providing education materials such as newspaper, journals, radio, television and social media like face book, twitter, instagram etc.
- Development of solid waste management programme and reuse of natural resources.
- Promotion of eco tourism programmes in the state and focus on conservation and preservation of natural resources.
- Providing equal distribution of wealth for the citizens of the state.
- Eco tourism should promote the conservation of nature and provide benefit to the local people.
- Local people participation and community development is necessary for eco tourism.
- Education of the guides is necessary for the development of eco tourism.
- Proper co ordination between public and private is essential.
- There should be proper planning and management for the success of eco tourism.
- There should be sufficient financial support from the government for the growth of eco tourism in the state.
- Proper communication channel and role of media is essential.
- Protection of human habitat and restriction of illegal trade and poaching of wildlife should be there.

10. Conclusion

Rajasthan has immense opportunities for the eco tourism. There are several national parks, lakes, wetland, mountains and natural sceneries which attracts the tourists. Due to the development of hotels, resorts, restaurants and other infrastructure there is also a problem of loss of habitat and destruction of wildlife in the state. There is a need of an urgent action by the government and local people to conserve the environment. There should be proper planning and management for the conservation of natural resources and education of the tourist is very essential for it .The long term policy is required for the growth of eco tourism in Rajasthan. There should be use of proper technique to reduce the flow of tourists like use of tourist sign post, advance booking of ticket for the park, use of e- rickshaw and cycles. Proper parking system is must and tourist should walk from the parking to the sites or can use public transport for the benefit of the environment. There should be proper interpretation and information for the tourist who visit national parks, bird sanctuary etc.

The role of government should play positive role with private sectors and local people for the development of eco tourism. However, there is no doubt that there is a huge scope of eco tourism in the state and it is a new concept where there is very little research done. On the other hand it is necessary that natural environment should be conserve with the protection of the scarce resources. This study show that the role of everyone is important

like government, private sector, NGOs, community etc for the growth of eco tourism in Rajasthan and benefits should be given to the local people to improve their standard of living.

11. Scope for Further Research

This study is conducted to focus on the outlook and challenges of eco tourism in Rajasthan. The tourism sector in Rajasthan can be boost in future due to the management strategies. This study can help the government, private sector and scholars for the further research in eco –tourism and various suggestions can be implemented in future. The present study can be useful for tourists, local people, service suppliers, and government and marketing agencies for the planning for the growth of eco – tourism in the state.

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